

Chilworth House School

Thame Road, Wheatley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX33 1JP

Inspection dates

5–7 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior leaders and those responsible for governance provide effective leadership. This has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. The school is constantly improving and the independent school standards are met.
- Teaching is good. Staff have high expectations. They have a good understanding of what to do to support pupils who have different needs. Activities are planned to interest pupils.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is outstanding. Staff, including members of the pastoral care team and therapeutic team, are dedicated and committed.
- Pupils, who in the past have demonstrated challenging behaviours in their previous schools, usually behave well. They get on well with each other.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. All who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school to another parent. They say that the school understands and supports their children.
- Transition arrangements to the adjacent secondary school are sensitively handled to ensure that the process goes smoothly.
- Those who are responsible for governance are effective in holding the school to account.
- The school provides an interesting and engaging curriculum which extends pupils' experiences. However, there are not enough opportunities for scientific enquiry.
- Pupils do not get enough chances to write in other subjects of the curriculum. This is particularly the case in science and history.
- The system that middle leaders use to check work in books does not focus sufficiently on the progress pupils make.
- Some staff do not accurately assess pupils' attainment on entry or the subsequent progress that is made.
- The attendance of a minority of pupils is too low.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement in writing still further by providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in a range of different subjects, particularly in science and history.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - when middle leaders are checking work in books, they use a system that clearly focuses on the progress that pupils are making
 - all staff are accurate in their view of pupils' starting points and the subsequent progress that is made
 - there are greater opportunities provided for scientific enquiry
 - the attendance of a minority of pupils improves.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers are passionate about the school. They are successful in rebuilding pupils' self-esteem and in re-engaging them with education in a calm and supportive environment. Leaders work well with pupils' families and other agencies. Morale is high and the quality of teaching is good.
- British values are effectively promoted. Pupils have a good understanding about different faiths and cultures. They learn about the democratic process through school council elections and visits to the local council to meet the mayor. Discrimination of any kind is vigorously challenged and pupils learn the importance of equality. Pupils learn to respect one another.
- The quality of teaching is good because it is regularly checked by senior staff. They provide support and advice to improve practice where necessary. There is a very detailed system of appraisal and teachers pay is linked to their performance.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. They are unanimous in saying that the school has had a massive impact on their children's lives. They say that their children feel respected and valued and that this helps them to be happy and settle down quickly into school routines.
- The curriculum is effective in developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. It is carefully planned to develop both pupils' social skills as well as their academic skills. Pupils said how much they enjoyed the curriculum enrichment weeks when a subject is studied in great detail. Experiences in Forest School, cookery and drama provide pupils with a good breadth of knowledge. Sport is much enjoyed by pupils who play football, rugby and cricket. They make good use of the local swimming pool. In music pupils have the opportunity to learn to play instruments such as the guitar. The school enables those who are most-able to study their specific areas of interest. For example, teachers have adapted the curriculum so that pupils can study specific periods of history that fascinate them. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that take place at lunchtime. However, in science, pupils do not have enough opportunities for scientific enquiry, including setting up experiments and measuring the results.
- Middle leaders are supportive of teachers and have good subject knowledge. However, when checking pupils' work in books, they use a system that places emphasis on whether pupils are at age-related expectations. As many pupils in this school have had a disrupted education and have been out of school for some time, few are at age-related expectations. Hence the system is of limited use.

Governance

- Governance is strong. Strategic oversight is effective. Clear systems to monitor school information have been put in place.
- Those who are responsible for governance work closely with the school. They are very aware of the school's strengths and areas to develop. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the school.
- Challenging targets are set for all staff, including senior leaders, to ensure that pupils at the school receive a good quality of education.

- Those who are responsible for governance have ensured that the independent school standards are met and that the school meets the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Many pupils say that this is the first school where they have felt safe and happy. They are confident that their needs will be met and if they had concerns they would be able to share their worries with sympathetic staff.
- Parents praise the good flow of communication between home and school. They appreciate the availability of the pastoral care team to listen to concerns.
- A particular strength of the school is the way that it works with other agencies. Concerns are acted on quickly and record-keeping for liaison with other agencies is meticulous.
- Transition arrangements are strong. A caring team helps pupils to become accustomed to secondary school. Due to the effective arrangements, staff have ensured that pupils do not fall back into withdrawing when they move to their next school.
- The safeguarding policy is fully compliant with the latest government guidelines and is published on the school's website.
- Staff are trained at appropriate levels and have regular safeguarding awareness training.
- Staff have had training so as to ensure that pupils are not exposed to extremist views at any time.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good because pupils, many of whom have been unsuccessful in learning in other settings, are helped to develop the confidence and skills to re-engage.
- Teachers and teaching assistants appreciate the difficulties that pupils experience with their learning; nevertheless, they have high expectations of the work they wish pupils to complete. When the inspector and pupils looked at their books, all were able to talk about work that they were proud of and where they had made good progress.
- Teachers recognise that some pupils, including those who are most-able, have very specific interests in particular subjects. Teachers are successful in encouraging pupils to develop these interests whilst simultaneously developing skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school makes sure that every pupil is encouraged to read regularly, both at home and in school. Pupils often visit the local library to broaden the choice and range of books. Those who are most-able read more challenging books. In writing, those who are most-able are encouraged to create their own poetry.
- In mathematics, teachers encourage pupils to solve problems. Those who are most-able are given tasks of a greater level of complexity. Pupils, especially the most able, are encouraged to complete homework based on key stage 2 papers.
- When pupils first join the school, there is an assessment made of what pupils can and cannot do. Whilst some staff are accurate in using the school's system, other staff are less confident. There are also some inconsistencies in measuring the subsequent progress that pupils make. As a result, some pupils are recorded as having made more progress than they actually have.
- Teaching actively promotes British values and challenges prejudicial attitudes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school has very high aspirations for all of its pupils. Previous negative experiences of school are quickly forgotten because this school gives pupils the self-confidence and belief in themselves to succeed. This is why personal development is outstanding.
- Staff work well together as a cohesive and caring team. This contributes to pupils becoming aware of what they need to do to become successful learners. Pupils say that staff at this school have really helped them to persevere and have a 'special understanding of pupils like us'.
- Daily routines are well structured. Pupils value the friendly start to the day. The pastoral care team greets each pupil warmly and arrival is acknowledged by all staff through walkie-talkies. Pupils say that they feel valued.
- Central to the school's positive ethos are the close links with parents and other agencies. Parents say how much the school has helped their children. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that their children are well cared for and supported.
- The curriculum has been carefully planned to enhance each pupil's personal development. Pupils were looking forward to the residential trip. This experience has been carefully designed to help develop pupils' social and emotional skills.
- The school promotes pupils' safety well. Pupils are encouraged to think about their own personal safety in a variety of situations, including when online.
- The school ensures that all pupils have the chance to look after a range of pets that are up for adoption. Pupils showed extremely caring attitudes when tending these pets.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils make good progress in learning how to manage their own behaviour. This is because teachers and other staff give pupils the respect, care and attention they need to make the right decisions. Occasionally, some pupils struggle to manage their behaviour; however, the school provides them with clear strategies to help them manage their behaviour.
- In most lessons, pupils display positive attitudes to their learning and listen carefully to the teacher. Learning support assistants provide careful guidance and help to redirect any pupil who is going off task. Books are well presented. Pupils value the time they have to learn in a peaceful and supportive environment.
- Outside areas are well managed and pupils play well together. Assemblies proceed very smoothly.
- Pupils understand about bullying, and say that although there are sometimes problems, these are always very quickly dealt with by staff.
- For a small minority of pupils, attendance is lower than would usually be expected. Their irregular attendance restricts the quality of their learning and achievement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The progress of pupils is good. Most pupils who arrive at Chilworth House have often missed a significant amount of time from school or their learning has been disrupted. They typically arrive with knowledge, skills and abilities that are below those of others of similar ages nationally.
- Pupils make good progress in a broad range of subjects, including French and geography. They make strong progress during the various curriculum weeks. For example, during enterprise week, they developed their commercial skills by creating and selling art work to parents.
- Good progress is made in mathematics. Pupils consolidate their understanding of the basic rules of number. They then apply that knowledge to mathematical problems in everyday life. For example, following a day trip to a confectionary factory, pupils were working out problems related to the number of bars of chocolate that they could buy for £2.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. A well-taught programme helps some less able pupils to understand letters and the sounds they make. The majority of pupils demonstrate good skills in reading.
- Although most pupils make appropriate progress in writing, it is not as strong as it could be because there are insufficient opportunities for them to practise their writing skills in subjects such as history and science.
- Parents are pleased with the progress that their children are making. They praised the lunchtime homework club that enables pupils to review their learning and to research topics.
- There are only small numbers of pupils in each year group. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there is no significant difference in the rates of progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those who need to catch up.
- Those who are most-able in particular subjects, such as history, demonstrate very advanced skills. This is because the school nurtures their intellectual curiosity.
- Often when they arrive at the school, pupils make progress in small steps. Over time, pupils learn to value the opportunities provided, and then make faster progress and build successfully on their previous knowledge and learning.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education. There are effective transition arrangements between this school and the adjacent secondary school.

School details

Unique reference number	131064
DfE registration number	931/6125
Inspection number	10008615

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair of board	Kelley Fray
Headteacher	Dave Wilcox
Annual fees (day pupils)	£59,331–£88,401
Telephone number	01844 339077
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/chilworth-house-school
Email address	admin@chilworthhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 June 2012

Information about this school

- Chilworth House School is a small independent day special school for up to 34 boys and girls between the ages of five and 11. Currently there are 29 pupils on roll. Pupils are taught in five mixed-age classes.
- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties that are often associated with autism spectrum disorder. Prior to starting this school, many pupils have had unhappy experiences at school or have experienced considerable periods out of full-time education. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. Pupils are usually placed by the home local authority.
- The school is owned by the Witherslack Group, which is an education and care provider. The company has several schools and children's homes across the UK.

- The school is situated in a large Georgian farmhouse in Oxfordshire with extensive grounds, which include outdoor play facilities. Most pupils go on to the adjacent Chilworth House Upper School.
- The school was last inspected in June 2012 when it was judged to be good and all the independent school standards were met. Since the previous inspection, there has been a new headteacher appointed, who was previously the deputy headteacher at the school.
- The school aims to provide a happy, welcoming and motivating learning environment by providing the highest quality of education and care to enable every child to fulfil their potential.
- The school works in accordance with the 'team around the child' approach. It provides both pastoral as well as a range of therapeutic support. These include mental health practitioners, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and educational psychologists.
- Most pupils arrive at the school at times other than the beginning of the school year. The school does not currently receive any additional funding such as the pupil premium.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons or parts of lessons, and all were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with a range of staff, including senior leaders, teachers, the therapeutic team and the pastoral care team. The inspector held telephone conversations with a supporting outside agency as well as the chair of the board and one other member responsible for governance.
- The school's documentation was examined, including all of the statutory policies, the website, planning for subjects, and records of pupils' progress and the welfare and safeguarding of pupils.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There was a discussion with a parent. Information was also gained from recent feedback given to the school from parents.
- The inspector listened to some pupils reading in Years 3, 5 and 6.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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