

Inspection of The Gables Learning Centre

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 January 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

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

What is it like to attend this school?

The Gables Learning Centre has a highly committed staff team. Their work has a profound positive impact on the way pupils value and engage in their learning. Many pupils have had a traumatic start to life and have not been able to successfully access learning before coming here. Staff quickly build exceptionally strong relationships with pupils who appreciate that the staff genuinely care about them. Pupils quickly relax and feel safe in this school.

The school has high aspirations for its pupils. There is an ambitious curriculum that leads to formal qualifications, including GCSEs. For many pupils, this is their first experience of being able to study towards any form of qualification. Pupils are, rightly, proud of their achievements.

Pupils love coming to school and attend often. Pupils make exceptional progress in managing their behaviour. They begin to enjoy learning and grow in confidence during their time here.

The school has an exceptionally rich and wide range of opportunities and experiences that go beyond the academic. Pupils enjoy these opportunities. Pupils learn how to act in a wide range of different situations and this helps to prepare them for life after school. For example, some pupils take responsibility for stocking the rewards vending machine, which is very popular.

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

The proprietor body provides the school with effective monitoring, support and challenge. It ensures that the independent school standards and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are met. Talented and dedicated leaders create a positive school culture. Everyone is valued, and pupils flourish. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working here. The school is committed to supporting their well-being and managing their workload.

The school has thorough and effective ways of deciding how to support pupils' special educational needs. This starts from the moment a pupil has an agreed placement. An integrated staff team works together to plan and deliver the support a pupil needs. All staff know the agreed support strategies and use them well to help pupils. As a result, all pupils access the same curriculum and make good progress.

The school has thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. The school is clear about the order in which it wants pupils to learn new knowledge. However, in a few subjects, teachers do not follow the curriculum closely enough. As a result, pupils do not have the same access to a rich and broad curriculum in these subjects. Where this happens, pupils are not as well prepared for their next stage in education as they could be.

Staff value the extensive training they receive and have good subject knowledge. Teachers plan activities that spark the pupils' imagination and interest. They use resources effectively to help pupils understand new and challenging concepts and remember more of the curriculum. This is helping to give pupils a good quality of education and, often for the first time, enjoy learning.

In the main, leaders use assessments well to understand pupils' starting points when they join the school. However, in a few subjects, these assessments do not provide staff with the information they need to adapt lessons and provide work that matches pupils' abilities. Furthermore, in a few subjects, the checks staff make on pupils' learning do not always match the intended curriculum content closely enough. This means that the school does not always have an accurate view of what pupils have learned.

Helping pupils to learn to read is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils read often from a wider range of appropriate texts. Pupils who struggle to read receive swift and effective support. For those pupils at the earliest stages of reading, this will include phonics lessons and books matched to their phonics skills.

The school is consistent in the way that it supports pupils' behaviour. Staff take time to understand what pupils might be trying to communicate through their behaviours. They then give the pupil time and support to recover. Pupils know the high expectations that the school has about how they should behave towards each other, the staff and the environment. Pupils do all they can to meet these expectations. The school expects pupils to complete any unfinished work at the end of the day, and they do. Pupils learn from their mistakes because staff help them to understand why it is wrong and how to put it right.

Exceptionally well-planned curriculum subjects like personal, social, health and economic education support pupils to develop the personal and social skills that they need. The school has creative and innovative approaches to help pupils understand and develop respect and tolerance for different cultures. For example, all pupils have their own extensive individual and tailored plans of trips and experiences. The school teaches pupils the resilience skills they need to cope with the traumas they may have experienced and to be ready to take an active role in their future.

The exceptional careers programme helps pupils learn about and experience different jobs and work skills they need. A unique initiative provides pupils access to independent career advice for the rest of their lives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In a few subjects, staff do not follow the planned curriculum closely enough. Consequently, in some subjects, pupils are not accessing the full range of activities leaders have planned. In addition, a few pupils are not building the knowledge that the school expects them to learn over time. This slows pupils' learning and means some pupils are not as well prepared for their next stage in education as they could be. The school needs to ensure that all pupils access the full curriculum as leaders intend.
- In a few subjects, the assessments used do not match the curriculum closely enough. In these subjects, assessments do not help teachers plan work that is well matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, the school does not have an accurate view of what pupils have learned and is not able to identify any gaps in learning in these subjects. The school should make refinements to its assessment processes so it has the information needed to provide activities that are well matched to pupils' needs.

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 | 149196 |
| DfE registration number | 893/6046 |
| Local authority | Shropshire |
| Inspection number | 10299266 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent day school |
| Age range of pupils | 7 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 14 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Witherslack Group Ltd |
| Chair | Richard Wilkins |
| Headteacher | Louise Brown |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £115,674 |
| Telephone number | 01902 916950 |
| Website | www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/the-gables-learning-centre |
| Email address | brown.louise@witherslackgroup.co.uk |

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 19 January 2023.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including social, emotional and mental health needs, moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and autism.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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 first routine inspection the school 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 met with members of the proprietor body and members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also met with teachers, teaching assistants and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors considered the school's curriculum documentation, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their wider experiences of school.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, risk assessments, attendance information and behaviour logs.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the staff survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Amanda Green, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024