

The Treehouse School

37 Wallingford Road, Cholsey, Oxfordshire OX10 9LG

Inspection dates 19–21 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and the commitment to put this into practice effectively. As a result, the school is continuing to improve.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know pupils individually and carefully track their progress. This enables teachers to plan lessons well to match most pupils' abilities.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum is organised well. There is a strong focus on helping pupils develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Pupils can also choose their own activities. This allows pupils to learn by following their own interests and helps to develop their self-confidence and independent learning skills.
- Pupils are keen to learn and behave well. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have confidence that the staff will deal with any problems that may arise. The school makes good provision for their welfare, health and safety.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Opportunities are sometimes missed to extend the speaking and listening skills of pupils and their understanding of how to explore and use appropriate vocabulary to explain what they are learning, especially in practical activities.
- Teaching is not outstanding. More-able pupils are not always fully challenged in lessons.
- Over time, the trustees have not focused sufficiently enough on providing challenge for senior leaders about improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amended) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amended) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was informed about the inspection one day before the inspector visited.
- The inspector visited eight lessons and part lessons, observed two teachers, examined pupils' work and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, a number of parents and carers, a proprietor of the school and a group of pupils. School improvement plans and policies on teaching, the curriculum, health and safety and the safeguarding and welfare of pupils were scrutinised.
- Responses from 10 parents and carers who completed the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website were analysed.

Inspection team

James Henry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Treehouse is an independent day school for boys and girls and is housed in an adapted, large Victorian house.
- The school was registered in July 2012 and opened in November 2012. This is the first inspection of the school.
- The school is registered to admit up to 15 pupils aged from five to 11 years of age. Currently, there are 15 pupils on roll aged from five to 10 years.
- The school aims to provide an education 'where children's happiness is paramount, where the curriculum is designed around children's needs and interests and where individuality is valued'.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- There are no disabled pupils or pupils with special educational needs or any with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school does not make any additional provision for its pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently provide suitably challenging work for more-able pupils, especially in lessons
 - take more opportunities to extend the speaking and listening skills of pupils and their understanding of how to further explore and use appropriate vocabulary to explain what they are learning, especially when engaged in practical activities
 - are given opportunities to share with each other the good practice that already exists in the school.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring trustees:
 - are given the detailed information gathered from tracking pupils' progress to enable them to challenge the headteacher about pupils' achievements
 - gain a more independent view about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress through more frequent visits to classrooms.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good because of good teaching and a good curriculum. School assessments, pupils' work and observations in lessons show that all groups of pupils, including the less able, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work shows the pupils are reaching levels often above those expected for their age in writing and mathematics. Tests show that most pupils are attaining above the levels expected for their age in reading. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are developing good reading skills due to good teaching of blending sounds together (phonics). Older pupils are taught effectively ways of finding out the meanings of unfamiliar words and this helps them to understand what they are reading. However, some more-able pupils do not always make the progress in lessons that they are capable of. Pupils do not take national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2.

All groups of pupils are given constant opportunities to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in different subjects and in the practical activities pupils choose for themselves. Pupils assess their own and others' work. For example, a different pupil writes in the school diary the activities that have taken place during the day. This is then read to the whole school in a morning meeting. Pupils are given the opportunity to share positive comments about how well the diary was written.

Pupils are given targets to improve their academic skills. Targets are also set to help them improve their personal qualities, such as the ability to work in a team and to show respect for others. This develops pupils' sense of responsibility and self-worth. For example, pupils are given different jobs each day around the school. They willingly carry them out showing a good level of independence.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour and personal development is good. A wide variety of activities in the curriculum promote effectively pupils' personal development. Pupils' independence is promoted through giving the pupils some freedom of choice during parts of the school day. Pupils undertake activities that interest and motivate them to learn; for example, older pupils choose to investigate topics such as Mexico and younger pupils to learn through outdoor exploration and play.

Individual pupil achievements are constantly celebrated. This promotes effectively pupils' self-confidence and self-worth. Consequently, relationships both with staff and other pupils are good, with pupils showing good attitudes to learning. Staff encourage pupils to consider the feelings and needs of others. This promotes effectively pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils' personal development is not outstanding because regular opportunities to promote pupils' cultural development are not well planned. This issue is being addressed as planning opportunities arise in the curriculum.

The school has a good and fair-minded approach to managing pupils' behaviour. School records show that instances of poor behaviour are very few. During the inspection no disruption to learning in lessons due to poor behaviour was observed. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say bullying is very rare and have confidence in staff to resolve any problems that may arise. Attendance is high, with the school keeping appropriate pupil attendance records.

Staff help pupils understand about living in a modern and diverse democracy and the importance of British institutions and services; for example, different pupils take turns in leading school meetings following set agendas. Pupils are given opportunities to speak on different aspects of school life, for example on the importance of keeping each other safe when using the swings in the school garden. Pupils have undertaken activities such as visiting a local parish council meeting.

Although there are currently limited opportunities for pupils to fully understand public services and institutions, the school is addressing this issue. Leaders ensure that when controversial and political issues are considered, steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Quality of teaching

Good

All groups of pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers know pupils individually. They accurately assess and track pupils' progress. For example, teachers take notes during lessons assessing pupils' understanding of what the pupils are learning. These are used to record pupils' progress towards their targets and to plan future lessons to move pupils quickly on in their learning. As a result, lessons are generally planned well and match the abilities of most pupils. Teaching is not outstanding, partly because more-able pupils are not always fully stretched in lessons. Pupils' attitude to learning is good. Teachers motivate pupils well by providing adult-led activities that interest and stimulate them. Question-and-answer sessions effectively help teachers to gauge the level of understanding of pupils and move them on in lessons. Consequently, pupils learn at a quick rate.

Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to choose their own activities, for example sewing or choosing a topic to investigate, such as Australia. Pupils say this adds to their enjoyment of learning. However, opportunities are sometimes missed during these activities to fully extend pupils' speaking and listening skills and increase pupils' understanding of how to explore and use appropriate language to explain what they are learning. Relationships are good in lessons between staff and pupils. Teachers mostly have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils respond by working hard. For example, pupils were showing good levels of concentration and perseverance in writing a script for a Christmas nativity play.

Teachers mark pupils' work well with appropriate comments to help pupils to improve. Pupils respond to the guidance given, particularly in their 'learning logs', and are given opportunities to judge how well they understand what they are learning. Pupils say this helps them feel involved in their learning.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good and well organised with an effective balance between activities that are led by staff and those chosen by the pupils. This enables pupils to learn by themselves and to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and especially in developing their communication and problem-solving skills. The curriculum is broad and balanced, partly based on subjects in the National Curriculum and covers the required areas of learning. Suitable schemes of work cover English and mathematics, as well as different topics. Some topics, such as one on the Victorians, link subjects together, such as art, history and geography, to make learning more meaningful for pupils.

The curriculum is planned well to match the abilities and ages of most pupils. While there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are given practical tasks appropriate for their age. For example, they were learning about triangles through cutting out shapes to make stars. The school uses the local area as a resource to enhance the curriculum. Pupils use maps to learn about the geography of the surrounding area and how the use of land has changed over time in the local village. Pupils' work, especially in Years 3 and 4, shows a variety of activities have been undertaken such as letter writing, note taking, learning about the different operations of number and using tally charts to draw graphs.

Although currently extra-curricular activities are limited, the school has applied to join a local partnership of schools in order to take part in a wider range of sporting events. Visits to places of interest and visitors to the school enhance the curriculum. For example, a Chinese visitor talked to

pupils about life in China and what school was like in China. This is an example of the way that the curriculum has a good impact on pupils' overall personal development, as well as promoting their academic achievement.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. All the independent school regulations are met. The school has successfully undertaken all the required risk assessments, including making sure fire regulations are met, to ensure the school environment is safe and secure. There are effective risk assessments for visits outside school. There are good procedures for safeguarding pupils. All staff are fully vetted before being allowed to work in school. Checks are kept on a single central record, as required. The school has effective safeguarding policies, with staff appropriately trained in child protection at the required levels. Policies and procedures are effective in promoting good behaviour and in dealing with any bullying. Pupils say they feel safe because, while they may fall out occasionally, bullying is very rare. All the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey considered that the school kept their children safe, dealt effectively with any bullying and ensured pupils behaved well.

The school is beginning to provide more opportunities to help pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, during a session when pupils were setting up their own email accounts, staff explained what pupils should do if they receive unwanted emails. The school knows that it needs to develop more learning activities to help pupils stay safe in a wider range of different situations. Pupils are well supervised with staff trained in first aid. Staff provide a good level of pastoral care for pupils. There is a strong commitment to ensure pupils have a healthy lifestyle. For example, all pupils either walk or cycle to school. Healthy snacks and meals are prepared on site, with pupils showing a good awareness of the importance of keeping healthy.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good because the headteacher, supported by staff, has a strong commitment to the aims of the school and the vision and drive to see these aims are met. As a result, pupils are valued as individuals as there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal qualities as well as their academic achievement. Pupils then learn and achieve well. The headteacher and staff know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They constantly review its provision and outcomes and take action to improve the school. For example, the means of communication with parents/carers is being changed to ensure that they have a better understanding of how well their child is doing.

The school provides the required amount of information to parents, carers and others. The complaints procedure meets requirements. The trustees have ensured that the premises and accommodation are a safe and suitable environment for learning and that all the independent school regulations are met. Classrooms are well furnished with appropriate lighting, heating and ventilation. There are adequate facilities for pupils who may be sick. The garden has well-maintained swings and a climbing frame and an appropriate grassed play area for pupils.

The trustees have begun to look at pupils' achievement, for example by looking at pupils' work. However they currently provide only limited challenge to the headteacher in relation to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Trustees are not currently provided with good information about pupils' achievement based on the tracking and records of their progress. Opportunities are missed for them to gain a more direct view of the quality of teaching for themselves by making more regular visits to classrooms to observe teaching and learning. Staff are given too few opportunities to share with each other the good practice that already exists in the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138873
Inspection number	422833
DfE registration number	931/6011

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Coeducational primary school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	5–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Treehouse Trust
Chair	Samantha Rhodes
Headteacher	Lee Ryman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Annual fees (day pupils)	£0
Telephone number	01491 652000
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