

Inspection of Old Farm School

Old Farm School, Stank House Farm, Kilton Lane, Brotton TS12 2TZ

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 September 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are enthusiastic and engaged in their learning. They speak highly of their school and how well staff support them. Relationships between pupils and staff are extremely positive. Parents and carers recognise the significant difference the school makes to pupil's lives as they re-engage in education. The school has an ambitious vision for pupils to achieve their best. Pupils' achievement and attendance improve the longer they spend at the school.

The school has developed a highly effective transition programme that helps pupils settle into their new routine. The school's values are well understood by everyone. Pupils are eager to learn. The school community celebrates and respects differences. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe by staff who know them well. Pupils flourish and show extremely positive attitudes to their education.

Enrichment activities on offer at the school make a tangible difference to pupils' time in education. Photography workshops, visits to universities, the theatre and foreign countries broaden pupil's life experience. The school encourages pupils to explore new talents and interests as well as stay active. Canoeing, swimming, hiking and a variety of sports are enjoyed by many pupils. Several pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at the highest level.

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

The school's curriculum is adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils well. Most of the time, staff tailor lessons to reflect what pupils already know and can do. This is especially the case for older pupils. This helps pupils to understand new learning quickly.

Some pupils start the school with considerable gaps in their knowledge and skills. The school identifies these gaps swiftly and accurately in most cases. Regular checks on what pupils remember about the curriculum are effective. The questions staff ask are carefully chosen to do this.

The school's curriculum places a strong emphasis on pupil's personal development as well as academic achievement. The curriculum is implemented well. Staff use a range of carefully selected resources to help pupils learn. Staff meet pupil's individual needs well so they can access the learning. Pupils are keen to ask questions and explore new ideas in more depth. Pupils listen attentively to each other's views.

The school has a precise understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It quickly identifies the needs of each pupil and puts in place appropriate support. Staff receive precise and relevant information that helps them to meet individual needs. Professional development for staff, including from external professionals, increases their expertise in this regard.

The school places great emphasis on developing a love of reading. A warm and inviting library space is available. Leaders recognise that some pupils have significant gaps in their phonic knowledge. An effective programme of phonics intervention is in place for pupils at an early stage of learning to read. Staff have the relevant training to implement this. The programme ensures that pupils can access the curriculum by removing literacy barriers.

When pupils join the school, many have a history of very poor attendance. Others have struggled to regulate their behaviour. Often this is linked to complex social, emotional or medical needs. The school works tirelessly to understand what support each pupil and family need. Over time, the school's approach has become highly effective. Most pupils now attend very well, some after years of missed education. Pupils are calm, respectful and regulate themselves successfully.

The school is highly committed to pupil's personal growth. The school provides a wide range of enrichment opportunities, a broad curriculum and an excellent careers programme. Older pupils have work experience placements and access to independent careers advice. The school arranges visits to workplaces and higher education establishments. Pupils are excited and motivated for their future.

Pupil's personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is a priority for the school. Staff teach pupils about important topics and issues that might impact them. However, some of the important content of this curriculum is not well understood by pupils. For example, pupil's knowledge of other faiths and cultures, as well as fundamental British values, are under developed. Some pupils have misconceptions about people who are different from themselves.

The school is well led and managed. The ambitious vision of the proprietor body permeates the school. Staff are committed to their mission of doing the best for vulnerable young people. However, some are new to their posts and are still developing their skills and knowledge. Well-being and workload are a priority at the school. Staff feel very well supported and value the professional development opportunities that they receive.

The school has grown significantly in recent years. A second site and increasing pupil numbers have put additional pressure on staff. Leaders recognise this and have set school improvement priorities accordingly. They are beginning to monitor the impact of their work more closely. The school has ensured that the buildings and facilities are maintained to a very high standard. The school has the knowledge and expertise to meet the independent school standards consistently. Pupils benefit from the high-quality environment, equipment and facilities on offer to them. The school maintains compliance 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 school's strategic vision, particularly around pupil's personal development, is not fully embedded. For some pupils, understanding of different faiths, cultures and the values that shape British society is not secure. The school should ensure that its ambition for a high-quality personal development programme is realised by ensuring that staff have the necessary expertise to implement it effectively.

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	143429
DfE registration number	807/6001
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	10391776
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Proprietor	William Ashton
Headteacher	Steve Graham
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,355 to £50,815
Telephone number	01287677178
Website	www.oldfarmschool.co.uk
Email address	office@oldfarmschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 June 2022

Information about this school

- Since the school's last standard inspection in June 2022, there has been one additional material change inspection. On 16 June 2023, the school successfully applied to increase the age range of pupils admitted from 5 to 19 years, to increase the number of pupils on roll from 30 to 70 and to add an additional site at which pupils would be educated.
- The school operates from two sites. The school's main site is located at Old Farm School, Kilton Thorpe, Brotton TS12 2TZ. Its second site is located at Rigwood House, Saltburn Lane, Saltburn-by-the-Sea TS12 1HE.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties as well as moderate learning difficulties, such as autism. All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is registered to admit 70 pupils from 5 to 19 years old. At the time of the inspection, less than five students were on roll in the sixth form. No pupils were on roll in the early years foundation stage.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.

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 evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders from the school.
- Inspectors met with two members of the governing body, including the proprietor. Inspectors reviewed minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in science and religious education.
- 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.

- Inspectors completed premises checks across both sites the school operates from.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- Inspectors spoke with an early career teacher and other members of staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. Inspectors spoke with groups of staff and pupils to gain their views about the school.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mary Cook

His Majesty's Inspector

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