

Inspection of Wetheringsett Manor School

Church Street, Wetheringsett-cum-Brockford, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QX

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 November and 8 and 9 November
2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The school provides a safe haven for pupils, many of whom have had long periods of absence or turbulence in their previous school experiences. Staff care about pupils and prioritise getting pupils settled and ready to learn. Individualised approaches to managing pupils' behaviour and anxiety mean that pupils attend lessons and work hard.

Pupils enjoy school. They talk positively about their lessons. However, pupils do not all get taught as well as they might in some subjects. Pupils do not receive work that matches their age and needs well enough.

The expansive grounds provide many opportunities for outdoor learning and developing skills such as riding a bike. Most pupils work well in small-class settings, cooperating and respecting each other. When pupils need more support, they are provided with individual teaching and support, drawing on their own needs and interests.

Parents and carers are pleased with the school's provision. Pupils feel well supported by staff and know whom to talk to if they were to be bullied.

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

Since the school opened, the number of pupils who attend has grown rapidly. The headteacher joined at the end of the last academic year. Many staff are also new to the school. Staff have not yet had sufficient training or support to deliver the planned curriculum as effectively as intended. As a result of all these changes, the delivery of the curriculum is not yet having the impact that it needs to.

Assessment systems and a curriculum are in place for Years 7 to 11. However, teachers do not use all the information available to them to plan appropriate next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils have gaps in their learning. Teachers are aware of these, but the activities that they set do not help pupils to catch up well. Sometimes, work or activities are too easy or aimed at much younger pupils. There is not yet a well-planned curriculum for Years 12 and 13 for students who are ready to access provision after qualifications at key stage 4.

Pupils are taught to read and understand different texts in their English lessons. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to write at length, and they enjoy this. Leaders have introduced daily time for pupils to read. The books available are of high quality and interest to pupils. Teachers recommend books to pupils based on knowledge of their interests. However, this reading programme is not being used consistently, and as a result, some pupils do not get the same opportunities to read as others.

Plans for careers advice are in place, but have not yet been taught. Leaders have introduced a vocational curriculum that both engages pupils' interest and also enables them to gain awards, for example in fishing.

Small teams of staff work together to plan out individual behaviour and support plans for pupils, who all have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff meet routinely to share information and to plan for pupils' ongoing and specific needs. This means that all pupils are known well by all staff. They are skilfully able to de-escalate when pupils need support. As a result, pupils are able to manage a range of situations, and behave well. Support staff manage behaviour well, but their role in supporting pupils in their academic learning is not as well developed yet.

Pupils' personal development is woven through everything the school does. There are regular discussions in class about subjects such as respect and tolerance. Pupils elected a school council that influences decisions made about the school, for example most recently about the books bought for the library.

Pupils have opportunities to learn off site, for example in visiting Banham Zoo to complete a photography project. They develop social skills by working together on projects in the woodland areas. The physical education curriculum is enhanced by using local swimming and rock-climbing facilities.

Local governance from the proprietor brings in a range of external partners to check on provision and standards. Leaders and teachers are working with others in the group to develop their practice. Staff feel well supported by leaders and are positive about the recent changes and improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carefully track all issues that could put pupils at risk. Staff are well trained and know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils get any help they need in a timely way.

Pupils know about keeping themselves safe and whom to ask for advice if they need it. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the relationships and sex education curriculums are adapted as needed for individuals.

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

- The curriculum is at an early stage of implementation across all key stages. In some subjects, teachers are not matching what they cover closely enough to pupils' age and ability. This means that pupils are not always able to make as much progress as they could through the chosen topics. Leaders need to ensure that teachers are able to plan and deliver learning that enables pupils to learn and remember more over time.
- Support staff currently focus mostly on supporting pupils' behaviour. They have not yet had enough training to ensure that they are confident in supporting pupils to access the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not make the progress in the

curriculum of which they are capable. Leaders need to ensure that support staff have appropriate training to give them the skills to support all aspects of pupils' 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.

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	148058
DfE registration number	935/6027
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10203410
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Mark Jeffries
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,000 to £79,000
Telephone number	01449 703935
Website	www.wetheringsettmanor.co.uk
Email address	office@wetheringsettmanor.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened on 3 November 2020. It provides specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils also have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- All pupil places are funded by their local authorities.
- The school is registered for 11–18 provision. Very small numbers of sixth-form-aged students have been on roll at the school since it opened. Inspectors did not make a judgement on provision in the sixth form during this inspection.
- The school uses Acorn Digital Learning to provide off-site remote education for a very small number of pupils.
- The school occupies three buildings, all on the same site. The converted 'Manor' house provides classrooms and dining and social spaces for the majority of pupils. The 'Cottage' is used for much smaller groups or individual tuition, mainly for those pupils with ASD. The 'Stables' is used for administration and first-aid facilities. There is a range of other buildings on site that will be brought into use in time, including rooms that are already ready for fitting out as fitness spaces.
- The school now uses supply staff, which is a change from the pre-registration inspection.
- The school has had very few days lost to closure and remained open for pupils during periods of COVID-19 restrictions.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the head of education and the regional director as the proprietor's representative. They met pupils, teachers and support staff. They spoke with a representative of Norfolk local authority.
- Inspectors did deep dives into English, mathematics, history and PSHE. As part of these, they spoke to subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They scrutinised curriculum plans, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

- Inspectors also visited a range of other lessons, including for the vocational curriculum. They spent time observing pupils' social times and a staff briefing.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record and a range of safeguarding files. They spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the six responses to the parent survey, 17 responses to the pupil survey and 15 responses to the staff survey.
- This inspection was paused on 3 November and completed on 8 and 9 November 2021.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Dick

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kim Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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