

Inspection of Gust Independent School

1 Haldane Street, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 8SF

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 March 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

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 enjoy coming to GUST Independent School. They feel valued and understood. The relationships between pupils and staff are based on mutual respect. Some pupils arrive with negative attitudes to school. The staff and leaders help to turn these attitudes around. Pupils know the adults they work with will do their best to help them achieve well. Pupils feel safe and well cared for.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has high ambitions for all pupils. It helps them to succeed. Pupils leave with the skills and knowledge to take their next steps in their learning journey confidently.

The school ensures pupils focus on their learning in calm, focused classrooms. Pupils appreciate this learning environment. Bullying does happen. The school takes action to address bullying promptly. The school provides effective support to those involved. Pupils say this is always the case.

Leaders have given careful consideration to the wider opportunities pupils participate in, such as mountain biking and litter picking. The school ensures that pupils maintain a healthy lifestyle by making use of local leisure facilities. Recently developed outdoor pursuit awards help pupils actively contribute to the local community.

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

Following the previous inspection, the school prioritised the development of the curriculum. Pupils now benefit from a broader curriculum. The carefully sequenced primary curriculum prepares pupils for their next stages in learning. Academic learning sits alongside vocational courses. Older pupils achieve a range of qualifications. Pupils benefit from being taught in small groups. This provision helps them to build the small steps of knowledge needed to be successful. Across lessons, staff use questioning well to check on pupils' previous learning. Pupils recall their learning well. For example, younger pupils recall the features of poetry they have learned previously when reading a new poem. While older pupils use their multiplication tables knowledge effectively to complete work on ratio. In subjects like science and mathematics, staff carefully connect key learning to the vocational subject offer. This helps bring the curriculum to life. For example, pupils are taught to use the press in the mechanics workshops to understand weight bearing linked to biology.

Reading is a priority across the school. Daily reading time enables pupils to maintain their reading skills. Older pupils value this offer. Pupils at the earliest stages of reading receive daily phonics lessons. Staff teach phonics well. They support pupils to be independent readers effectively. Older pupils use texts to develop and expand their language and vocabulary.

Leaders maintain a sharp focus on the progress pupils make towards individual targets. Daily planned time to support pupils in this part of their learning journey is effective. Staff capture the progress pupils make clearly. Pupils' achievements are celebrated regularly. Parents, carers and pupils are actively involved in this work.

The positive relationships between staff and pupils helps pupils do well. Leaders focus on pupils feeling safe and welcomed when they join the school. The support for pupils' well-being is evident in all interactions between staff and pupils. Pupils find it challenging to regulate their own behaviour. Leaders' records reflect this. Careful support from staff helps pupils to improve their behaviour over time. Parents and carers are also positive about the support the school provides for pupils to improve their behaviour.

A clear personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum ensures pupils understand important aspects of growing up. Over time, pupils build knowledge and skills linked to healthy lifestyles, healthy relationships and sexual health. Additional activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the wide range of school visits (including to local employers), help pupils to develop lifelong skills. The school ensures that pupils encounter British values, such as democracy and individual liberty. This happens through a range of activities and the PSHE curriculum. Pupils do not recall this work with clarity or understand where British values are found in everyday life. The school ensures pupils receive timely information and support linked to careers. This helps pupils make informed decisions about what to study next or where to seek further training or employment.

Some pupils struggle to attend school every day. The school focuses well on overcoming pupils' barriers to regular attendance. This helps some pupils to increase their time in school. Where needed, the school uses other professionals to support families with this further. Despite this work, some pupils' attendance remains too low.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They value the support they receive from leaders and the proprietor. Staff are equally proud of the positive relationships they develop with pupils. They should be. Staff are well supported with their well-being. The school plans and delivers comprehensive and ongoing training for all aspects of safeguarding. For some areas of school development, staff training is not well matched to the ambitions of the curriculum. Careful monitoring by the proprietor and leaders ensures the school meets the independent school standards consistently. They work together effectively to ensure that the school has a positive impact on the pupils who attend. Leaders also ensure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The training offer for staff is not well matched to their needs. This means staff's understanding and skills do not match the school's ambitions. The school must ensure staff have the relevant training to meet the needs of pupils who attend here which is also aligned to the curriculum and vision of the school.
- Some pupils do not recognise British values well. These pupils are not fully prepared for life in modern Britain. The school must continue to develop its curriculum linked to British values and make checks to ensure pupils recognise British values in everyday life.
- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. These pupils do not benefit from the planned curriculum and fall behind their peers. The school should continue to work with pupils and their families to improve pupils' attendance at school.

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	137385
DfE registration number	929/6002
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10299215
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	39
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Philip Gallagher
Chair	William Gibb
Headteacher	Karen Gibb
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,621 to £39,000
Telephone number	01670 850943
Website	www.gustschool.com
Email address	info@gustschool.com
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 February 2022

Information about this school

- The school's last standard inspection took place in February 2022. Two monitoring inspections took place in November 2022 and September 2023.
- A new leadership team, with new deputy and assistant headteachers working with the existing head of school, was put in place in September 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. There are also a number of pupils with autism.
- The school has section 41 approval from the Department for Education.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 those responsible for the leadership and management of the school including the headteacher and the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum development in history and geography for pupils in primary-based classes.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and to their education. They talked with staff and pupils about pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

- Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the standards. As part of these checks, an inspector toured the school's premises, accompanied by a school leader.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through phone calls and meetings. The views of staff and pupils were considered through Ofsted's online surveys and through meetings.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bernard Clark

Ofsted Inspector

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