

Gryphon School

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

Inspection dates

29–31 January 2019

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

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The proprietor and headteacher have created a culture of excellence. They continuously convey their high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Excellent teamwork between leaders and staff translates this vision into outstanding practice.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding because staff have a relentless focus on how pupils learn. They create an environment in which pupils are encouraged and trusted to achieve.
- The school's curriculum is imaginative and creative. It enables pupils to enjoy learning and achieve success.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from mostly below average starting points. Their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to school improve in response to the school's positive atmosphere.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. They develop resilience, perseverance and a desire to succeed.
- Staff are diligent and thorough in their attention to pupils' well-being and safety. Pupils develop a secure understanding of how to manage risks and to develop a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils are prepared extremely well for the transition to further education and employment.
- The proprietor provides effective challenge to leaders and staff. She understands the features of successful learning and progress and asks the right questions about how the staff implement their plans.
- The headteacher inspires cooperation and teamwork. The school is continually evolving and improving, based on continuous, often informal, discussion and review.

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?

- Consolidate and embed the school's outstanding practice by ensuring that plans for further development draw systematically on the findings of leaders' continuous review and evaluation.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The proprietor and senior leaders have created a culture in which pupils with a variety of mixed, and often negative, previous experiences of education feel welcome and safe. They have ensured that the requirements of all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher demonstrates total commitment to the well-being and safety of pupils. His desire that each pupil should experience success is shared by the staff. School leaders and staff work extremely effectively as a team. Relationships between staff and with pupils are exemplary. Pupils appreciate the fact that leaders and staff are very accessible to them.
- Pupils make strong progress with their behaviour and attitudes to learning, despite any previous negative experiences, because they feel they belong to the school community. Leaders and staff ensure that all pupils, including the disadvantaged, make excellent progress from their starting points in English and mathematics. As a result of effective and dedicated leadership, teaching is strong across the school and has a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.
- The curriculum is kept continuously under review and has recently been restructured to better match the learning and personal needs of pupils across the full age range of the school. Pupils have access to a full range of learning opportunities, with suitable opportunities for external accreditation. Staff ensure that each pupil develops a plan for transition to the next stage of their education or employment. This is strongly supported by learning opportunities in the curriculum throughout key stages 3 and 4, and through independent guidance and advice from external careers services.
- The school provides excellent opportunities for the continuing development of staff expertise. Senior leaders have a firm understanding of the strengths of the staff and this is reinforced by appropriate arrangements for regular review of teaching. Staff appreciate the opportunities provided for regular in-house training and access to external courses and opportunities to develop their qualifications and expertise.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is embedded effectively throughout the curriculum. This includes the promotion of British values and equality of opportunity for all pupils. Pupils enjoy and benefit from a wide variety of stimulating activities, including visits from local professional sports clubs, visits to a mosque and to the theatre, dramatic presentations about keeping safe, organising a variety of charitable collections and working towards a national award scheme involving physical challenges and community service.
- The proprietor, senior leaders and staff ensure excellence throughout the school community. They lead and promote continuous improvement across the life and work of the school.

Governance

- The proprietor maintains excellent oversight of all aspects of the school's work. She contributes effectively to the strategic direction of the school and has a strong input to new developments. She ensures appropriate accountability for the school's leaders and staff.
- The headteacher and senior leaders ensure that the proprietor is fully informed about all aspects of the school's work, including outcomes for pupils.
- The proprietor ensures that resources are used effectively. She challenges leaders appropriately and provides strong support for their decisions and plans.
- The proprietor takes full account of the views of parents, pupils and staff. She has an excellent understanding and experience of how to meet the needs of the school's pupils. She ensures that her vision is shared effectively throughout the school community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils' well-being is central to all aspects of school life. Leaders have produced effective safeguarding policies and procedures which take full account of the latest government guidance. A copy of the school's policy is available to download from the school's website.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training which underpins their excellent understanding of the risks to which pupils may be exposed, for example online, through illegal substances, sexual exploitation, knife crime or extremism.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe through a variety of engaging activities in the curriculum and through visits from external experts. They state that they know who to turn to if they need advice or have a personal concern.
- Senior leaders work very effectively with parents, carers and external agencies to resolve any concerns about pupils' well-being, safety or mental health. The school's therapists and family social worker make an excellent contribution to ensuring the confidence of parents and carers that their children are well cared for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- A major strength of teaching throughout the school is the ability of staff to adapt their strong subject knowledge to meet the learning needs of pupils with a variety of different starting points.
- Senior leaders ensure that staff have a secure understanding of pupils' previous educational experiences, their individual barriers to learning, and their starting points in literacy and numeracy. This information is applied effectively through a whole-school approach to planning.
- Senior leaders provide excellent support to teachers by planning an effective curriculum and supporting teachers with their lesson planning. Staff work together to review and adapt lesson plans to meet the learning needs of pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together to ensure excellent behaviour in lessons

through strong relationships, trust and appropriate learning environments.

- Pupils know how to work safely, for example when using a lathe in the design workshop or cooking a cheese and bacon omelette in a food studies lesson.
- Staff demonstrate excellent sensitivity to pupils' emotional and mental health needs. They use well-judged interventions to encourage and redirect pupils' learning. They know when to raise the level of demand and when to provide additional space and time.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively to encourage pupils to develop their vocabulary, to use alternative language and to express themselves imaginatively. For example, pupils in key stages 2 and 3 English lessons generated and recorded vivid language to express their ideas about characters and events in their creative writing.
- Staff also provide effective opportunities for pupils to read regularly. Many pupils develop confidence in reading aloud in class, for example demonstrating expression and suitable rhythm in reading poetry. Teachers use phonics appropriately to help pupils build up words when reading or spelling.
- Older pupils, for example in Year 11 English, are challenged to seek deeper meanings in their reading. They enjoyed analysing the historical context of a play set in an unfamiliar location and interpreting how the writer explores the behaviour and attitudes of the main character. Pupils raised questions and sought additional knowledge, showing an interest in the unfamiliar features of the plot and the characters.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' engagement in lessons and of their ability to make strong progress from their starting points. The tasks set for pupils follow a common theme but place different demands on pupils according to their starting points. Pupils, for example in key stage 3 mathematics, demonstrated the ability to calculate the mean in a sequence of numbers, with some using whole numbers while others worked with decimals and negative numbers.
- Staff provide appropriate information for parents and carers about the work covered and the extent of progress of their children. Pupils comment on how well staff manage behaviour and do not allow it to intrude on the learning of others.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils across the full age range of the school develop excellent attitudes to learning. Many enter the school with negative previous experiences of education, but they develop self-confidence and a willingness to work independently.
- Pupils demonstrate trust in the staff and respect for the learning environment. They respond positively to staff requests and avoid confrontation. Staff are very skilled at predicting potential negative reactions and implement effective strategies to refocus pupils' efforts.
- Pupils are proud of the school, their positive relationships with staff and what they can do as a result of effective learning. Older pupils recognise how their education equips them well for the next stage of their education and employment.
- Pupils state that they are safe in school. They recognise how well the staff know them

and care for them. Pupils' individual needs and behaviour characteristics are very well understood by staff. This knowledge contributes to an alert environment and sensitive responses to individual pupils. Bullying is not a concern to pupils and staff are very alert to the quality of relationships between pupils.

- Pupils have a good understanding of risks to which they might be exposed. They can identify issues that they have considered in lessons, including how to maintain safety online.
- The school provides appropriate advice and opportunities for pupils to understand the features of a healthy lifestyle. This guidance is reflected in themes studied in many lessons, including attention to health eating in food technology lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils learn successfully to recognise their own anxieties, with sensitive individual support from adults throughout the school. Many learn to be reflective about their behaviour and can identify improvements over time.
- Pupils' positive behaviour contributes well to the pace and extent of their learning. They learn to sustain their concentration and to make a positive contribution to discussion and written work.
- Pupils' attendance is close to the national average and, for many pupils, shows improvement from their previous settings. There are no persistent absentees. Staff are vigilant in immediately following up any absences and ensuring that they work effectively with pupils' families to maintain good attendance. The school's educational social worker makes a strong positive contribution to building positive relationships with pupils' families.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils enter the school with starting points that are mostly below the average for their age, due largely to previously disrupted educational experiences.
- Pupils settle quickly into the school's welcoming environment. They develop resilience and the ability to take advantage of the wide range of learning opportunities provided for them.
- Pupils, across the full age range of the school, make considerable progress from their starting points, in a wide range of subjects and areas of learning. For the majority of pupils, their progress across the curriculum accelerates and matches or exceeds that of other pupils with similar starting points. They develop the confidence to have a go and often surprise themselves with their success.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make rates of progress similar to those of other pupils. Many pupils benefit considerably from the individual attention they receive through personally designed learning tasks and the confidence arising from success.
- Pupils develop effective communication skills to demonstrate what they have learned. Many pupils enjoy learning and using new vocabulary. Their oral skills enable them to

explain, to reason and to ask questions that deepen their knowledge. They develop an increasing vocabulary and the ability to apply new ideas in their spoken contributions to lessons.

- Younger pupils learn to read with expression and understanding. They enjoy reading about familiar characters and applying their ideas in creative writing. They benefit from considerable support and challenge from staff as they seek greater accuracy in their spelling and grammar. Older pupils develop their skills of analysis as they apply their increasing knowledge and understanding to new texts.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics. They have regular opportunities to demonstrate their increasing understanding through practical activities such as buying and selling, calculating total costs and the resulting change in their purchases. They learn how to calculate and use numbers accurately in a variety of contexts. Staff work effectively with older pupils in applying their mathematical skills in real-life contexts.
- The most-able pupils at key stage 4 use their increasing knowledge to achieve external functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology, together with certificates in vocational areas of learning and awards in sports leadership and food technology.
- Pupils are prepared very well for the transition to the next stage of education at the end of Year 11. The most recent cohort of Year 11 leavers were successful in gaining places in employment or further education courses, such as level 2 photography, level 1 animal care, hairdressing or construction, or foundation courses in skills for employment and working life. A small number of pupils move on to apprenticeships or employment with training. No pupil in this cohort left school without a positive destination for the future.

School details

Unique reference number	135530
DfE registration number	855/6041
Inspection number	10078672

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Proprietor	Christina Church
Headteacher	Lee Matts
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,000 to £85,000
Telephone number	01509 414338
Website	www.gryphonschool.com
Email address	quornhall@gryphonschool.com
Date of previous inspection	17–19 May 2016

Information about this school

- Gryphon School is a coeducational special school that provides full-time education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and those with autism spectrum disorder.
- Almost all pupils admitted to the school have an education, health and care plan prepared by their placing local authority.
- The number of pupils on roll has continued to increase since the previous inspection in May 2016.
- The school does not have a governing body. There is a sole proprietor.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across all teaching groups, covering the full age range of the school. He scrutinised samples of pupils work in English, mathematics and additional subjects.
- The inspector held discussions about oversight and accountability of the school with the proprietor. He discussed all aspects of leadership and management and the implementation of school policies with the headteacher, senior leaders, therapists, staff with responsibility for special educational needs and teaching and support staff.
- The inspector considered written and oral responses from a small number of parents. In addition, he held a meeting with a group of pupils and with other pupils informally.
- The inspector scrutinised several school policies, procedures and records to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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