

Oak House School

61 South Park Drive, Ilford, Essex IG3 9AB

Inspection dates

26–28 March 2019

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	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The hard work and commitment of leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met. The promotion of pupils' well-being is at the heart of leaders' work. Safeguarding arrangements are now fit for purpose.
- Leaders share an unwavering belief that all pupils will succeed and get the most from their education, irrespective of any difficulties they may have faced in previous settings. The school's caring ethos enables pupils to flourish in their personal development and begin to enjoy learning again.
- Staff are equally committed to bringing out the best in each pupil. They provide strong levels of support for pupils' emotional and social needs. Encouragement from staff, together with appropriate structure and boundaries, help pupils to feel secure and behave well.
- Leaders and staff deal with incidents of poor behaviour without a fuss. They help pupils to understand the effect that their behaviour can have on others. Over time, the school secures marked improvements in pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance.
- The quality of teaching is typically strong because staff set and adapt tasks to reflect pupils' individual abilities and interests. Equally, pupils' readiness to learn gradually increases because staff select activities and topics that are relevant and appealing.
- Effective teaching means that, over time, pupils make good progress. Crucially, teaching fosters pupils' self-confidence and willingness to learn from mistakes. Sometimes, however, teaching in academic subjects could do more to stretch pupils' knowledge and skills and, in turn, increase the progress they make.
- In their curriculum planning, leaders give careful thought to the experiences that pupils will need to make strong progress, particularly in their personal development. While the curriculum caters for a broad range of subjects, more work is needed to develop the breadth and depth of the technology curriculum.
- Leaders have coherent plans to develop the school further. However, plans to improve the quality of teaching lack precision. This is because leaders do not check the quality of teaching in academic subjects as systematically as the provision for personal development.

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?

- Sharpen leaders' systems for checking and improving the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' academic outcomes.
- Strengthen the quality of pupils' learning in academic subjects by making sure that teaching is sharply focused on extending pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Develop the technology curriculum so that it provides for a sufficiently broad range of subject-specific skills and knowledge.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have taken effective steps to make sure that all of the independent school standards are met. The shortcomings in safeguarding arrangements identified at the previous inspection have been fully addressed. Pupils learn and behave well in a secure and stimulating environment. External agencies and placing authorities speak highly of the school's work.
- The leadership team is ambitious for pupils' outcomes. Leaders care deeply about making sure that pupils benefit from the support and guidance they need to be successful and confident learners. They have created a school ethos which successfully combines high-levels of pastoral care with clear expectations for pupils' conduct and attitudes. This approach underpins the good progress pupils make during their time at the school.
- Leaders know pupils exceptionally well. Working closely with external professionals, they continually seek the most effective ways to cater for pupils' individual needs and circumstances and, in turn, rekindle pupils' enthusiasm for their education. High-quality therapeutic provision contributes effectively to the school's work in this respect.
- Leaders have developed a strong and committed team of staff who share leaders' passion for improving pupils' life chances. Through their investment in high-quality professional development, leaders ensure that staff have the necessary skills and expertise to bring about marked improvements in pupils' behaviour and well-being. Leaders and staff are rightly proud of the positive difference they make to pupils' personal development, including their attitudes to school.
- The curriculum is carefully planned, balancing opportunities for pupils to study a broad range of subjects with topics and experiences that appeal to pupils' interests. Pupils enjoy taking part in the rich range of extra-curricular activities on offer, including local outings. Leaders keep the content of the curriculum under constant review. This ensures that it remains relevant to pupils' individual abilities but also encourages them to explore other skills and talents, including in music and sport. Nonetheless, there is room to strengthen the curriculum for technology so that it is sufficiently ambitious for pupils' outcomes.
- Through the well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need for life in modern Britain. For instance, pupils learn about important topics, such as positive and safe relationships, equality and how to be a responsible citizen. Leaders do not shy away from ensuring that pupils learn about sensitive or complex issues so that pupils develop respectful and considerate attitudes. Additionally, leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to help others, for example through work with local charities. Such experiences are effective in fostering pupils' self-esteem and help them to understand how they can play an active role in the wider community.
- The leadership team has an accurate view of what the school does well. Leaders are rigorous in checking that their actions bring about tangible improvements in pupils' personal development and behaviour. However, in academic subjects, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress are not characterised by the same levels of rigour. This means that, at times, teaching is not as tightly focused as it could be on securing the best possible academic outcomes for pupils.

Governance

- The proprietor holds leaders to account effectively and makes sure that pupils learn in a secure and warm environment. The proprietor has provided both stability and direction following the recent departure of the headteacher. Critically, the proprietor has made sure that interim leadership arrangements remain strong and effective.
- Following the previous inspection, the proprietor acted decisively to secure the necessary improvements in safeguarding arrangements. This includes making sure that all the required pre-employment checks are carried out on staff and that these checks are recorded accurately on the single central record.
- The proprietor knows the school well, including which aspects of pupils' education could be improved further. She asks leaders helpful and challenging questions to ensure that the provision is tailored closely to pupils' needs and circumstances. Together with the governors, she has credible plans to improve the school further, for instance by developing the technology curriculum. However, plans to improve teaching lack sharpness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' safety and well-being form the cornerstone of the school's work. Leaders and staff are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding issues and have the necessary skills and knowledge to secure pupils' emotional and physical welfare.
- The strong culture of safeguarding is centred on staff's detailed knowledge of each pupil. Leaders and staff assess risks to pupils' safety thoroughly, including when they take part in off-site activities. They are highly alert to signs and symptoms that a pupil's welfare may be at risk, including those related to child sexual exploitation, extremism and gang culture. Leaders and staff take prompt and effective action when any concerns arise. They work closely with external agencies to acquire a full picture of pupils' needs and ensure that pupils receive the right levels of additional help.
- Leaders reflect carefully on how best to adapt the school's approach to safeguarding so that it takes into account the risks that pupils may encounter online and beyond the school community. Considerable emphasis is given to developing pupils' understanding of risk and safe behaviour. For instance, pupils recently took part in a workshop on the risks of gang-related activity and how to avoid them.
- The premises are well maintained and secure. Leaders check the ongoing safety and suitability on a regular basis. They are quick to identify and rectify any issues so that pupils continue to learn in a safe environment. Throughout the school day, there are plenty of staff on duty to ensure that pupils are well cared for and supervised effectively.
- Placing authorities speak highly of the school's work to ensure that pupils feel safe and are kept safe.
- The safeguarding policy includes the most recent statutory guidance. The school does not have a website. Leaders have appropriate systems in place to provide parents and carers with all the information stipulated in the independent school standards, including the safeguarding policy.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good because it typically meets pupils' individual needs and abilities. Leaders and staff are highly aware of pupils' barriers to learning. They consider carefully how best to plan and sequence activities to increase pupils' readiness to learn and, over time, overcome these barriers.
- Staff are skilled in adapting activities to ensure that pupils develop confidence in their own abilities and persevere, even when the task becomes more challenging. Staff provide clear guidance, so pupils know what is expected of them. As a result, pupils usually settle to work well and sustain their focus on the task set.
- Teaching gives due attention to ensuring that pupils acquire basic skills in English, such as being able to use punctuation accurately and spell words correctly. Staff choose topics that pupils are keen to write about. As a result, pupils are able to practise using the skills they have been taught and gradually produce more accurate and complex pieces of writing. Over time, pupils are increasingly ready to ask for help when they need it and learn from their mistakes.
- Mathematics teaching covers a broad range of concepts, with due weight given to making sure pupils develop a strong command of number and calculation skills. Staff adapt work to help plug any gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills that have arisen over time.
- When selecting content and resources, staff give careful thought to how best to incorporate and build on pupils' interests. This, together with well-chosen outings and visits, contributes effectively to pupils' enjoyment of their learning and motivates them to try hard. Sometimes, however, teaching in academic subjects is not sharply focused on deepening pupils' subject-specific knowledge and understanding. This hinders pupils from making substantial progress over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and staff are acutely aware of individual pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. They ensure that pupils benefit from personalised programmes of support which increase pupils' self-esteem and ability to deal with adversity. As a result, pupils begin to enjoy their learning and take pride in their achievements. They become willing to try activities that are more demanding or out of their comfort zone.
- Staff are quick to notice changes in pupils' emotional and mental well-being. They continually review and adapt the support they provide to ensure that pupils feel secure and safe. Effective partnerships with external professionals and therapists enhance the strong pastoral care pupils receive.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful. When talking to pupils, staff provide strong role models through their use of positive and calm language. When issues arise, leaders and staff invest time talking to pupils and working through any problems together.
- Pupils are well supervised throughout the school day. Leaders and staff respond promptly

and effectively to any concerns that arise so that pupils typically get along well together. Incidents of unkind behaviour, including bullying, are rare.

- Through the school's personalised curriculum, pupils learn about potential career pathways and the training or education they will need to realise their goals. Crucially, staff take effective steps to raise pupils' aspirations and instil them with the confidence to explore different options.
- Pupils are taught about how to lead healthy lives, including the importance of a balanced diet and keeping active. For instance, through well-planned and regular 'fitness' sessions, pupils are able to see for themselves the positive difference exercise can make to their physical well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders and staff leave no stone unturned in their work to promote pupils' positive behaviour. Staff skilfully combine praise and encouragement with well-embedded routines and boundaries. Pupils respond effectively to this approach. They know what is expected of them, and usually conduct themselves sensibly and with consideration for others.
- Leaders and staff deal with any incidents of poor behaviour quickly and effectively. Staff are attuned to signs that pupils may be struggling to cope with their emotions or manage their behaviour. They are skilled at de-escalating situations and resolving issues at an early stage.
- Pupils have ample opportunities to reflect on their conduct and attitudes to learning. Staff guide them to take responsibility for their choices and help them to become aware of the impact of their behaviour on others. As a result of adults' effective support, pupils' behaviour improves considerably over time.
- Pupils attend regularly and, over time, start to value their education.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress because teaching is tailored to their needs and interests.
- High levels of pastoral care, together with the well-planned curriculum, ensure that pupils make strong gains in their personal, emotional and social skills. This means that pupils successfully re-engage with education and begin to expect more of themselves in all areas of their learning. Crucially, pupils acquire the skills and attitudes they need to be successful in their next steps in education or training.
- Over time, effective teaching enables pupils to acquire and improve their basic skills in English. Pupils are increasingly able to apply these skills to produce accurate writing on different topics and in different styles. Pupils also make good progress in mathematics because teaching is carefully planned to address gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Staff encourage pupils to read regularly. They help pupils to choose books and texts that reignite their interest in reading, as well as make good progress in their reading skills.
- Pupils acquire important skills that will serve them well for life beyond education, such as learning to plan and prepare their own healthy meals. However, the curriculum for

technology remains underdeveloped. Leaders have appropriate plans to secure further improvements in this aspect of pupils' learning, for instance through the introduction of the study of computer programming. It is too soon to see the impact of this work.

- Through the curriculum's strong focus on practical and 'hands-on' tasks, pupils benefit from plentiful opportunities to apply their learning and, in turn, obtain a secure grasp of important concepts. Nevertheless, in academic subjects, sometimes staff plan activities without being sufficiently clear on how these activities will deepen and stretch pupils' knowledge. This reduces pupils' ability to make even better progress.

School details

Unique reference number	143406
DfE registration number	317/6005
Inspection number	10068032

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	10 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Saheena Saeed
Chair	Nancy Bwalya
Interim headteacher	Sherry Hinkson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,000
Telephone number	0208 599 9675
Website	The school does not have a website
Date of previous inspection	10–12 October 2017

Information about this school

- Oak House School is an independent special school located in Redbridge local authority. It caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), primarily related to emotional, social and mental health difficulties. The school is registered to admit up to five pupils.
- The school's last full inspection took place in October 2017, where it was judged to be inadequate. In February 2018, the school submitted an action plan. The plan was evaluated as acceptable. Ofsted conducted an additional inspection in June 2018. All the standards that were checked during this inspection were met.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.
- The headteacher left the school shortly before this inspection took place. An existing member of the senior leadership team has been appointed as the interim headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, including the proprietor and the chair of governors, to discuss their evaluation of the school's effectiveness, including their priorities for improvement.
- The inspector toured the premises and reviewed a range of health and safety records to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Together with leaders and staff, the inspector observed pupils' learning. The inspector also reviewed a range of documentation related to pupils' behaviour, personal development and pupils' outcomes, including samples of work in different subjects.
- The inspector spoke to pupils informally about their experiences at the school. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- The inspector gathered the views of staff through formal and informal discussions. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- Documentation related to safeguarding was scrutinised, including the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff and safeguarding records and policies.
- Telephone discussions were held with placing authorities and external professionals who work with the school.

Inspection team

Sarah Murphy-Dutton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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