

Oxford House School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	881/6030
Unique Reference Number (URN)	115424
Inspection number	386838
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2012



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Oxford House School is an independent day school for boys and girls from rising-three to eleven years of age. The school is located in a large and extended detached Victorian house in Colchester. It is non-selective. The school was established in 1959 and became part of the Cognita group in 2006. There are 144 full-time pupils at the school. There are two children under three years of age and 34 aged three to five, all of whom receive nursery education funding. The lower Nursery for the youngest children operates in the mornings only, five days a week. The school aims to 'understand and to develop the potential which all children possess and to send them on to senior schools as literate, numerate, well mannered and happy individuals'. About one in five children speak English as an additional language, being mostly of Indian or Chinese or Middle Eastern heritage. There is a low number of pupils with additional needs and none with a statement of special educational needs. The school prepares pupils for entry into independent and maintained secondary schools. The school was last inspected in December 2008. There is a breakfast club and after-school activities organised and run by the school.

Evaluation of the school

Oxford House School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and their behaviour is outstanding. The school has made good progress in improving the quality of education since the last inspection and all the regulations are met. The school makes good provision for safeguarding pupils. The majority of parents are very pleased with the school and with the progress their children make. In the words of one parent, 'Oxford House staff work hard to achieve each child's potential whilst providing a supportive environment in which children learn to respect one another.'

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and is based on the National Curriculum. Information and communication technology is taught well and pupils gain a good range of skills which they are able to use in other lessons. The curriculum is underpinned by detailed schemes of work that are set out as long,

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

medium and short-term plans. Teachers produce detailed lesson plans and lesson evaluations are used to inform future planning. Some lesson plans indicate how learning activities will be different for different groups of pupils; however, this is not always evident in lessons and sometimes higher achieving pupils are not given sufficient challenge. Record keeping is good. Teachers know their pupils very well and carefully track their progress. The assessment coordinator and headteacher evaluate this information and check that pupils are being given targets that will move their learning forward. The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good because additional needs are identified as early as possible and good provision is put in place to support them, including the use of a range of external professionals. Support is also given by a specialist teaching assistant. There is a good range of educational visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum, for example a visit to a Victorian classroom, a discovering fossils workshop and the annual environmental science week for Years 5 and 6 in Norfolk. After-school clubs also add to pupils' learning experiences and the recently introduced 'club night' is proving very popular.

The good improvement to teaching and assessment is due to the drive and passion for excellence of the headteacher. She regularly reviews lesson planning and teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching and assessment is good and because of this pupils make good progress in all subjects. Learning objectives are clearly stated at the start of the lesson and re-emphasised and evaluated during the course of the lesson. Teachers are creative in making lessons memorable and interesting. For example, a good range of practical activities are included that engage pupils' interest and help them to understand difficult concepts. This is particularly evident in the use of Montessori methods in the teaching of mathematics. There are regular tests to encourage revision which results in pupils being motivated to acquire the skills and knowledge they will need in the next stage of their education. Although there is useful developmental feedback to pupils in lessons about the quality of their work, this is not yet evident in all teachers' written marking in pupils' books. Pupils are not given time in lessons to improve their work in the light of teachers' comments.

The school makes good provision for meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. The staff are kind and caring and are confident in the implementation of the curriculum which is well planned and covers all the areas of learning. Children are very eager to learn because they have the opportunity to make choices about their own resources which are easily accessible to them. The learning environment is well equipped and children have access to different learning resources both indoors and outdoors, which creates an exciting and buzzing atmosphere. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, enabling the children to engage confidently in all activities. Children are excited and eager to learn which is evident in the good progress they make. Good records are kept about children's progress and development against the Early Years Foundation Stage goals. These are recorded and updated regularly.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school motto, '*Labore confecto gaudentes* – Joy in achievement' is evident in pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their good spiritual development is reflected in their high enjoyment of learning. Pupils love coming to school and their enjoyment of learning is reflected in their good attendance. The school's strong Christian ethos shines through in assemblies when pupils participate with great enthusiasm in telling stories to the rest of the school. Pupils particularly enjoy their art lessons which they describe as very relaxing and creative. In most lessons, they have opportunities to discuss and reflect upon their work. Year 6 pupils relish the opportunity to have discussions in class on political and general news issues. Pupils' cultural development is also good. They learn about a range of religions mainly in religious education lessons. Although a number of different festivals such as Diwali and the Chinese New Year are celebrated with enthusiasm, pupils do not have a full understanding of the similarities and differences between their own and other cultural and faith communities.

Pupils' moral and social development is excellent and, as a result, behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have a strong understanding of the difference between right and wrong because staff offer excellent guidance for their social development, supported by the school's rewards and sanctions policy consistently applied by all. Pupils are very friendly, outgoing and polite. By the time they leave they have a high degree of social competence. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Staff are extremely supportive and empathetic and in return pupils display much respect, courtesy and hard work. The school council is well established and helps pupils to understand the principles of democracy. The process enables class representatives to successfully convey the views of classmates to the school council and vice versa. Pupils carry out a number of responsibilities extremely seriously such as the selling of fruit snacks at break times. Year 5 and 6 pupils are very ambitious about their futures. They have excellent self-knowledge of their abilities and are very clear about where they want to be for the next stage of their schooling and what they need to do to achieve it. The school has good relationships with receiving secondary schools.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have good relationships with their peers and adults alike. They know their morning routines and are able to take off their hats and coats independently. Staff are willing to offer help if needed and take an active role in keeping a lively and enjoyable environment. Children feel happy and safe in their learning environment and are confident to talk to all adults who work with them and, as a result, behave exceptionally well and enjoy the carefully planned activities.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

There is good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The school rightly discourages holidays in school time. Pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and only healthy snacks are provided for them. A few parents and pupils expressed concern about school meals; however, inspectors found these to be varied, nourishing and tasty and reflect pupils' dietary

requirements. As well as a hot meal, pupils can choose from a range of attractively presented salad items and many of them do this. The breakfast club is well supervised and also provides healthy choices for the pupils. After-school activities are well supervised.

All required policies are in place and reflected in practice. For example, risk assessments are made before all educational visits. All staff have received child protection training and this is updated as required. There is good supervision of pupils at all times in class, on the playground and around the school.

There are regular fire drills and records show that the school is evacuated quickly and that the time for this has improved with practice. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

There are robust procedures for the recruitment of appropriate staff. A single central register of checks on the suitability of staff is maintained and meets requirements.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school has ensured that all the points raised in the last inspection have been addressed. The accommodation provides a safe and effective environment for learning. Classrooms are of a reasonable size for the number of pupils who work in them. They are brightly lit and have good-quality decoration. Pupils' work is celebrated through attractive wall displays. The Nursery classrooms have good facilities and a wide range of equipment for young children. Children in the Reception class also have access to this space. The outside area is small but this is thoughtfully used and pupils can access the curriculum outside as well as indoors. There are plans in place to expand this in the near future. The playground is also small; however, the school has addressed this by arranging different break times for Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils.

Provision of information

The school brochure includes the necessary information, and safeguarding and child protection policies are available on request. 70 parents returned the questionnaire with the majority being very positive about the school. A very few raised a point about insufficient school visits and provision for physical education; however, the inspection team found that there is a good range of visits and visitors to support the curriculum and that pupils have an appropriate amount of physical education every week due to the school's use of local amenities, including a sports field and swimming pool. The school sends informative and adequate written reports to parents about their children's progress twice a year.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints procedure meets requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Ensure that there are appropriately challenging learning activities for all pupils in every lesson.
- Ensure that all written marking in pupils' books includes the next steps in learning so that pupils know precisely what they need to do next to improve their work and are given opportunities to make these recommended improvements.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Non-selective primary		
Date school opened	1959		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 69	Girls: 75	Total: 144
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 4	Total: 8
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 7620		
Address of school	2 Lexden Road Colchester CO3 3NE		
Telephone number	01206 576686		
Email address	info@oxfordhouseschool.net		
Headteacher	Kate Golding		
Proprietor	Cognita		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oxford House School, Colchester, CO3 3NE

We really enjoyed visiting your school this week. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and with how much you enjoy your lessons. You are extremely polite and courteous to each other and to your teachers and support staff. We think teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and fun; for example in one English lesson everyone was having a great time deciding which adjective to put with which noun. You certainly had some very amusing and good choices! You make good progress with your learning thanks to the good teaching you receive and it was interesting to hear Years 5 and 6 talk about which schools they would like to go to next and how determined they are to work hard to get to these schools.

Even though your playground is quite small we thought you played some good football and are certainly learning how to control the ball well. The school is doing everything it can to make sure you get the variety of sports you would like and it is good that you have use of the sports field and swimming pool as well as having your dance lessons at school. A few of you were critical of school lunches. We think you have a good choice over a number of weeks and were very pleased to see how many of you are able to make healthy choices from the salad bar as well.

There are two things we have asked the school to consider in order to make your learning even better. The first is to make sure everyone has tasks in lessons that really make them think hard. The second is to make sure written comments in your books explain exactly what you need to do to improve your work and that you get time in lessons to do this.

We would like to wish you every success for your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector