

Gretton School

Manor Farm Road, Girton, Cambridge, CB3 0RX

Inspection dates	12–14 November 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Pupils' achievement is good, including in English and mathematics. This is because of good teaching and the good use of an interesting, relevant curriculum.
- Pupils behave well in school. When pupils find this difficult, staff support them well and help them to calm themselves down and concentrate on learning. Pupils and staff respect one another, and pupils work well because lessons are good-humoured and enjoyable.
- Leaders and managers are clear that they want each pupil to achieve as well as possible. They have successfully improved teaching and learning since the previous inspection.
- The proprietor has provided a good range of facilities and equipment that is well used to help pupils make good progress.
- The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding and the overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good.

It is not yet outstanding because

- The curriculum for students in the sixth form is not as well developed as that for younger pupils.
- A few pupils do not make the rapid and sustained progress that they could.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day’s notice. The lead inspector observed eight lessons taught by eight different teachers and looked at pupils’ work. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher. Discussions were held with leaders and managers, staff members from both the school and residence, and social workers and representatives of local authorities.
- The inspectors met with residential and day pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including that relating to the residential provision, safeguarding, teaching, management and progress.
- Inspectors took account of 20 questionnaire responses from staff, and the views of 21 parents and carers who responded to Parent View (the online questionnaire) and of seven parents and carers met with during the inspection.

Inspection team

John Gush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steve Halliley

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Gretton School is an independent residential special school for girls and boys with autistic spectrum conditions, specifically those of higher ability and those with Asperger's Syndrome. It is located in Girton village on the outskirts of Cambridge.
- The school opened in January 2010. It is registered for up to 60 pupils aged from five to 19 years and has provision for eight residential placements. It is owned and operated by Cavendish Education Ltd.
- There are 53 pupils on roll aged from 5 to 16 years. All have statements of special educational needs for autistic spectrum conditions or related difficulties. Six of the pupils are weekly boarders in the school's residential provision.
- The school makes use of a local further education college to extend its provision for older pupils and prepare them for life after school.
- The school aims 'to offer an environment where children and young people who have experienced disruption in their education are supported to achieve their academic and social potential'.
- The school was last inspected in October 2010 and the previous inspection of the residential provision took place in July 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils' work is marked in such a way that they always know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Develop the curriculum for sixth formers so that it better prepares them for independent adult life.
- Improve pupils' learning and behaviour plans so that they reflect pupils' academic abilities and aspirations more accurately, and are clearer about exactly what must improve.
- Improve the residential provision by:
 - ensuring that all staff follow the administration of medication procedures at all times to minimise the possibility of errors occurring
 - ensuring that all pupils are aware of the availability of an advocacy service they can contact if they wish to do so
 - ensuring that records of sanctions and restraints accurately and fully reflect the reason for the restraint or sanction taking place
 - ensuring that at least one residential pupil is included on the school council and attends meetings.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good. While their autistic spectrum conditions present substantial barriers to learning, pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching, an effective curriculum and valuable support for learning and personal development from a range of therapists. Pupils' achievement is not outstanding because a few pupils do not make such rapid progress. Pupils make good progress towards their targets in all subjects, including English and mathematics, but these do not always make sufficiently clear what pupils must achieve if they are to be successful. The residential provision supports pupils' achievement very effectively, for example, in relation to their literacy, communication and self-help skills.

A large proportion of the pupils have experienced disrupted education and many have only been at the school for a short time. Almost all re-engage quickly with learning, and make up lost ground well.

With careful, well-prepared support from teachers and assistants, almost all pupils take part actively in lessons and enjoy learning. They take pride in their work, much of which is attractively displayed in classrooms and around the school. They contribute well when presenting what they have learned to others. Pupils are active users of information and communication technology (ICT) which is effectively used throughout the school to extend learning, especially in literacy and numeracy.

During the year prior to the inspection the first group of pupils to take GCSEs achieved results that exceeded expectations in view of their starting points. They achieved grades ranging from G to B in English, mathematics, science and art.

Pupils in Key Stage 5 (the sixth form) continue to make progress in their literacy, communication, numeracy and independent living skills. Many study for AS-level art. Together with older pupils in Key Stage 4 they take a range of introductory courses at the local further education college, such as motor mechanics, photography and carpentry. These subjects provide additional opportunities for pupils to gain recognised qualifications and to work in community settings. They prepare them well for moving on to further education, training or employment when they leave school. All the pupils who left school at the end of Key Stage 4 last year went on to further education or apprenticeships.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour is good, reflecting the rapid improvement that they make in their personal development from when they first join the school. These qualities help pupils to enjoy school again and to make good academic progress. Most pupils are polite and communicate well with each other and with staff members and visitors. A few pupils, though, continue to struggle to control outbursts of frustration and anger. Staff are knowledgeable about pupils' difficulties and support them well to manage their own behaviour more appropriately.

Pupils' outcomes as a result of the residential provision are outstanding. Behaviour management is a strength in the residence. There have been no unauthorised absences or physical interventions for the last five months, and very few sanctions have been given as a result of inappropriate behaviour. The behaviour and personal development of residential pupils are strongly supported by their residential experience. These pupils respond very well to the wide range of interesting activities provided. They develop new skills such as bike riding and swimming, and develop their confidence, social skills and ability to participate in group activities. Residential pupils have a very strong and clear voice in the running of the residence. They express their thoughts, feelings and

views at weekly meetings and through discussion and negotiation with keyworkers and other adults. This helps them to develop their communication skills and has a good impact on their learning and development.

Pupils say that they enjoy school. One said 'I love coming' and another commented that it is 'very fun'. Almost all attend well and are punctual to their lessons. Residential pupils' attendance in school is excellent. Staff are consistent in their use of agreed approaches to supporting pupils' behaviour. Targets are mentioned throughout lessons, which regularly end with an opportunity for pupils to evaluate their own performance in learning and behaviour. This helps pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own actions and learning. Pupils respond well to the school's reward scheme and enjoy the positive response to their efforts.

The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All staff contribute very well to the culture of understanding and mutual respect which helps the pupils to become more self-confident and sociable. Through assemblies and lessons in humanities and personal, social and health education, pupils gain a good awareness of some important features of other cultures. Recently, some pupils have learned about asylum seekers and the perils of being recruited as a child soldier in Africa. Such subjects help pupils to develop a deeper understanding of compassion, morality and tolerance of difference. This all helps them to understand further the importance of appropriate behaviour and relationships.

Pupils learn about British institutions and services through citizenship lessons, residential experiences and the everyday work of the school. A recent study of parliamentary procedures included a visit from a member of the House of Lords which helped pupils to understand some political processes. The school council allows pupils to be involved in decision-making about the school, although it does not currently involve residential pupils. Together with the school's charity work, which builds very good relationships with the community, such activities help pupils to develop the attitudes and skills they need to take an active part in democratic society.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress in learning and development. Teachers and their assistants have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They use a range of effective methods to help pupils overcome their particular difficulties in learning, and to make the most of their abilities, especially in literacy and numeracy. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, for example, pupils in Key Stage 2 recounted how they had tallied the colours of cars in the car park the previous day, and then learned how to represent the information as a bar chart. In this lesson, the well planned build-up of learning during the week and the careful deployment of teaching assistants helped each pupil to reinforce their understanding and develop new skills. In a minority of teaching, however, pupils are not clear about what they are expected to do, or about the standard of work they are expected to achieve. As a result their progress is slower.

Pupils are accurately assessed when they first join the school and regularly thereafter to check on their learning and progress. Assessments are shared with staff in the residential provision so that they know how these pupils are progressing and can support their learning and development further. Teachers use the assessments to set targets for each pupil. These underpin lesson plans well, allowing teachers to use a good range of activities to meet each pupil's needs.

Pupils' work is neatly presented and regularly marked. Although most marking is very helpful, some does not indicate what pupils need to do to improve and reach their targets, or allow them to show how they have responded to this advice. Careful attention is paid to pupils' statements of special educational needs, and teaching ensures that requirements are fulfilled. All pupils have valuable individual plans for learning and the development of their behaviour. These are used effectively to help staff provide relevant support for each individual. However, these plans do not

always provide sharp and challenging learning targets that reflect pupils' academic abilities and aspirations, or behaviour targets that are clear about exactly what aspects must improve.

Teachers and staff, including those who support the courses taken by pupils attending further education college, make good use of their subject knowledge to enthuse and inspire pupils. They use ICT effectively to stimulate learning and promote pupils' motivation. Their expertise in working with pupils with autistic spectrum conditions is supported further by effective work with the school's educational psychologist and team of therapists. This helps staff to develop strategies that enable pupils to re-engage well with learning and make good progress. Teaching assistants provide excellent support to classes and to individual pupils. In almost all instances they work seamlessly with teachers, both by following plans and directions and by taking appropriate initiative. Their enthusiasm and the valuable relationships they develop with pupils have a very positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The school has developed a good curriculum for pupils in Key Stages 1 to 4. It is built around the National Curriculum subjects as well as personal, social and health education, citizenship and religious education. The curriculum provides a good basis for teaching and helps pupils to learn well, make good progress and use their developing literacy and numeracy skills across most subjects. The excellent range of activities provided for the residential pupils contributes very well to their personal development. Residential staff support pupils' academic progress effectively because of the good information provided by the school.

The curriculum for students in the sixth form adequately supports the continued development of their independent living skills and skills in communication, literacy and numeracy. It is effectively supplemented by the use of college courses that extend students' range of skills and help to prepare them for the next stage in their lives. Nevertheless, the curriculum does not yet provide the best possible opportunities for students in the sixth form to extend their independence and employability skills.

Physical education takes place in the school's gym and is supplemented by a range of outdoor activities, including the newly established and very enthusiastic football team of both boys and girls. Physical education has a good impact on improving individuals' health and fitness. Regular outings, such as to museums and local places of interest, extend pupils' knowledge and interest in their locality and in the world at large. Residential visits to an outdoor pursuits centre help them to develop friendships, improve their skills and willingness to learn. Professionals from occupational, speech and language, drama and music therapy services provide expert, helpful interventions for pupils as well as valuable advice to teachers and assistants. Appropriate advice about future options is provided for pupils through lessons, the annual reviews of their statements of special educational needs and visits from advisers.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good in both the school and residence. There is a high level of commitment to pupils' wellbeing and care and all the regulations for independent schools and national minimum standards for residential special schools are met. The wide range of suitable and effective policies and procedures to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety are implemented well throughout the provision. Effective and vigilant supervision ensures that pupils are safe at all times. Risk assessments, including those for visits outside school, are thorough. Potential dangers, such as those associated with the use of the internet, are effectively outlined to pupils and this helps to keep them safe. Fire drills and health and safety checks are rigorously implemented in both the school and residence. Pupils are very well supported to adopt a healthy lifestyle throughout the provision, for example, through sport and the varied, well-prepared meals throughout the day and evenings. The behaviour management policies are clear and effectively

implemented in the school and residence, with all incidents of inappropriate behaviour carefully recorded.

The school has good procedures for dealing with and eliminating bullying. The curriculum includes work on the unacceptability of bullying, and helps pupils to understand what it means. Day and residential pupils do not identify bullying as an issue and almost all are very clear they feel safe while at school. This is evident in the relaxed and good-humoured atmosphere during the school day and in the evenings. However, residential pupils are not sufficiently well informed of any out-of-school advocacy service that they can contact for independent advice should they wish to. The school works effectively with any parents and carers who have concerns, but they are generally extremely positive about the impact the school has on reducing their children's anxiety and helping them to overcome their difficulties. One commented that without the school her child 'would have remained suicidal'.

In the residential provision, detailed and well-understood health and safety, child protection and anti-bullying policies contribute effectively to pupils' welfare, health and safety. Clear procedures are in place for the administration of medication but occasional errors are noted due to this procedure not being completely followed at all times. Individual pupils' and activity-based risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated in conjunction with pupils themselves. This allows for well-managed, age-appropriate risks to be taken and for independence to be developed. Pupils' safety and welfare is further protected by the high staffing levels, which ensure experienced and qualified staff are available at all times. Feedback from residential pupils and their families about the impact of the provision is overwhelmingly positive.

Staff recruitment throughout the school is rigorous. All adults, including supply staff and college staff, undergo the required checks to ensure their suitability to work with children and young people. These are recorded as required. Staff training in child protection and first aid is thorough, and regularly updated within the recommended timescales. This includes suitable training, at the appropriate higher level, for the designated safeguarding officers.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management of the school and residential provision are good. They ensure that pupils are safe, achieve well and make good progress. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils in the school has increased significantly. The school has adapted well to the changes that have resulted from this because of the strong and effective leadership of the Principal, the headteacher and the head of care. They have recruited a staff team that shares their vision and high expectations. Ownership of the school has recently changed hands. The new proprietor provides active support and additional investment for staffing and for the school's premises and facilities which make a good contribution to pupils' achievement. The proprietor has ensured that all the regulations for independent schools and the national minimum standards for residential special schools are met.

The school knows itself well. Self-evaluation is accurate and clearly identifies strengths and areas for development, such as the better analysis of behavioural incidents in order to reduce them more rapidly. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise achievement since the previous inspection. There are effective arrangements for regularly observing and monitoring teaching. The resulting guidance to teachers and the targets set to help teachers to improve their work have had a positive impact on pupils' learning and development, enabling them to make good and sustained progress.

Good leadership and management of the residential provision have ensured that areas highlighted for improvement in the previous inspection have been properly dealt with. Residential leaders ensure that staffing levels are consistently high and that staff members are suitably qualified and receive ongoing training and professional development. As a result, the residential provision is safe

for pupils and staff are very well equipped to support pupils’ development and wellbeing. The residential provision is an integral part of the school and it is highly valued by pupils, their families and placing authorities. Effective monitoring by independent visitors and evaluative reports written by senior managers contribute to the ongoing development of the residential provision.

Appropriate, clear and informative records are maintained on residential pupils and are stored securely. These provide a good overview of how each individual's time is spent, as well as their development and progress. However, while records of sanctions and physical interventions are always completed, they do not always include sufficient detail, for example, as to why a sanction or intervention was necessary.

The premises and facilities of the school are good and suitable for their purpose. The residences are homely, well maintained and provide a good standard of accommodation for the residential pupils. Classrooms are well maintained and of a good size. Specialist teaching areas include appropriate facilities for therapy and a well-equipped food technology area. Appropriate equipment for science teaching is available and good arrangements for ICT are available throughout the school. All the required information for parents, carers and others is provided or made available through the school’s brochure and welcome pack or on the school’s website. The complaints procedure meets requirements and is effectively used by parents and carers to express any concerns they have about the school.

Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	Good
Residential pupils’ safety	Good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good

What inspection judgements mean

School and residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education and care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education and care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education and care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	136047
Social care unique reference number	SC 425708
Inspection number	422825
DfE registration number	873/6048

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special school for pupils with autistic spectrum and associated conditions
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Number of part time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	6
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Ltd
Chair	Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Tina Harris
Date of previous school inspection	October 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,000 to £95,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£90,000 to £135,000
Telephone number	01223 277438
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