

Inspection of Gretton School

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

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Attending Gretton School is life-changing for pupils. They join the school often having had a turbulent time. Many come with deep-rooted negative views of education. The transition to Gretton School can be a choppy ride. Pupils, though, are skilfully guided to navigate these rough waters with a 'real warmth'. They build trust in adults and quickly see themselves succeed. Their journey through school becomes smoother. There are bumps in the road, but pupils develop the strategies they need to overcome these successfully.

Highly positive relationships between adults and pupils, coupled with clear expectations, help pupils to behave well. Adults expect pupils to try hard and do their best, which they do. They work hard in lessons and know that adults are on hand to provide expert help and guidance when these are needed.

Pupils benefit greatly from a range of wider opportunities. Whether volunteering in the community, undertaking relevant work experience or taking part in expeditions, pupils undertake rich experiences to prepare them for later life. Pupils receive high-quality support with their mental health and anxiety, especially as they prepare to leave Gretton School. Pupils leave the school having achieved extremely well and are ready to face the world and embrace new adventures.

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

Pupils learn a broad and rich curriculum. Some pupils join the school having missed much education. Teachers provide precise support to help these pupils make up this lost ground. Adults use the information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to adapt the curriculum to meet the individual needs of pupils. As pupils move through key stage 3, they build on their knowledge and skills. For example, pupils successfully tackle more complex algebraic equations because they have much prior knowledge to draw on. Similarly, in art, pupils apply their knowledge around perspective, tone and line to produce high-quality artwork.

Teachers ask skilful questions to check pupils' understanding. Pupils' responses help teachers to adapt their explanations or the activities to ensure that pupils understand their work. Assessment is used well to ensure that pupils follow the right pathway for them. In key stage 4, pupils gain meaningful qualifications to help them in the next stage of their learning. These include GCSEs and A levels in the sixth form. This prepares pupils well for their next destination, such as studying at university. Many former pupils return to school to share their experiences with current pupils. This helps current pupils see what they can aspire to achieve.

Pupils at the early stages of learning to read are very well supported. Adults are highly skilled in teaching phonics. Pupils read a range of books that are closely matched to their knowledge of phonics. This helps them to practise their new-found reading skills and to become more confident and fluent readers.

Pupils' personal development is catered for extremely well. They benefit enormously from a carefully designed programme that helps them develop the social and emotional skills needed for the future. Pupils are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and try new things. Much of this is targeted specifically on the needs of individual pupils, helping them learn and develop important life skills. Pupils have a well-rounded understanding of how they are all different and they celebrate these differences regularly. The therapy provision in school complements the academic and personal development curriculum. The school provides these experiences in a coherently planned way. These considerably strengthen the school's offer to pupils.

The school keeps a close eye on behaviour. Staff record and review behaviour incidents in a meticulous manner. This means that precise steps can be taken to support individual pupils. These are proactive and help to reduce anxiety in pupils. This results in pupils being better prepared to regulate their own emotions. This in turn means that incidents of dysregulated behaviour are rare.

Students in the sixth form study a range of subjects and courses. Each is matched closely to the needs and aspiration of students. Students conduct themselves extremely well. They are treated as young adults and live up to this responsibility. Social times are calm. Pupils enjoy interacting with one another and with staff but also know that it is okay to spend time alone in a quiet space if they need to. Pupils develop their independence. Whether this be through independent study or independent travel, there is a clear pathway for pupils to help them into adulthood.

Leaders provide well-tailored careers guidance for pupils. This becomes more individualised as pupils move into key stage 4 and the sixth form. Work experience helps pupils to try out careers for the future and see what the wider world has to offer them. Pupils benefit from this high-quality provision. This helps to prepare pupils for the future.

The school makes sure that the site is safe for pupils and staff. Regular and rigorous health and safety checks are made. If minor issues are identified, the school rectifies these swiftly. The school identifies relevant risks that may be faced by pupils and staff, such as when using tools and equipment or when travelling on educational visits. Sensible mitigations are in place to reduce these risks.

The proprietor body works in a strategic way. It keeps a close eye on the provision, ensuring that leaders are challenged to make the school even better. It balances this with the right levels of support. The strong oversight ensures that the school meets all the independent school standards. The buildings and extensive school grounds are well kept and safe. They provide pupils with a rich environment in which to thrive. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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| Unique reference number | 136047 |
| DfE registration number | 873/6048 |
| Local authority | Cambridgeshire |
| Inspection number | 10299211 |
| 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 | 131 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 23 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Cavendish Education |
| Chair | Aatif Hassan |
| Headteacher | Beth Elkins |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £47,191 to £69,663 |
| Telephone number | 01223 277438 |
| Website | www.grettonschool.com |
| Email address | info@grettonschool.com |
| Date of previous inspection | 14 to 16 January 2020 |

Information about this school

- The school operates on two sites, which are a short walk apart. Pupils in key stage 2 and key stage 3 are based on the Manor Farm site. Pupils in key stage 4, as well as students in the sixth form, are based at The Rectory, 65 High Street, Girton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB3 0QD.
- The school does not have a governing body. Governance is provided by the directors of the proprietor body.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- All pupils have an EHC plan for autism.
- The previous standard inspection took place in January 2020. At this time, the school was judged to be good. In March 2023, the school received a material change inspection. This was as a result of the school requesting an increase in the number of pupils on roll from 119 to 200. This was approved by the Department for Education.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The current headteacher took up her post in January 2021. The previous headteacher is now executive principal of the four schools, known as The Newcome Group, of which this school is a part.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, and art and design. 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 met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a range of staff. The lead inspector met with the executive principal, the head of compliance and the chief executive officer of the proprietor body. The lead inspector also held telephone conversations with representatives of three local authorities.
- Inspectors toured the premises at both school sites to review the suitability of school buildings. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents and carers through responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, as well as in interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lynne Williams

His Majesty's Inspector

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