

Inspection of Wetheringsett Manor School

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

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

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?

Pupils join Wetheringsett Manor having experienced significant disruption to their education. Many have not been in school for long periods of time. Pupils receive high-quality support from staff, who care deeply for the pupils. The strong and respectful relationships between everyone in school means pupils are well supported to get back on track.

Pupils play a big part in creating a warm school community. From the 'fiver challenge' to selling bacon rolls, pupils work to raise money for charities, some that are close to their hearts. The visit to the local primary school with Christmas hampers made by pupils, along with selling produce from the allotment, helps pupils to make highly positive contributions to the local community.

Difference is celebrated; pupils know it is 'Ok to be themselves'. The rare instances of bullying are sorted quickly. Pupils do not tolerate discriminatory language between peers. They are safe in school and feel safe to speak up when they feel something is wrong.

Adults have high expectations of pupils. Most live up to these expectations, behaving well and working hard. When pupils' behaviour falls below what is expected, adults guide and support them well to put things right.

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

Since the previous standard inspection, leaders have worked with a steely determination to bring about improvement. The staff team works as one to ensure pupils receive the best deal they can. The curriculum is ambitious; pupils learn well. Leaders set out the important knowledge pupils need to know across the curriculum. Many pupils go on to achieve GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics. Leader's use of curriculum 'learning snakes' provides pupils with a clear picture of where they are in their learning journeys.

Teachers are expert in the subjects that they teach. They present information clearly and check to make sure pupils understand new ideas and concepts. Many pupils join the school with significant gaps in their knowledge. Teachers adapt the curriculum to help pupils learn what they need to know to help them to catch up. This is also the case with reading. Pupils who find reading a challenge are provided with much support to help them become confident readers. Leaders are currently refining the strategies they use to break targets in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan into smaller steps for individual pupils. This is a work in progress. Currently, some individual pupils' plans do not set out precisely what they need to know, remember and do. This means that some activities and intervention sessions do not precisely focus on exactly what pupils need to learn to achieve well.

Leaders have identified with precision exactly which personal, social and economic skills pupils need in order to be able to develop into young adults with full access to

the world. Through targeted actions, they ensure that pupils learn and can use these skills. Pupils flourish as a result. By the time they leave, they are markedly better equipped to succeed in the world. The 'Wetheringsett 101' is coherently planned and builds through the school. Working through these pupils develop a rich set of real-life skills that they are supported to master, such as learning first aid, assembling flat packed furniture and preparing a meal. Pupils themselves recognise how and why these skills help them in school, at home and when out and about.

Leaders provide well-tailored careers guidance for pupils. This becomes more individualised as pupils move into key stage 4. Work experience helps pupils to try out careers for the future and see what the wider world has to offer for them.

Pupils have highly positive attitudes to their education. Although this is often not the case when pupils join the school, the guidance and support from adults and fellow pupils, quickly turn this around. Where pupils struggle with their behaviour, adults provide exceptional support to help them to succeed, including from the highly skilled therapy team. Attendance is high.

The proprietor and local governors work closely to ensure that leaders are challenged to make the school even better. 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 learn. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Staff are proud to work in school. They receive much support from senior leaders, especially around their workload and well-being. The 'four-day week' approach is highly valued by staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is culture of vigilance in school. Staff are well trained to be able to spot signs that a pupil may be at risk. They report their concerns to leaders. Any concerns are followed up swiftly. Leaders work effectively with external agencies if they need to. All pre-employment checks on staff are carried out and recorded accurately.

Pupils are well supported to stay safe. The PSHE curriculum provides them with useful help and guidance to navigate through the potential risks they face.

Members of the proprietary body make regular checks to ensure that leaders do all they should to keep pupils safe.

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

- In some cases, the individual targets pupils are working towards are broad and do not exactly identify the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to develop. This means that, at times, activities do not always match the intended learning. Leaders should ensure that they fully implement their planned changes to make sure individual targets precisely set out what pupils need to know, remember and be able to do.

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	148058
DfE registration number	935/6027
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10267085
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	42
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 703 935
Website	www.wetheringsettmanor.co.uk
Email address	office@wetheringsettmanor.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	2 to 9 November 2021

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 EHC plan.
- All pupil places are funded by their local authorities.
- The school is registered for provision catering for 42 pupils aged between 11 and 18 years.
- The school occupies three buildings, all on the same site. The converted 'Manor House' provides classrooms, dining and social spaces for the majority of pupils. The 'Cottage' is used for much smaller groups or for individual tuition, mainly for those pupils with ASD. The 'Stables' building is used for administration and first-aid facilities. There are two newly refurbished buildings which house a sports hall, music studio, food technology room and a science laboratory.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in November 2021, when it was judged to require improvement. In October 2022, the school received an additional inspection during which the school was judged as having met all of the independent school standards that were checked during the inspection.

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.

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, head of education, the regional director and a number of other leaders. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the chair of the proprietary board. The inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of Norfolk local authority and a representative of Suffolk local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and PSHE. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, 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.

- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, scrutinised safeguarding records and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors toured the premises to review the suitability of school buildings.
- Inspectors considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted surveys for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The standard inspection was combined with a material change inspection to consider if the school is likely to continue to meet the independent school standards if they increase the maximum number of pupils from 42 to 72.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

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 outcome of this part of the inspection is **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school is implemented.**

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils, *Paragraphs 7, 7a, 7b, 11, 12, 14, 16*

- The school has appropriate systems and processes in place to keep pupils safe. The school's safeguarding policy includes all statutory information. This is published on the school's website. Leaders have ensured that all relevant health and safety requirements are complied with, including regular fire safety checks. Risk assessments are appropriate and contain sufficient evaluation of risk. The school has a sufficient number of staff, who are well trained to carry out their roles effectively.

Part 4. Suitability of staff

- All pre-employment checks are carried out and recorded diligently. The proprietary board has strong oversight on these checks to make sure they comply with all requirements.

Part 5. Premises and accommodation

- The two new building are complete and ready to be used as a science laboratory, music studio, sports hall and food technology room. This accommodation has been completed to a high standard and all required checks have been completed.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management

- Leaders, including the members of the proprietor body and local governance board, have the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their roles and to ensure the independent school standards are met consistently.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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