

Inspection of Lord Gowthorpe's Independent School

45 Common Road, Dunnington, North Yorkshire YO19 5PA

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 June 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely positive about their school experience. Many attend the school for a fresh start following a significant period out of education. Pupils' attendance often increases dramatically the longer they spend at the school. Pupils respect one another and share positive relationships with staff. The school has a clear and ambitious vision for all pupils. Pupils' opinions are valued, and they feel understood.

Pupils behave well and listen to staff attentively. When pupils struggle to focus, staff take swift action to support them. The school develops pupils' talents and ambitions. Trips to colleges and opportunities for work experience inspire pupils. The school gives pupils the personal skills that they will need in the future, for example by budgeting for their 'free choice Friday' activities or planning travel to local places of interest.

Staff understand pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. The school works closely with families to ensure that it meets each pupil's needs. Specific adjustments are made to ensure that pupils thrive at school. Pupils respond well to this nurturing environment. They produce work of a high standard in several subjects. Pupils' mental health and well-being are prioritised. In one pupil's words, 'First, staff make sure you are happy... then the learning begins.'

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

Over the last year, the curriculum has undergone several changes to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils well. The curriculum is increasingly broad and ambitious. However, some of these changes are recent, and pupils have not developed as deep an understanding of the curriculum as they could have.

Staff have an effective knowledge of the subjects they teach and of the needs of pupils with SEND. These needs are accurately identified. Plans to support pupils with SEND include precise strategies to enhance their learning. These plans are appropriately updated to ensure that they reflect the current needs of pupils. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

Typically, staff select appropriate activities to support the intended learning, for example by breaking topics down into smaller steps of learning through different tasks. However, there are occasions when this is not the case. Sometimes, some pupils are ready to move on to more ambitious learning while others require greater support to develop their foundational knowledge. Adaptations are not made as effectively in some lessons as in others.

The school checks what pupils know and can do in different ways. Some of the approaches used are more effective than others. Where this information is used precisely to inform lesson or curriculum choices, it helps pupils learn the curriculum more securely. This is not consistent across the school. Gaps in pupils' understanding remain.

Reading is prioritised at the school. Pupils engage with a range of texts. Staff model high-quality vocabulary and read aloud to pupils. This helps to develop pupils' understanding of language and how it is used. Pupils use increasingly complex vocabulary with confidence. Those who struggle to read are identified and suitable support is put in place.

Improving pupils' attendance and engagement with education are priorities for the school. Many pupils join the school having been persistently absent at their previous setting. The school takes effective and determined action to reverse this. The support that the school puts in place builds pupils' resilience and leads to many attending school regularly once again.

The school provides excellent opportunities to develop pupils' independence and to prepare pupils for adulthood. They discuss important topics and learn about different faiths and cultures. The school actively promotes tolerance and understanding. Pupils know how to stay safe online and lead healthy lifestyles. Many pupils take part in horse riding or other sports.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is of a high quality. Pupils understand the important messages it contains well. These include mental health, positive relationships and financial independence. The school's careers programme is well considered. It exposes pupils to different career paths and helps them think meaningfully about their futures.

The proprietor and those responsible for governance have a passion and ambition for making fundamental improvements to pupils' life chances. The careful curriculum choices and high-quality pastoral care help this ambition become reality. Staff are committed to the values of the school and uphold them strongly.

The proprietor and governors understand the strengths and areas for development of the school. Governors support and challenge the school well to meet its objectives. Staff well-being and workload are considered as changes are made. The views of parents and carers reflect the high regard with which the school is held by its stakeholders. Those closely associated with the school know the difference it makes to pupils.

The proprietor is fully involved with the school. They have a clear oversight, coupled with a secure understanding and knowledge of the independent school standards (the standards). The building is maintained to a high standard and teaching spaces are bright, clean and well-resourced. The proprietor has ensured that the standards are consistently met, including 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)

- When making changes to the curriculum or learning activities, the school does not continually consider pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Some new learning does not build effectively on what pupils know and can do. When this happens, pupils do not develop as deep an understanding of the curriculum as they might. The school should ensure that it accurately identifies what pupils know and can do so that the curriculum and learning activities can be adapted to reflect these consistently.

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	150928
DfE registration number	816/6014
Local authority	York
Inspection number	10374871
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Proprietor	Teach Me Happy Ltd
Chair	Lindsay Newton
Headteachers	Dr Adele Lord-Laverick Georgina Gowthorpe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,000
Telephone number	01904 215661
Website	www.lordgowthorpes.co.uk
Email address	info@lordgowthorpes.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the first standard inspection of this school. It was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) on 26 July 2024.
- The school operates from two sites. The school's main site is located at 45 Common Road, Dunnington, North Yorkshire YO19 5PA. Its second site is located at Field House Farm, Harlthorpe, Bubwith, Selby, East Riding YO8 6DW.
- The school caters for pupils with autism, speech, communication and language needs and pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties. Most pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is registered to admit 25 pupils.
- The school currently uses one unregistered 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 judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteachers and other leaders from the school.
- Inspectors met with a member of the governing body. Inspectors reviewed minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, equine and land-based studies 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, physical education and computing.
- 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 which the school operates from.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone to local authority representatives.
- 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

Alison Stephenson

His Majesty's Inspector

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