

Gildredge House

Compton Place Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 8AB

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are determined to provide the best possible experiences for pupils in the school. Governors are ambitious for academic excellence as well as a need to develop confidence, resilience and independence.
- Following the last inspection, leaders were slow to respond to the challenge of sustainability as the school grew rapidly. Since his appointment in April 2017, the headteacher has taken effective action to tackle previously declining standards.
- During the last year, the headteacher has reorganised and strengthened leadership throughout the school.
- Middle leaders are committed to enabling further improvement and are developing well. Leaders at all levels, such as the primary phase leaders, embrace new responsibilities.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, which is good overall. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching. Teachers do not use assessment information consistently well to provide the right level of challenge and support to pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Capable governors carry out their duties conscientiously and rigorously. They visit regularly and have a more accurate understanding of the school than previously.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge fosters an eagerness to learn across the school. Pupils show highly positive attitudes.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Strong relationships between staff and pupils help pupils feel secure and promote their learning and personal development well.
- Children make a good start and achieve well in the early years.
- Students in the sixth form have high aspirations and achieve well. They are well prepared for their next steps.
- The curriculum is broad, rich and ambitious. Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- Outcomes are improving, but the impact of good teaching is not yet evident throughout the school. Not enough pupils make good progress from their starting points. The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Disadvantaged pupils do not consistently make strong enough progress to catch up with their peers.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Tighten up the use of assessment of pupils' learning across the school to ensure that:
 - pupils receive the right levels of challenge and support in lessons
 - leaders in the secondary phase can more accurately track pupils' progress in all subjects.
- Improve pupils' outcomes so that they are consistently good by:
 - ensuring that strategies to improve the learning of disadvantaged pupils are used consistently throughout the school and their impact on pupils' progress is regularly evaluated
 - increasing the challenge provided for the most able pupils, so that they reach the highest standards they can across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has experienced considerable change since the last inspection: the sixth form opened and the school grew rapidly as new year groups joined the primary and secondary phases. However, leaders did not respond swiftly enough to the challenges brought by the expansion.
- Nevertheless, a new headteacher, appointed in April 2017, identified appropriate priorities for improvement. These included improving the school's finances to a sustainable position. Following reorganisation and with some new leaders in post, effective action is underway to rapidly improve pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders identify the school's strengths accurately. They know which aspects of the school need to improve most urgently and are taking useful steps to tackle them.
- Throughout the school, staff are hard-working and committed to ensuring that pupils thrive, feel safe and achieve well. Staff welcome the improvements being made and pupils are proud of the school. Parents are very positive about the school.
- Staff are supportive of leaders' vision and appreciate the increased range of training and professional development opportunities. Newly qualified teachers and those new to the school are well supported.
- As a result of leaders' higher expectations and effective professional development, teaching overall is good. However, some variation in the quality of teaching persists across and within subjects and year groups. Middle leaders show strong expertise and a determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning further.
- The leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has strengthened following a review earlier this year. Nevertheless, funding to support pupils with SEND across the school is not yet helping them make consistently good progress.
- Previously, leaders have not used additional funding to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils effectively. Leaders have recently sharpened their analysis of how this funding is used, planning more focused actions to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- The curriculum is ambitious, aiming for high academic achievement coupled with the development of confidence, resilience and independence. It offers a broad range of academic subjects and a much higher proportion of pupils enter the English Baccalaureate than the national average. Pupils and sixth-form students participate extensively in a wide range of extra-curricular subjects, designed to develop character alongside enrichment and enjoyment. High-quality careers education contributes well to the development of pupils' focus and determination.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and is embedded throughout the curriculum, particularly through personal, social, health and economic education lessons. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the successful promotion of British values across subjects and the development of a strong sense of equality and personal responsibility.

- The assessment system is not consistent across the school. For example, across key stage 3 and in foundation subjects in the primary phase, pupils' progression is not assessed systematically. This means that leaders do not have a full picture of how well pupils' knowledge and skills are developing. School leaders are now addressing this.
- Of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 87% would recommend the school to other parents. The school is oversubscribed for admission into Reception Year and Year 7.

Governance of the school

- The governing body, which includes the trustees, has high aspirations and expectations of the school. Governors have a clear vision for an all-through school to provide a seamless and high-quality education for pupils, from early years to the end of sixth form.
- Governors acknowledge that the school is not as successful as they would have liked at this stage. The turbulence experienced a few years ago slowed down the school's development. Governors offer the headteacher robust challenge and appropriate support to bring about the necessary improvements. Governors also draw on their expertise and experience to enhance the school's effectiveness. This includes financial oversight.
- Governors are aware of the school's strengths and, broadly, areas which could be improved. However, their knowledge of the performance of groups of pupils, such as the most able, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, is imprecise. This limits governors' ability to hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions on pupils' progress.
- Governors visit the school regularly to test out what leaders tell them about improvements, priorities and challenges.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school is a caring environment in which every pupil is valued. Staff have positive relationships with pupils and know them well. This means that staff are alert to any changes in pupils that may indicate a concern. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident in knowing that there is always a trusted adult they can speak to if they are worried about something. Staff have received appropriate training for their roles and responsibilities and know what to do if they have a safeguarding concern.
- The school has well-developed systems in place to secure the well-being and safety of pupils. Safeguarding records are up to date, and referrals are followed up promptly and are well documented. Safeguarding leaders work well with other agencies to help families receive the necessary support.
- Statutory procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are efficiently managed. Leaders ensure that regular training and updates about safeguarding are effective.

- Leaders routinely check the safeguarding arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers create a positive climate for learning. In class, pupils respond well to teachers' clear expectations. Learning routines are well established. Pupils expect to work hard, and they tackle tasks in class with a sense of purpose. Learning time is rarely wasted. Pupils work well together, supporting each other successfully with their learning.
- Pupils benefit from teachers' secure subject knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Where teaching leads to good or better achievement, skilful questioning probes pupils' thinking to develop deep understanding.
- The most successful teaching takes close account of pupils' individual starting points and uses a range of strategies to meet their needs. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not consistently use assessment of pupils' progress to set work at an appropriate level.
- Sometimes, the most able pupils are not given challenging enough tasks and do not make the progress of which they are capable. At other times, pupils are presented with tasks which they are not equipped to tackle because teachers have not checked their level of understanding carefully enough.
- There are examples of effective feedback from teachers, in line with the school's expectations. In these instances, pupils clearly understand what they must do to improve, and they act on this feedback. However, there are some instances when the school's feedback policy is not being used effectively to help teachers plan the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Previously teachers, particularly in the secondary phase, did not consistently provide enough support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Teachers are now more aware of how to respond to the diverse needs of these groups of pupils and have adjusted teaching accordingly. However, it is too soon for this sharper focus to impact on pupils' achievement.
- In the primary phase, teaching successfully develops pupils' love of reading. Effective teaching of phonics contributes well to younger pupils' strong progress in reading. Teachers make sure that pupils' reading books closely match their reading ability. Teachers provide increasing opportunities for pupils to write in a wide range of meaningful contexts and for different purposes.
- Teaching in mathematics in the primary phase is improving. Leaders are clear about what needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement further, for example by promoting more problem-solving and expecting pupils to explain their thinking. These developments are at a relatively early stage and pupils' reasoning skills are more embedded in some classes than others.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers and pastoral leaders have created a caring environment with high expectations. Staff know pupils well, respond in a timely manner to any concerns and maintain contact with parents as much as possible.
- Pupils say that they feel happy and safe at school and most parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agree. Pupils trust the adults in school and say that their concerns are taken seriously. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online because e-safety is an integral part of the school's curriculum.
- A few parents and pupils have lingering concerns about some pupils' behaviour, the use of inappropriate language and remaining bullying. However, pupils told inspectors that staff act swiftly and effectively to stop any bullying that does happen.
- Careers education and guidance are a strength of the school, being well led and managed. Leaders have devised a programme to raise pupils' awareness from Year 7 onwards of the range of opportunities available to them. Pupils benefit from a variety of careers initiatives, including hosting careers fairs and running enterprise challenges. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, including targeted support for pupils with SEND.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The atmosphere around the school is purposeful and orderly, with pupils settling quickly into their routines. Pupils understand what adults expect of them, and respond appropriately to any reminders they may need, so that high standards are maintained.
- Pupils are polite and show consideration for others. They are punctual to lessons, fully equipped and are ready to get on with their learning as soon as they arrive. However, pupils do not always show pride in their work, particularly some boys.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly similar to the national average and is improving. The school has worked effectively with individual families to improve the attendance of those pupils where there is cause for concern.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Improvements to teaching are making a positive difference to pupils' achievements but have not had time to raise standards for all groups of pupils. Consequently, pupils' outcomes require improvement because the progress that they make is not yet consistently good enough.
- Across the school, the most able pupils do not achieve well enough. Too many do not develop the wide knowledge and deep understanding needed to achieve the higher standards. Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are sometimes too low.

Overall, disadvantaged pupils are not progressing fast enough to catch up from their lower starting points. Boys' achievement lags behind that of girls.

- Published information about pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 shows that for the last two years the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 exceeded national averages. However, the proportions of pupils attaining greater depth in writing and mathematics were below national levels. The most able pupils did not build on their high starting points when they left Reception Year two years earlier.
- Leaders are beginning to tackle this underachievement successfully. Teachers' higher expectations and improvements to the curriculum are deepening pupils' learning. The work completed by current Year 2 pupils shows higher standards in writing and mathematics than previously.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been above the national average for the last four years. Pupils in the primary phase make stronger progress in reading than writing and mathematics. Many pupils read for pleasure.
- There are no published outcomes for the end of key stage 2. The school's monitoring information and work in pupils' books indicate that pupils in Years 4 and 5 are achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress made by pupils in Year 3 is weaker.
- Pupils' work across the primary curriculum varies. Pupils clearly enjoy a wide range of experiences to help them learn about a range of topics. Teachers from the secondary phase provide specialist subject knowledge to improve learning in physical education, languages and information technology.
- The school's curriculum has been mapped carefully to provide coverage of the national curriculum, but pupils' work does not consistently show the same commitment and standards as in English and mathematics. Pupils enjoy exciting, practical-based science lessons, but do not routinely use subject-specific vocabulary to describe what they know or explain their thinking.
- A high proportion of pupils join the secondary phase with key stage 2 outcomes above those typically expected. Over half the pupils in both last year's and this year's Year 11 joined the school with high prior attainment scores.
- Provisional information about the 2018 GCSE results indicates that pupils' attainment is above national levels. The proportions of pupils achieving at least a grade 4 and grade 5 in both English and mathematics are above the national average. Pupils' average points score in the English Baccalaureate is also above the national average. However, pupils' progress from their overall high starting points is below the national average.
- Scrutiny of work from pupils in Years 7 to 11 showed considerable variation within subjects and between subjects. Some work was of a very high standard, but other work lacked depth. Some pupils with lower prior attainment are struggling to keep up. Work produced by many disadvantaged pupils did not show strong enough progress to enable them to catch up with non-disadvantaged pupils with the same starting points. However, other disadvantaged pupils were doing much better.

- Strong leadership and more effective teaching are promoting good progress in English throughout the school.
- Pupils with SEND have previously not made good enough progress. Effective actions to address this are in place in the primary phase, where more precise support is helping pupils with SEND make better progress towards their targets. The impact of changes made to improve the progress of pupils with SEND in the secondary phase is not yet evident.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the early years get a good start to their schooling. Children join Reception with a wide range of skills and knowledge. Previously, their starting points have been above those typical for their age, but this year children's starting points show greater variation. By the end of Reception, children make good progress.
- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception has been consistently higher than the national average for the last three years. However, the proportions of children who exceed the early learning goals in mathematics, reading and writing are similar to or lower than national levels.
- Leaders ensure that strong transition arrangements are in place to ensure that children settle in quickly to early years. Routines are established swiftly, which helps children to feel secure and more receptive to learning.
- The teaching of reading is effective and includes carefully structured phonics lessons. Adults demonstrate effectively how to use the sounds that letters represent to read and write. Occasionally, these sessions lack challenge for those children who already know their sounds.
- Adult-led activities are generally well planned to engage and enthuse children, and they promote learning well. Questioning is used to probe the reasoning behind children's answers, which helps their learning. However, some of the most able children could be challenged further and their learning extended more quickly.
- Staff have focused on improving children's communication and language skills as they identified these as relatively weak in comparison to other areas of learning. Children confidently and clearly explained what they were doing to visiting inspectors.
- Children learn how to keep themselves safe in early years. They enjoy positive relationships with each other. Staff ensure that children learn routines quickly, such as tidying away play equipment and following adults' instructions.
- Parents are very positive about the early years provision. They feel well informed about their children's progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Sixth-form provision has improved and is good. The new leader of the sixth form has high aspirations and is improving the provision further.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Inspection evidence, including talking to students and looking at their work, showed that teachers' secure subject knowledge,

high expectations and skilful questioning were extending students' learning well. Teachers' strong subject expertise helps to interest students and promote high levels of engagement.

- In 2017, students' progress on their A-level courses was below that of students with similar starting points nationally. Provisional outcomes for 2018 show that the proportion of students who achieved the top A-level grades is above the national figure.
- The curriculum is well suited to students' starting points. It offers a range of A-level courses focused on subjects that facilitate further academic study. This year a vocational course in physical education is also offered.
- Retention of students from Year 12 into Year 13 is higher than national levels, with virtually all students progressing into Year 13. Recruitment from the school's first Year 11 into the sixth form is currently low, but there are already many more applications from the current Year 11.
- Pupils in Year 11 are fully informed about the range of post-16 opportunities available to them. Some Year 12 students initially started their studies elsewhere but returned to Gildredge House because they appreciated the strong teaching and effective support to help them with their learning. Students who joined Year 12 from other schools experienced a smooth transition.
- The school meets the 16 to 19 programmes of study requirements. Non-qualification activities are wide and varied and include, for example, relevant work experience, Duke of Edinburgh awards and extra reading around their subjects. Most sixth-form students develop leadership skills through supporting younger pupils, for example by providing sports coaching or acting as mentors. Students appreciate the diverse range of opportunities they can access.
- Personal development and careers programmes are a strength of the school. These programmes have a positive effect on students' well-being and future employability. Students benefit from individual guidance to support their next steps, which are mainly further study at universities. Students are also well informed about health-related topics and appreciate the provision to support their mental health.

School details

Unique reference number	139796
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10081247

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1099
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	64
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Julian Mace
Headteacher	Stuart Reeves
Telephone number	01323 400 650
Website	www.gildredgehouse.org.uk
Email address	info@gildredgehouse.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 June 2015

Information about this school

- Gildredge House School provides for a range of age groups. It comprises an average-sized 11 to 16 secondary phase and a primary phase which currently caters for pupils from Reception Year up to Year 5. The school also has a sixth form, currently smaller than average but growing.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.

- A small number of key stage 4 pupils attend alternative provision at East Sussex College and Plumpton College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 40 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Some of these lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, other staff and governors.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school. They also met formally with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents during the inspection and considered the 317 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, around the school and during break and lunchtimes.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information available on the school's website and records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of governors' meetings, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plans were scrutinised, along with records of the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Edwards	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Joseph	Ofsted Inspector
Clementina Aina	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Lankester	Ofsted Inspector

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