

Inspection of Gretton School

Manor Farm Road, Girton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB3 0RX

Inspection dates: 14–16 January 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do well at this school. Leaders ensure that pupils' academic and personal development is central to the school's work. For many pupils, this is the first time they have felt settled. At Gretton, pupils have found a school where most are happy and can be themselves.

Pupils have positive relationships with adults. Staff make pupils feel valued from the moment they join the school. Staff carefully plan individual programmes so that pupils receive the help and support outlined in their education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Each morning, pupils receive a personal greeting from staff at the school gate. Adults are kind and skilful when speaking with pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide well for their academic achievement. Pupils gain qualifications from key stage 3. Pupils try hard with their learning in lessons. Adults support pupils well when required. Pupils build self-confidence and skills, so they can work with increasing independence. Leaders prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education or employment.

Pupils say that they have experienced bullying elsewhere in the past. The longer they remain at this school, pupils trust that adults will listen and act on any concerns they have. Older pupils understand that adults will not tolerate bullying of any sort. This is a school where pupils' differences are easily celebrated.

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

Pupils are valued. Leaders understand each individual's needs and plan each pupil's start at Gretton School carefully. These plans are regularly reviewed until pupils attend school full time. Often, pupils have not had an easy time previously in the education system. Many have lost years of education and some have significant gaps in their learning. Pupils make rapid gains at this school.

There is appropriate breadth to the curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to learn well, and leaders offer courses that appeal to pupils' interests. Pupils gain qualifications as soon as they are ready. Leaders want pupils to be successful and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Leaders prepare older pupils in the sixth form well for moving on to college, university or the workplace.

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge. They use assessment increasingly well before and during lessons. For younger pupils, teachers adapt the learning in lessons effectively, keeping pupils focused. By the time pupils are in the secondary phase, the need for one-to-one support reduces. Pupils are more confident and skilled to work independently or with their peers.

Leaders have introduced a team that delivers a range of therapeutic approaches into all aspects of learning and daily school life. For example, occupational therapy is

provided in classes. Pupils often have specialist equipment which helps them remain in their class to enjoy learning.

Pupils learn and recall facts well. In English, for example, pupils read well and are taught to read with expression. Leaders are upgrading reading books, so pupils develop a greater love of reading. Leaders have plans to introduce a new programme to teach phonics. This is so that all pupils experience a more consistent approach to learning the knowledge they need to read well.

In some subjects, such as science, leaders have ensured that there is a clear link in the curriculum from the primary phase into Years 7 and 8. The curriculum is planned and delivered effectively. However, the sequence of learning requires further refinement to ensure that all pupils learn well. This is particularly the case in subjects such as personal, social, health and emotional (PSHE) development between key stages 2 and 3.

The school provides a wealth of experience for pupils' personal and emotional development. Pupils especially enjoy their outdoor learning. Staff are trained and effectively support pupils to take measured risks with their learning. Pupils who become rangers take their responsibilities seriously. These pupils develop skills of leadership that are useful for their own future success.

Similarly, pupils develop leadership skills through their elected roles on the school council. Some pupils work with others from mainstream schools as part of the young leaders programme. In sports, pupils compete with pupils from other special schools. They compete to at least county standard in boccia.

Leaders are rightly proud of the residential trips that pupils experience. Older pupils have successfully travelled abroad to places such as Krakow. Younger pupils have opportunities to spend time away from home at an outdoor activity centre.

Pupils generally behave well. Pupils are supervised well at the start of the day and at breaktimes. Staff deal with any problems swiftly to prevent issues escalating. On occasion, adults have to intervene physically. Well-kept records show that the number of interventions is reducing over time. Staff and pupils are routinely offered time to talk about any incidents.

The proprietorial body ensures that leaders consistently meet the independent school standards. Its directors work closely with school leaders to ensure that pupils build knowledge and skills to achieve well. Directors continue to update the facilities for pupils. Currently, building works are well under way for the construction of new science, art, and design and technology specialist classrooms.

The views of parents and carers are very mixed. Many appreciate the work of school leaders and staff. They understand how well their children settle, learn and achieve over time. Yet, a significant minority would like to be more involved in the life of the school. Some parents would like improved communication about how well their child

is progressing and what is being taught. A few parents want to be reassured about recent staff changes and how leaders ensure that there is consistency in teaching.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding are appropriately trained. They have ensured that all staff are well trained and know how to identify and report any concerns they may have. School policies are appropriate. Staff use the school's system effectively.

Key staff know those pupils who are most vulnerable and work carefully with other agencies to provide support. The local authority has recently checked that appropriate systems and safety procedures are in place.

Leaders have good systems in place to check the suitability of staff to work with children.

Staff are trained in first aid and providing appropriately for pupils' complex medical needs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Curriculum leaders have ensured that their subjects are well planned. In some subjects, such as PSHE, pupils experience a different scheme of work when they move into the secondary school. Leaders should ensure that the transition in learning between key stages 2 and 3 is smoother.
- Some parents are not clear about the recent changes at the school. They want to understand what their child is learning and to receive more regular information about how well their child achieves academically. Leaders should provide parents with relevant information about the curriculum and pupils' achievement across the school.
- Leaders should continue to develop the teaching of phonics for younger pupils. Leaders need to continue providing more opportunities for more pupils to develop a love of reading for pleasure.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	136047
DfE registration number	873/6048
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10130170
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	119
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	17
Proprietorial body	Cavendish Education
Chair	Aatiff Hassan
Principal	Ian Thorsteinsson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,500 to £59,500
Telephone number	01223 277438
Website	www.grettonschool.com
Email address	info@grettonschool.com
Date of previous inspection	22–24 February 2017

Information about this school

- Since the previous standard inspection in February 2017, a new principal has been appointed. The principal commenced his role in September 2018.
- The principal has restructured the leadership team and appointed a number of new staff.
- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietorial body meet three times a year to provide governance for the school. There is a clear structure in place for the directors to quality assure the work of the school.

- Currently, there are no pupils in key stage 1.
- The school does not use alternative education provision.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Pupils are placed at the school by a number of local authorities. The main category of need is for high functioning autism and Asperger's syndrome. Pupils enter the school with increasingly complex emotional needs.
- Cambridgeshire local authority has recently carried out a review of the school. The evidence showed the school to have suitable systems and be compliant.
- A number of pupils are children looked after by the local authority.
- The school provides residential accommodation for some pupils in bungalows located on site.
- The school is in the process of building science, art, and design and technology specialist classrooms. The school site is large and safety arrangements are suitable.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The school has requested to increase the total number of pupils on roll from 124 to 150 through the 'material change' process.
- The outcome of this part of the inspection is that the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.
- This standard inspection was aligned with a residential inspection on the same dates.
- We met with the principal, assistant principals and other senior leaders. We also met with the newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the sixth-form leader and leaders responsible for career development.
- We met with leaders responsible for the school's therapeutic approaches and behaviour and welfare.

- We did deep dives in English, science, art and personal, social, health and emotional development. We met with leaders, visited lessons, checked pupils' work, and spoke with pupils and teachers in lessons. We reviewed curriculum plans.
- We checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and looked closely at documents relating to safeguarding presented by the school. We spoke with staff about their training. We spoke with pupils and parents about safety at school. We reviewed how well leaders ensure the suitability of staff that work with pupils and staff qualifications for their roles.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of Cambridgeshire local authority.
- A meeting was held with the Cavendish Education group managing director.
- We considered the 39 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- We spoke with pupils and took account of the 17 responses to their online survey.
- Parental views were evaluated through speaking directly with parents, considering recent school surveys and through the 58 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with their free-text comments.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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