

Inspection of Wilds Lodge School

Stamford Road, Empingham, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8QQ

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
------------------------------	-------------

The quality of education	Good
--------------------------	-------------

Behaviour and attitudes	Good
-------------------------	-------------

Personal development	Good
----------------------	-------------

Leadership and management	Good
---------------------------	-------------

Sixth-form provision	Good
----------------------	-------------

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
--	-------------

Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
--	------------

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils like being part of Wilds Lodge School. They value the care given by staff. Many pupils show determination to overcome difficulties. They are persistent in their learning. An older pupil typically commented, 'This school has meant the world to me.'

Pupils gain from the school's rural settings. The range and quality of facilities are excellent. Pupils like having the animals on both school sites. Randall, one of the pigs, is much liked.

Pupils' behaviour improves during their time at school. Staff are skilled in helping pupils to reflect on, and develop strategies to regulate, their emotions and behaviours. At times, some pupils are unkind. Pupils say that when bullying happens, the school deals with it effectively. The school's approach to positive behaviour is bringing about a reduction in suspensions and physical interventions.

Leaders set high expectations for pupils' attendance. Most pupils' attendance improves over time. The school is effective in supporting and challenging parents and carers whose children do not attend regularly.

Parents have polarised views of the school. Most value and appreciate what the school provides for their children. However, others are less positive, especially when they are unclear about the benefit of changes brought about in recent years.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has developed a broad curriculum that provides for pupils' academic learning and personal development. Younger pupils learn a range of subjects. Older pupils also benefit from vocational learning. Outdoor learning extends pupils' learning.

Leaders have developed ambitious subject curriculums. These curriculums identify key knowledge and skills that build pupils' learning over time. The teaching is strong in some subjects, such as personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, English and mathematics. There is some inconsistency in the teaching of some other subjects, as is also recognised by leaders. Older pupils gain a range of qualifications that strengthen their self-confidence. They build on their achievements over time.

The school has recently strengthened its provision for the pupils' additional needs. Effective processes are in place to identify these needs. Staff have access to clear guidance as to each pupil's needs in order to help provide appropriate support. The school's therapeutic provision supports pupils' personal development and learning well. Leaders work with external agencies to gain additional support when needed.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Most explain new learning well. They know pupils and their learning needs very well. Most teachers adapt their teaching to

enable pupils to learn in small classes. For example, staff break down tasks and provide appropriate challenge and support. Most staff continually check pupils' learning in lessons. However, the school has not developed an effective approach to checking what pupils learn and remember in the long term.

Reading is prioritised. The school supports pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. Pupils become fluent in reading. The reading curriculum enables pupils to build their comprehension skills, including, for example, through understanding vocabulary, visualising what they are reading and developing inference skills. Pupils are encouraged to read and develop a love of reading. Younger pupils like the reading bus.

Students in the sixth form benefit from good provision. They are appropriately challenged in many subjects, including English, mathematics and construction. The school provides a breadth of curriculum for these students. This includes a well-structured personal development programme that prepares students well for adult life. Students enjoy the opportunities for outdoor education. They engage very well and have positive attitudes. They show resilience and determination in their work and learning. Students gain a range of qualifications that are matched to their interests and abilities. They benefit from work-related learning that is carefully matched to their interests or aspirations, including, for example, working in a supermarket or learning about childcare in the main school's nurture classes. Students are very well prepared for their next steps.

The school has a strong focus on pupils' personal development. The PSHE education curriculum is adapted to pupils' social and emotional needs. Leaders ensure that PSHE education is responsive to any issues in pupils' lives or in society. Older pupils gain from good careers advice and guidance. They are helped to explore next steps that reflect their interests and skills. Pupils receive age- and maturity-appropriate relationships and sex education. The school ensures that pupils learn about healthy living. Pupils learn about potential risks, including the dangers of knife crime, drugs and alcohol. They learn how to be safe when online and in the community. They deepen their understanding of right and wrong. They learn the importance of respecting people who are different from them. Pupils gain from various experiences, such as trips and visits. They recall fondly, and appreciate a wide range of, enrichment activities.

Leaders, including the proprietor, know the school very well. Since acquiring the school, the proprietor has taken decisive steps to build the school's culture based on a clear vision and key values. Leaders use research and experience to develop the curriculum, adapt the approach to behaviour management and build leadership capacity. However, the school has not communicated effectively with all parents to help them understand why and how the changes are made to benefit all pupils in the longer term.

Most staff are proud to be part of the school. They value the recent changes and understand the part they play in developing the school. Many staff comment that leaders are supportive of their well-being and are mindful of their workload.

The proprietor ensures that the independent school standards are met securely and consistently. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders ensure that policies and procedures reflect relevant statutory guidance. The premises are maintained very well. Leaders are rigorous in maintaining health and safety standards. The school publishes relevant information on its website, including the relationships and sex education and safeguarding policies.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school has not consistently embedded the implementation of strong curriculum intent in all subjects. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they could in some subjects. The school must ensure that there is consistency across all subjects in relation to implementation, so that all pupils are able to know, understand and do more across the curriculum.
- The school's current approach to summative assessment is not sharp enough to determine the precise learning that pupils gain in the long term. As a result, staff do not have a clear appreciation of pupils' embedded learning. The school should ensure that its approach to summative assessment enables staff to see what pupils have learned over time and to determine their next steps in learning.
- The school has not communicated effectively with all parents concerning the changes that have been brought about to the provision. As a result, not all parents understand why and how these changes benefit their children. Consequently, some hold negative views about the school. Leaders need to ensure that parents understand the rationale for changes that the school is implementing to bring about further development.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	134938
DfE registration number	857/6005
Local authority	Rutland
Inspection number	10286411
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	15
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cavendish Education and Training Limited
Chair	Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Toby Oakley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,100 to £77,250
Telephone number	01780 767254
Website	www.wildslodgeschool.co.uk
Email address	office@wildslodgeschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 November 2019

Information about this school

- Wilds Lodge School is an independent special school. The school is registered to admit 120 pupils aged between five and 19 years. There are currently 98 pupils on roll.
- The school has two sites. These are: Wilds Lodge School, Stamford Road, Empingham, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8QQ, and Crossroads Farm, Grantham Lane, Empingham, Rutland PE9 4AF.
- The school provides education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' additional needs include social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have autism. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school was acquired by Cavendish Education and Training Limited in April 2021. There have been many changes in leadership since then. The senior leadership team has been restructured. The headteacher took up post in February 2023. The head of education was appointed on an interim basis in November 2022 and took up the substantive role in July 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The previous inspection of the residential provision was in July 2023.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the residential provision.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They met with a range of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with a director remotely. He met with a company officer and the executive headteacher.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, PSHE education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at

curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They listened to pupils reading aloud.

- Inspectors also visited lessons in other subjects, including English, mathematics, construction, forest school, computing, topic and enrichment. They reviewed curriculum planning in mathematics, history, geography, art, forest school and sixth-form preparation for adulthood.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: met with leaders; reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; reviewed safeguarding records; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about various aspects of school life.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. They looked at the school's website and published information about the school's provision, including policies related to health and safety, risk assessment, curriculum and complaints. They reviewed the school's self-evaluation and development plan.
- The lead inspector toured the two premises to review the suitability of the accommodation.
- Inspectors considers the views of parents who had completed Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments, and correspondence received during the inspection. Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's survey of school staff.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kirsty Norbury

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024