

# Inspection of Grace Garden School

Cherry Orchards, Canford Lane, Bristol BS9 3PE

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Inspection dates: 17 to 19 May 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Staff have high expectations of pupils. Many pupils join the school after long periods out of education or with previous negative school experiences. Leaders have created strong systems to support successful transition to school life. Pupils and staff forge positive relationships over time. As a result, the vast majority of pupils attend very well and recognise the positive impact that attending Grace Garden is making. Pupils gain confidence and develop both personally and academically.

Pupils enjoy the rhythm of the day, for example in feeding the animals and collecting eggs on arrival. The school places a strong focus on using the land to make, do and create. Pupils grow and harvest the food they eat. Pupils learn to have pride in their many achievements. Most pupils learn a lot of new knowledge and skills quickly. They value the fact that staff listen and help, including when sorting out any disagreements.

Pupils develop their self-esteem, emotional regulation and social skills well. Pupils learn about equality and the importance of being independent. Over time, pupils cooperate and work in pairs or small teams. They also get out in the community, for example through planned walks and visiting local art galleries.

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

The proprietor body, alongside the executive leadership of Ruskin Mill Trust, have set a clear and ambitious vision for the school. Leaders' strong and effective curriculum thinking is developing a broad curriculum month on month.

Staff tailor sequences of work to meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They combine what the school calls the practical skills therapeutic education (PSTE) with core studies in English, mathematics and science. This provides lots of practical experiences through which to learn. The mathematics curriculum is well sequenced and ambitious. Pupils learn a lot in mathematics. They apply their mathematical understanding when working in green woodwork and textiles. The animal- and land-based curriculums set out what pupils will learn and when. This also provides a solid grounding in science.

Leaders put pupils' ability to interact, communicate and read at the forefront of the school's work. Leaders' actions to enhance the reading curriculum are paying off. Pupils are re-engaging with reading and experiencing success. Pupils who read fluently are reading increasingly ambitious texts and deepening their understanding of what they read. They also undertake specific learning to develop speaking and listening skills, including through accredited qualifications. Knowledgeable staff support pupils at the early stage of reading to apply their phonics to read and spell accurately. However, not all staff have benefited from training in phonics yet. Leaders have a plan to address this.

As the school is growing and new staff and pupils join, comprehensive training packages are developing new members of staff well. For example, there is a sharp focus on specialist therapists supporting staff to develop their skills and knowledge in pupils' communication and language skills. This is making a positive difference. As a result, many staff are experts in developing their interactions with pupils precisely. This ensures that most pupils are making strong progress across the curriculum.

However, some teaching does not structure and shape the building blocks of knowledge that pupils need to know clearly enough. Occasionally, this heightens pupils' anxiety and makes it more difficult for them to learn and demonstrate the breadth and/or depth of their understanding of the curriculum.

The curriculums for craft and technology are well thought out. Pupils use tools safely and with respect. Pupils quickly see success and take pride in the many things they make. Sequences of work build up incrementally. This builds pupils' confidence and competence well. Pupils secure strong knowledge and skills in these subjects.

Leaders and staff focus on pupils learning essential life skills. The curriculum is restoring pupils' self-confidence and resilience to stick at learning. The relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education curriculums are comprehensive. Staff provide individual programmes to ensure that all pupils access and learn RSE and health education content well.

Leaders ensure that pupils are receiving impartial careers guidance. The school has a well-developed extra-curricular programme. Pupils enjoy undertaking activities to build independence, such as visiting the local library.

The proprietor body and executive leaders of Ruskin Mill Trust ensure that the independent school standards and the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are met. They conduct quality assurance visits and hold leaders to account for ensuring that the building is in good order and pupils are safe. Central trust staff and school leaders check the coverage of the curriculum. However, their work to assure themselves of the depth of knowledge pupils learn in subjects beyond land, animal and craft studies is not as stringent.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that the safeguarding policies and procedures are in line with government guidance and published on the school's website. All relevant employment checks are carried out.

The trust safeguarding team and school leaders provide specific training to all staff, including as part of the induction of new staff. Ongoing training encapsulates pertinent information. For example, staff learn how to spot when pupils are at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation.

Staff understand and apply the school's policies and procedures for reporting concerns. They do this swiftly. Written records are detailed. Leaders report concerns quickly and work closely with external agencies to keep pupils safe.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Staff do not always use their assessments of what pupils already know well enough. On occasions, lesson sequences miss out important steps of knowledge, or staff's interactions with pupils are not sufficiently precise. Leaders must ensure that all staff use assessment precisely so that sequences of work and their interactions support pupils to build firmly on what they already know, and any inconsistencies in curriculum quality are addressed.
- The school's reading strategy is making a positive difference. However, this work is relatively recent. Some staff are yet to be trained in phonics and so cannot support pupils precisely when working in other areas of the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that the school's reading strategy is fully embedded and that all staff implement it well.

## **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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 148394   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 801/6040   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | City of Bristol  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10230031   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Other independent special school                                       |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Independent school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 9 to 16  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 16   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>          | 0  |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Catherine Grace Trust  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Helen Kippax   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Francesca Meynell  |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £69,523  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0117 2033722   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.rmt.org/grace-garden">www.rmt.org/grace-garden</a> |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:info@grace.rmt.org">info@grace.rmt.org</a>             |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | Not previously inspected   |

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Ruskin Mill Trust. This is a national charitable trust that runs other special schools and colleges for adults with complex needs. The Ruskin Mill Trust is inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner, John Ruskin and William Morris.
- The school has a specialist craft and land-based curriculum. The PSTE curriculum uses applied principles, known as the Seven Fields of Practice. These are: genius loci (spirit of place); practical skills; biodynamic ecology; therapeutic education; holistic support and care; holistic medicine; and transformative leadership and management.
- Pupils are referred from local authorities and require an education, health and care plan for admission to the school.
- The school caters for a wide range of SEND, including autism spectrum disorder, moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health needs.

## 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, deputy headteacher, other school staff, members of the proprietor body, trustees and the director of education.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, design and technology, and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects, including science and history.
- An inspector listened to pupils from Years 6 and 7 read.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation. They met with the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and scrutinised safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school and the single central record. They

considered how well the DSL acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils and staff about safe working practices.

- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Deirdre Fitzpatrick

Ofsted Inspector

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