

Oak House School

Inspection dates

10–12 October 2017

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| Overall effectiveness | Inadequate |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Inadequate |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Insufficient evidence |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Inadequate |
| Outcomes for pupils | Insufficient evidence |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leadership and management are inadequate because safeguarding is ineffective. At the time of the inspection, some of the required vetting checks on new staff had not been completed and the school's safeguarding policy did not consider the latest statutory guidance. Some leaders have not completed an appropriate level of safeguarding training.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are inadequate because of ineffective safeguarding arrangements.
- Governance in the school is weak, as are the checks on staff members' performance and the accuracy of written policies and procedures.
- There is insufficient evidence to judge teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes because no pupils have been on roll, or attended the school, for a sustained period of time. There was no teaching activity available to observe during the inspection and no pupils to speak to.

The school has the following strengths

- The proprietor has an accurate understanding of the school's weaknesses. She recognises the work to do to raise standards.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management and pupils' welfare so that:
 - all the independent school standards are met
 - the arrangements for safely recruiting staff and training the designated safeguarding leaders meet statutory requirements
 - policies are written with accuracy to ensure that they reflect actual practice
 - checks on staff members' performance are focused and meaningful and have measurable, positive effects on pupils' outcomes.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- Ensure that no person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction (paragraphs 18(2) and 18(2)(b)).
- Ensure that the single central register of vetting checks contains the information about all the checks that are required to check that staff members are suitable to work with children (paragraphs 21(1), 21(3) and 21(3)(a)(iii)).
- Ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and that they actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate because leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor acknowledges that she and her colleagues are still learning how to lead an independent school effectively. School leaders currently lack the capacity to discharge their responsibilities effectively.
- Some of the school's policies and written procedures, such as those relating to safeguarding, are documents from other settings which have not been accurately adapted to reflect actual practice. This lack of attention to detail undermines the school's positive intentions.
- There are no systems in place for the monitoring of teaching or for checking on the performance of teachers. Consequently, teachers are unlikely to receive the guidance necessary to improve their work.
- The curriculum is appropriately designed to meet pupils' special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and is rightly focused on the development of social skills, self-esteem and emotional well-being.
- The school's intended promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is likely to be suitable. Plans for personal, social, health and economic education include appropriate coverage of equality, fundamental British values and the preparation of pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The inspection found the school to be adequately staffed and well resourced. Staff members are positive and care deeply about pupils' welfare.
- Placing authorities and other professionals speak positively about the school.

Governance

- Currently, an employee has been appointed as the school's governor and joins termly governance meetings which consider the school's strategic planning, teaching and learning, and finances. This is insufficient to support school improvements.
- The proprietor acknowledges that the lack of external support and challenge needs to be addressed. As a result, the terms of reference for a new form of governance are being considered as a matter of urgency.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective.
- The school's safeguarding policy did not meet requirements because it was based on an out-of-date template from a local authority. It did not pay due regard to the latest statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016). The policy was appropriately revised during the inspection.
- Some checks on the suitability of staff had not been carried out in accordance with statutory guidance. The single central record (SCR) of vetting checks did not meet

statutory requirements because there were omissions and mistakes and some checks were not recorded. Specifically, prohibition from teaching checks had not been undertaken, nor had checks on those barred from managing independent schools (known as 'section 128' checks). These were undertaken during the inspection and the SCR was updated and corrected accordingly.

- Although leaders and staff spoke confidently about what they would do if they were concerned about a pupil, designated safeguarding leaders have not completed an appropriate level of safeguarding training within the required time frames. Leaders were booked onto appropriate training courses during the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Insufficient evidence – amnesty granted

- There is an appropriate curriculum policy and schemes of work are in place to meet the needs of up to five pupils aged 10–17 who have SEN and/or disabilities. The policy and plans cover all the required areas of learning. Planning for individual pupils is sufficiently detailed and takes into account their varying ages, aptitudes and needs. The strongest focus of the curriculum is the social and emotional development of pupils. The ultimate focus of the school is to re-engage pupils in learning, raise their self-esteem and prepare them for a successful return to mainstream education.
- All the relevant independent school standards are met. However, as teaching activity is currently exceptionally rare, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate because the arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective.
- The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies meet the requirements of the independent school standards. However, it was not possible to evaluate their implementation.
- Arrangements for the promotion of pupils' personal and social development are likely to be strong. However, the impact of the school's work on developing pupils' social skills, self-confidence and emotional well-being is yet to be seen.

Behaviour

- There is insufficient evidence to judge the behaviour of pupils because there were no pupils to observe or speak to during the inspection. Since the school began operating in September 2016, no pupils have attended for long enough to evaluate their conduct, attendance or attitudes to learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Insufficient evidence –

amnesty granted

- Pupils have not yet attended the school for sufficient time to judge outcomes.

School details

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|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 143406 |
| DfE registration number | 317/6005 |
| Inspection number | 10035820 |

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.

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|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School status | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 10 to 17 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Proprietor | Saheena Saeed |
| Chair | Inayet Patel |
| Headteacher | Flavia Mbunga |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £19,000 |
| Website | None |

Information about this school

- Oak House School is an independent special school. It caters for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, predominantly in relation to their social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- This is the school's first full standard inspection following its registration with the Department for Education in August 2016. Since the school's registration, both the headteacher and the class teacher have changed.
- The school makes no use of off-site provision.
- The school does not have a website but ensures that all information required by the independent school standards is provided in hard copy from the school's office.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspection was conducted in collaboration with the school's headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the proprietor, the school's allocated governor and the class teacher.
- The inspector spoke with external agencies who are connected to the school.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including curriculum plans, policies and logs and information related to safeguarding and health and safety.
- The inspector toured the premises and considered additional information and evidence in relation to the independent school standards.
- The inspector considered one questionnaire completed by a member of staff.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- There was no teaching activity to observe and no pupils available to speak with.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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