

Gryphon School

Quorn Hall, Meynell Road, Quorn, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 8BQ

Inspection dates 17–19 May 2016

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- All staff, under the strong direction of the headteacher, create a supportive, nurturing culture that enables pupils to modify their behaviour and engage well with their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour improves significantly while they are at the school because of the close support they receive from the adults who work with them.
- Pupils' strong, positive relationships with each other and with staff are a key ingredient to the school's success.
- Senior leaders closely monitor teaching to ensure that teachers' performance is of the highest quality and secures outstanding progress.
- Teachers develop activities that engage fully with pupils and enable them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills well.
- From often very low starting points, almost all pupils make outstanding progress, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Children in the care of the local authority make outstanding progress across all years due to the effective support they receive from all staff.
- The well-considered curriculum provides pupils with comprehensive opportunities to develop their literacy and mathematical skills, as well as their understanding of a wide range of subjects.
- Senior leaders place a high priority on the well-being of staff who respond positively to this support. Staff work effectively as a team in supporting their pupils.
- Senior leaders work closely with a wide range of external agencies to support their pupils' welfare.
- The school has developed strong relationships with parents, carers and those local authorities that have referred children to the school. Because of this, pupils make significant progress, particularly in developing their sense of self-worth.
- There is a comprehensive range of enrichment activities that meet the needs of the pupils, and enables them to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. Pupils' safety and well-being are clear priorities of all staff.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop pupils' spiritual understanding by organising more visits to places of religious worship.
- Embed those strategies the school currently adopts to identify the pupils who, due to the rapid progress they make while at the school, could undertake higher-level qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by her senior leaders, has created a nurturing and supportive culture that enables pupils to improve their behaviour significantly while at the school. The headteacher has high expectations of both her staff and her pupils. In engaging with pupils and staff, she models these high expectations and the nurturing approach that she expects all members of the school's community to adopt. Her actions firmly endorse the school's ethos that every child is a 'precious entity'. Her staff and the pupils follow her lead. Pupils are appreciative of this inclusive culture and of the support they receive. On a daily basis and over time, the pupils demonstrate significant improvements in their behaviour, in how they manage challenging situations and in how they engage with others.
- The staff work effectively as a team to support their pupils and each other. Daily briefing meetings, both before and after the school day, provide adults with the opportunity to discuss each pupil's welfare. Staff value each other's contributions to these meetings. These meetings enable all adults to develop effective strategies to help pupils to manage any challenging situation that may emerge during that, or the following, day. Staff also use these meetings well to support each other. The creation of a supportive ethos among her staff to secure their well-being is one of the headteacher's clear priorities. Because of this, staff are passionate about what they do. They support each other effectively, listen to each other sensitively and work with each other cooperatively, to the great benefit of the pupils.
- The designated teacher for children who are in the care of the local authority closely monitors the achievement and welfare of these pupils. These pupils receive further support where this is necessary. The designated teacher comprehensively checks the impact of this support. He makes regular reports to the local authority. These reports provide a precise account of how effectively the school is using the additional government funding. The close support for these pupils enables them to make outstanding progress, both academically and in their personal development.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the school's provision. Their evaluation is precise, while their plans for improving the school's provision are detailed and appropriate. In keeping with the school's inclusive culture, senior leaders ensure that they take into account staff's views when drawing up the school's improvement plan. Consequently, there is a clear drive on every adult's part to ensure that the school's provision meets the needs of each pupil and secures their progress.
- Senior leaders undertake detailed monitoring of the quality of teaching. This enables them to identify quickly where teachers' performance does not meet their high expectations. On the rare occasions this occurs, the teachers receive close support. Consequently, they make rapid improvements in their performance. Senior leaders' continued monitoring ensures that the teachers maintain this improvement.
- All staff receive regular opportunities to undertake training that focuses on the quality of teaching and the care and support for pupils. For example, staff work closely together to share best practice to adopt appropriate strategies to support their pupils' behaviour. Teachers and teaching assistants regularly discuss pupils' work to ensure that their assessment of pupils' levels of understanding is accurate. Senior leaders encourage teachers and teaching assistants to discuss strategies they can adopt to ensure that pupils make significant progress in their learning. To this end, the school has engaged with other educational organisations to ensure that all adults learn from their best practice.
- Senior leaders regularly review pupils' achievement. Through this, they effectively monitor the progress pupils make and quickly identify those who are falling behind. Where this is the case, teachers put into place further support to enable these pupils to catch up quickly. Through their close checking of pupils' work, senior leaders have ensured that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate.
- The well-considered curriculum provides pupils with a comprehensive range of opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across all subjects. The thematic approach enables teachers to design lessons that engage with pupils' interests and secure their literacy and mathematical skills. Enrichment activities enhance the curriculum. These enable pupils to explore in greater depth their individual interests and to secure their skills further.
- Where appropriate, the curriculum is effective in enabling pupils to access accredited qualifications. Senior leaders are rightly reviewing this, to ensure that pupils are able to achieve higher-level qualifications.
- There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to secure their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of fundamental British values. The curriculum leader carefully tracks those opportunities that pupils experience within their lessons. Enrichment activities further enhance this development. For example, pupils celebrate different religious festivals and explore the notions of democracy and law making. In one lesson the inspector saw, pupils considered the imminent

referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union. Senior leaders rightly recognise that they can further develop pupils' spiritual understanding through visits to a wider range of places of worship.

- The headteacher, supported by all staff, is fully committed to promoting equality throughout the school. For example, all members of the school community treat each other as equals. Adults and pupils alike treat each other with mutual respect. Furthermore, staff sensitively challenge any gender, racial or sexual stereotyping that they may witness. This promotion of equality has created high levels of trust between all members of the school's community.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff receive comprehensive training relating to safeguarding, using resources that the local authority has created. All staff have received training related to topics including child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and preventing radicalisation. Staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. They are aware of the different signs of abuse, and know their duties in relation to reporting any safeguarding concerns they may have. This applies to safeguarding concerns relating to pupils' welfare as well as any inappropriate conduct by adults.
- Where safeguarding issues arise, the designated safeguarding lead works closely with appropriate local agencies. These agencies include the local authority, and those local authorities who have children in their care at the school. The designated safeguarding lead maintains comprehensive details of each incident. Senior leaders also communicate regularly with parents where they have concerns relating to a pupils' well-being. This includes undertaking home visits. Those parents who expressed a view spoke highly of the contact they have with the school.
- The school's recruitment procedures are thorough. They provide senior leaders with comprehensive opportunities to check the appropriateness of those individuals who apply to work at the school. This includes checking on any gaps in an individual's employment history.
- Senior leaders take the safety of their pupils extremely seriously. Members of staff supervise pupils' arrival and departure from the secure school site, to ensure that pupils arrive safely, and leave with the appropriate adult. Furthermore, senior leaders undertake thorough risk assessments for each activity pupils undertake, both on the school site and during school trips.
- Where a pupil leaves within the school year, senior leaders carry out thorough checks to confirm that the pupil attends their next school. Senior leaders continue to make contact with pupils once they have left the school, to check on their welfare and to celebrate their successes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers take great care to ensure that they plan activities that engage with their pupils and encourage them to learn. The close support that all adults offer pupils, both within the classroom and during social time, enables pupils to make outstanding progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. This support is a vital ingredient in ensuring that pupils develop a greater sense of self-worth.
- Both teachers and teaching assistants regularly assess pupils' understanding. They ask pertinent questions to establish how much pupils understand and to provide opportunities to clarify any misconceptions. Where learning is most effective, teachers ensure that the tasks they set pupils meet their individual needs, while at the same time challenging their skills and understanding. Pupils respond well to this mixture of support and challenge. Because of this, they make significant improvements in their understanding and their sense of self-worth, both within individual lessons and over time.
- At the end of each day, adults work closely with pupils to review the learning that they have achieved that day and the skills that they have developed. Pupils engage well with this process. They are able to develop confidence in their skills as a result. For example, the feedback pupils receive enables them to consider how they might improve their approach to their work. This feedback also enables teachers to plan tasks for the following day that build upon, and secure, pupils' understanding.
- There is a strong focus on the development of pupils' reading skills. In the lower years, teachers work effectively with pupils to develop their use of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to sound out words. Senior leaders regularly assess all pupils' reading skills. Where they identify pupils who are falling behind, they provide further support, particularly using one-to-one tuition. Consequently, almost all pupils catch up quickly in relation to their ability to read. Those pupils who read to the inspector, for example, read well, soundly using the skills they had learnt to read more-challenging words. In discussing what they had read, they demonstrated clear comprehension of the text.
- Teachers work well with teaching assistants to ensure that pupils receive the support they require to make progress in their understanding. In all lessons that the inspector observed, teaching assistants worked closely with pupils on a one-to-one basis, or in small groups, to support these pupils in their

learning. They asked carefully considered questions and provided appropriate praise. Consequently, the pupils engaged with their learning and developed a secure understanding of the topic they were studying.

- Adults work closely with pupils in workshop-based lessons to ensure that pupils use tools safely and well. Adults ask questions to check pupils' understanding of how safely they are working.
- Adults run a wide range of enrichment activities that enable pupils to secure their skills and further develop their sense of self-worth and their confidence. Such activities include ballet club, bibliography club and the opportunity to act as volunteers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- In lessons, pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement in their learning. This is because they are able to complete tasks that meet their individual needs and that directly link to their personal experience or interests. Almost all pupils the inspector spoke with in lessons talked with enthusiasm about their work.
- Those pupils that the inspector met with said that they feel safe at the school and that they have an adult they can speak with should they have a concern. They all said that they are confident that the adult will listen to and help them.
- All parents and members of staff who expressed a view agree that the pupils are safe at the school.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber, homophobic, racial and physical bullying. They also have a secure understanding of the difference between bullying and the breakdown in friendships. Those pupils who the inspector met said that bullying at the school is rare. However, when it does occur, they said staff deal with it effectively. The school's records demonstrate that, on the rare occasions pupils demonstrate bullying behaviour, senior leaders respond with rigour. They analyse incidents to identify any specific patterns of behaviour and provide appropriate support.
- Pupils receive effective opportunities to develop an understanding of healthy living. For example, pupils work closely with the catering staff in preparing food, through which they learn about nutrition. There are also vibrant displays within the kitchen that reinforce the need to eat healthily. Pupils are able to develop further their sense of self-worth through their greater understanding of how to lead healthy lives.
- Pupils know how to stay safe, including online.
- Staff work closely with parents and carers to support the personal development of their children. The parents and representatives of local authorities who expressed a view were most appreciative of the regular, detailed communication that the school provides them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The atmosphere around the school, both in lessons and during social times, is one of calm and composure. Pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are good. Adult supervision at social times enables pupils to engage in meaningful conversations that develop their confidence and communication skills. This supervision also enables staff to gauge pupils' emotional well-being, and provide the appropriate support where necessary.
- Where a pupil displays challenging behaviours, the staff work effectively to enable the pupil to modify their behaviour. Adults' careful questioning, their close listening and their sensitive body language enable pupils to reconsider their behaviour and to adopt appropriate strategies to manage their emotions. Consequently, situations that could prove highly volatile are quickly resolved. On these occasions, pupils can re-engage quickly with their learning or with other members of the school community.
- The school's comprehensive behaviour records clearly demonstrate that pupils' behaviour significantly improves during their time at the school. This is due to the supportive strategies that staff use to engage with pupils, including the therapy opportunities which pupils receive. The pupils the inspector met are appreciative of the sensitive way in which adults manage those occasions where pupils have trouble in handling their emotions. These pupils are clear that their own behaviour has improved significantly because of the support they receive while at the school.
- All staff who expressed a view agree that leaders and staff manage pupils' behaviour well.
- Those parents who the inspector met all agree that the behaviour of their child has improved significantly in the time they have been in the school. For some, the improvement has been significant in a relatively short space of time. Those parents who spoke with the inspector are clear that the improvement in their child's behaviour at school is also evident at home and in the local community.

- Attendance at the school is high. The proportion of pupils who are absent from school is well below national levels, including those pupils who are regularly absent. This is because of the school's strong support for the pupils, as well as the pupils' strong desire to be in school to learn.
- Pupils engage well with visitors to the school. They are polite and well mannered.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- Due to their past educational experience, almost all pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that are below those expected of their age or for their stage in education. From these low starting points, almost all pupils make outstanding progress in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills across the broad curriculum that they study. This is because of the high level of support that they receive from all adults at the school, and the outstanding teaching.
- The proportion of pupils across all age ranges who make more than the progress expected of them in English, mathematics and science is significantly above national levels. This includes those pupils who have special educational needs or disability. These high levels of progress are due to the outstanding teaching and support pupils benefit from.
- The progress of children who are in the care of the local authority is similar to that of other pupils within the school. Given their stage of education, the very large majority of children looked after make more than the progress expected of them in English, mathematics and science. This is due to the close support that they receive from all staff.
- The most-able pupils make outstanding progress. The proportion of most-able pupils who make more than the progress expected of them in English, mathematics and science is significantly above national levels. This is because these pupils receive work that challenges and stretches them. This is indicative of the high expectations that the headteacher and her staff have of these pupils.
- A very large majority of pupils make rapid progress in their reading skills while at the school. This is due to the close support they receive in developing their reading skills. Senior leaders' early identification of any weaknesses that pupils may have in reading ensures that these pupils receive prompt support.
- Where appropriate, pupils successfully complete accredited qualifications in those subjects that prepare them for the next stage in their education or training. Senior leaders make sure that pupils complete qualifications appropriate to their level of ability. Senior leaders are rightly reviewing this provision, to ensure that, where appropriate, the most-able pupils are able to complete higher-level qualifications.
- All pupils leave the school to progress to sustained placements in further education or apprenticeships. Staff work closely with pupils to prepare them for the next stage in their education. Senior leaders ensure that comprehensive arrangements are in place to support pupils as they prepare to leave the school and attend further education. This support includes maintaining contact with the pupils once they have left the school, both to check on their well-being and to celebrate their success. The support staff provide to these pupils helps to ensure their later success.

School details

Unique reference number	135530
Inspection number	10006067
DfE registration number	8566021

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6–17 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Proprietor	Miss Christina Church
Headteacher	Miss Christina Church
Annual fees (day pupils)	£46,350–£61,250
Telephone number	07833 623420
Email address	gryphonschool@gmail.com
Date of previous inspection	9–10 October 2012

Information about this school

- Gryphon School is a small coeducational school.
- The proportion of pupils who are from ethnic minority groups is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is significantly above the national average.
- A significant proportion of pupils are children who are in the care of the local authority. The school has pupils who are in the care of four local authorities.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.
- Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on the school roll has almost doubled.
- The school moved to its new site in 2014.
- Pupils have lessons in small classes of mixed-age groups.
- There is no governing body. There is a single proprietor.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector undertook eight joint lesson observations with the senior leader responsible for teaching and learning. These lesson observations covered all teaching groups. The lead inspector also listened to four pupils read and observed a one-to-one support session.
- The lead inspector looked at pupils' books, both within lessons and as a separate activity. He conducted the separate activity with the senior leader responsible for teaching and learning.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the curriculum leader, a group of teachers and three parents.
- The lead inspector took into account the views of four parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the three parents the inspector met in person. The inspector also took into account the views expressed by two of the four local authorities who have referred children within their care to the school.
- The lead inspector took into account the views of 23 members of staff who responded to the questionnaire.
- The lead inspector spoke with the local authority designated officer for Leicestershire and the virtual headteacher for Warwickshire local authority.
- The lead inspector met formally with six pupils from the upper school (key stages 3 and 4). He also met informally with pupils from lower (key stages 1 and 2) and upper school during lessons and social time.
- The lead inspector analysed documents relating to the school's provision, including the school's improvement plan, records relating to pupils' achievement, the curriculum, staff training, the quality of teaching, and pupils' behaviour and attendance. The lead inspector scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including the safeguarding policy, the school's single central record, its recruitment procedures and its whistleblowing policy.
- The lead inspector evaluated the school's policies to ensure that they met with the independent school standards.
- The lead inspector undertook a tour of the school site to ensure that the school's buildings, boundaries and resources complied with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Simon Hollingsworth, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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