

Inspection of The Old School House

1 March Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0HA

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

The Old School House is a welcoming place. Pupils are friendly and well-mannered. They thrive in the school's close, family atmosphere. Over time, pupils develop warm, trusting relationships with staff. These help pupils to feel safe and enable them to enjoy school in a way that they have not done previously. Attendance at the school is high.

Clear boundaries and well-established routines help pupils to behave well. They listen attentively in lessons, to their teachers and to each other. There is a strong culture of respect here. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including social and emotional difficulties. When pupils struggle to regulate their emotions, staff support them to reset so they are ready to learn. Pupils' needs are very well met.

Pupils like playing card and board games at social times. They enjoy opportunities to venture outside the school. For example, they go to a local park for sports activities or to the shops to buy ingredients for cooking. Pupils relish their trips further afield, such as visits to a science centre and an outdoor leisure park. These enhance pupils' learning and develop various life skills such as resilience and independence.

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

Many pupils have experienced disruption in their lives and in their previous experiences of school. This, along with pupils' needs, means that they arrive at the school with a range of different starting points. The curriculum is designed to take account of these. It is broad and balanced, with the flexibility to respond to individual pupil's needs. The curriculum is ambitious and staff are determined to give all pupils the chance to fulfil their potential.

The school's curriculum engages and motivates pupils effectively. It provides opportunities for creative, practical activities and lively discussions. Pupils learn key knowledge and vocabulary that is specific to each subject. They make links between subjects that help them remember what they have learned. In the core subjects of English and mathematics, the curriculum is taught sequentially. This supports pupils to build a secure body of knowledge gradually. However, in some other subjects, learning is not sequential. Sometimes, learning is driven more by individual activities than by clear end points. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge as securely in these subjects.

Typically, staff teach new knowledge clearly and confidently. They provide models to help pupils tackle their independent tasks. Staff use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking. Occasionally, staff subject knowledge is not strong enough. As a result, sometimes staff do not identify misconceptions or errors, or do not address these as effectively as they might. This hinders pupils' learning. It means that at times pupils' errors and misconceptions persist.

The school has strengthened its approach to the teaching of early reading and writing. Younger pupils have daily phonics lessons. These help them to secure their knowledge of the sounds they need to know to become fluent readers. Phonics lessons also support pupils' basic writing skills, such as letter formation and spelling. Older pupils with gaps in their phonics knowledge receive the support they need to improve their reading and writing.

The school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour is rooted in strong relationships and a knowledge of each pupil's needs. Staff apply the approach consistently. They listen to pupils and teach them strategies to help them manage their feelings. As a result, pupils feel valued. They learn to manage conflict, cope with setbacks and recover from upset increasingly well. The prevailing atmosphere at the school is calm and happy.

Pupils' personal development and their preparation for life after school are high priorities. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum is carefully planned. It teaches pupils important knowledge about equality and diversity, healthy lifestyles, and age-appropriate relationships and sex education. The school helps older pupils consider their next steps in education, employment or training. They visit nearby colleges and listen to visiting speakers who represent different careers, for example. The school provides careers guidance. It teaches pupils application and interview skills. Staff encourage pupils to have high aspirations for the future.

Leaders, including the proprietor, are keen to ensure that staff have the skills they need to meet pupils' needs. Since the last inspection, staff development has been prioritised. The school has called upon the expertise of external professionals, including subject specialists, to strengthen the curriculum and its delivery. As a result, staff are motivated and feel valued. They share the school's ambition to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils.

The proprietor has strengthened his oversight of the school's provision. There are effective systems in place to ensure that the independent school standards (the standards) are met and that the school fulfils its statutory duties. The proprietor ensures that the school's premises provide a safe and suitable environment for pupils. The school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some wider curriculum subjects, the curriculum is not taught in a coherent sequence towards clearly identified endpoints. As a result, pupils do not build secure knowledge of the key learning in these subjects as well as they could do. The school should ensure that it sets out a clearly sequenced curriculum with

identified endpoints and supports staff to deliver this effectively in all subjects so that pupils build their knowledge securely.

- Occasionally, staff subject knowledge is not as strong as it could be. This means that sometimes staff do not address errors or misconceptions effectively. This hinders pupils' progress and means that some misconceptions persist. The school should support staff subject knowledge and build staff confidence so that pupils learn as well as possible in all subjects.

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	133651
DfE registration number	873/6032
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10342040
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Jason Wright
Headteacher	Susan Clark
Annual fees (day pupils)	£74,000
Telephone number	01945 861114
Website	chartwellgroup.org.uk
Email address	sharon.english@chartwellgroup.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 July 2023

Information about this school

- The school is registered to admit 10 boys with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- Since the last inspection, the school has commissioned the support of a school improvement partner, who is part of the management structure along with the proprietor, headteacher and school business manager.
- The school does not use any alternative provisions.
- The school is located at 1 March Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0HA.

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 educational provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The school shares accommodation with a children's home of the same name, managed by the proprietor. The inspectors only inspected the education provision at this school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the headteacher, school improvement partner, school business manager and proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. 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.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and samples of pupils' work in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- To check compliance with the standards, the lead inspector undertook a premises check.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and spoke to a foster carer on the telephone. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Pedlow

Ofsted Inspector

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