

# The Treehouse School

37 Wallingford Road, Cholsey, Oxfordshire OX10 9LG

## Inspection dates

14–16 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Inadequate</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Trustees and school leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. Concerns are not logged systematically or in enough detail. For instance, leaders do not record or retain the particulars of important conversations between adults and pupils.
- Leaders do not apply locally agreed thresholds of concern knowledgeably. As a result, when serious issues arise, leaders do not act decisively enough to safeguard pupils who may be at risk.
- Despite training, staff, including the designated lead for safeguarding (DSL), do not have sufficient understanding of how to keep pupils safe.
- The teaching of e-safety is not sufficiently well developed to help ensure that pupils stay safe online.
- Leaders do not keep a watchful enough eye on pupils' well-being. Their approach to recording accidents and monitoring pupils' attendance is not careful enough. This limits leaders' ability to see patterns emerge and then take timely action.
- Leaders do not report safeguarding information accurately to trustees. Trustees have accepted too readily leaders' assurances about safeguarding. As a result, they do not hold leaders to account well enough for this aspect of the school's work.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have ensured that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed successfully across the curriculum.
- Teachers plan interesting and meaningful lessons which pupils enjoy. Expectations are high and pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' confidence and resilience as learners is developed well so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

### 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?

- Urgently review and sharpen safeguarding processes so that:
  - referrals are made in a timely manner
  - concerns are recorded systematically and in sufficient detail
  - thresholds of concern are understood and responded to
  - systems and record keeping, particularly those relating to child protection, are rigorous
  - all staff acquire a secure understanding of their responsibilities as set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2018)
  - appropriate risk assessments are in place, particularly those relating to activities taking place off the school site
  - the designated safeguarding lead undertakes the role effectively.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by making sure that:
  - records of accidents and attendance information are accurate and kept systematically
  - curriculum provision is reviewed to increase pupils' awareness of how to stay safe online
  - trustees are sufficiently well informed to enable them to hold leaders to account for their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leaders and trustees have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Safeguarding procedures are ineffective. Systems for reporting and recording information about pupils' welfare are not fit for purpose. The procedures used by trustees to check leaders' work in this area have failed to identify the weaknesses in the school's systems. As a result, pupils at risk of harm are not accurately and efficiently identified and supported.
- Leaders have not ensured that practices to record and monitor incidents of poor behaviour, accidents and concerns are well maintained. Occasionally, attendance records are filled out incorrectly, including the misuse of particular registration codes. Statutory requirements for recording pupils' absence are not followed with sufficient rigour.
- Leaders have ensured that aspects of the curriculum such as mathematics are reviewed to improve pupils' progress. They have revised teachers' plans so that tasks are structured to help pupils think more deeply and solve problems. Leaders are aware that further curriculum revision is needed to develop the teaching of e-safety across the school.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. Leaders have ensured that curriculum elements are carefully balanced to provide pupils with well-connected and meaningful learning. This helps pupils to build on their knowledge successfully. For example, the development of pupils' cultural understanding, resulting from study of a book about a Syrian refugee, was enhanced by cooking and sharing a Middle Eastern dish at lunch.
- Pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well. Pupils learn about a wide range of belief systems, for example through experiencing their own version of the Hindu Holi festival. Leaders search out and create opportunities for pupils to engage actively with their local community. Pupils relish the opportunity to expand their world view, for instance through reading and discussing information from newspapers.
- Leaders ensure that the ethos of the school reflects British values of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. Pupils demonstrate these values as they learn and play together. They take an active role in developing these attitudes throughout the school, for instance in their roles as 'garden guardians'.
- Parents and carers are fully supportive of the school. They value highly the way that their children's confidence is nurtured and self-esteem is bolstered through a wide range of experiences. In one comment, typical of those received, a parent reflected that the school supports pupils in developing, 'a strong moral framework, sense of place in their community and the world'.

## Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietors of the school are the board of trustees who act also as governors. The school makes good use of a range of expertise from trustees and associated consultants and volunteers to greatly enhance the work of staff.

- Trustees have not ensured that procedures for safeguarding pupils are fit for purpose and have accepted leaders' assertions too readily. They have completed some checks in school. For instance, they commissioned an external review of safeguarding to look at some aspects of the school's work and to ensure that pupils felt safe. Nevertheless, these checks were not sufficiently focused on the reporting and recording of concerns or leaders' actions. As a result, weaknesses in this area were missed.
- Trustees possess a clear and accurate understanding of the school's work to improve the curriculum. They visit the school often to check that leaders' actions are having the desired impact. Trustees are well informed about the performance of pupils.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Systems for reporting and recording concerns about pupils' welfare and safety are disorganised and poorly maintained. Written records are incomplete and confused. For example, they contain insufficient detail about important conversations between adults and pupils. School leaders' actions, and outcomes for pupils, are not captured. As a result, they do not build complete pictures or form useful documents to inform leaders' decision making.
- Leaders' actions in response to concerns do not follow statutory guidance. Leaders do not apply locally agreed thresholds of concern knowledgeably or decisively. As a result, when serious issues arise, leaders do not act urgently enough to safeguard pupils who may be at risk.
- Staff are not trained well enough in safeguarding and child protection. Consequently, some staff members' knowledge of different types of abuse is not secure enough, and some staff do not know how to refer concerns.
- While the safeguarding policy is up to date and published on the school's website, staff, including the DSL, are unaware of key aspects. As a result, some staff members do not follow the procedures outlined in the school's safeguarding policy.
- Leaders do not routinely ensure that they have got the information that they need, for instance, risk assessments from other providers. As a result, they do not review such information carefully enough to assure themselves that all necessary adaptations have been made or are in place to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They develop an awareness of how to keep themselves safe through, for example, taking part in a risk assessment to close parts of the climbing frame while it was awaiting repair. However, pupils have a limited understanding of how to stay safe online.
- When recruiting new staff, trustees and volunteers, the school ensures that all appropriate background checks are made. This information is logged accurately on the school's single central record, which is kept securely and reviewed regularly.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good throughout the school. Pupils learn well across a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.

- Staff and pupils enjoy positive relationships. This helps to ensure a typically productive and happy environment where pupils feel well supported to succeed. Expectations are high. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they do well and what they need to do to improve further.
- Teachers and volunteers work as a cohesive team. Adults know their pupils and their pupils' learning needs well. They use this to offer coaching when pupils make mistakes and to offer additional support. Staff use questions well to probe pupils' understanding. This helps pupils to structure their thinking and make improvements to their work.
- Adults have secure subject knowledge. They use this to structure learning appropriately and to ensure that pupils develop the skills they need across the curriculum. Staff use technical vocabulary and subject-specific terms to increase pupils' familiarity and contextual understanding of terminology well.
- The teaching of mathematics has been successfully developed. Pupils benefit from regular problem-solving opportunities to apply their skills and deepen their understanding. For example, during the inspection, pupils practised skills in decimal-place value. They then grappled with applying their knowledge to increasingly complex word problems. Pupils' mathematical skills and confidence were demonstrated in the range of ways they tackled the problems and their capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of each approach.
- Teaching provides a myriad of opportunities for pupils to extend their writing and mathematical skills across the wider curriculum in meaningful ways. For instance, pupils monitor the school's energy usage regularly.
- The curriculum is enhanced effectively through strong connections with the wider community. For example, pupils join with another local school for design-based sessions and enjoy swimming locally. Sports provision is further enhanced by pupils taking part in community activity such as the annual 'leg it' challenge.
- Pupils' progress is tracked carefully across the curriculum. Parents and pupils share in this process through the regular 'focus child spotlight'. This helps ensure that partnerships for learning are developed well, and unites everyone in shared targets and celebrations of success.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points because teaching is typically closely matched to their different needs and abilities. Pupils who need additional support have their needs met well because teaching effectively builds in well-sequenced, small steps for them. Occasionally, the most able pupils do not move quickly enough through these steps to apply their learning in greater depth.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. This is because processes and procedures for recording and reporting concerns about pupils' welfare are not effective. Consequently, leaders and governors cannot guarantee that pupils are safe.
- Nevertheless, there are many strengths in this area of the school's work. Pupils are supported well in developing the confidence to try new things. For instance, in a recent

production of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', the cast expanded from three original pupils to include the whole school. Pupils' singing and performance skills blossomed through this memorable experience.

- The school provides a calm and harmonious environment because pupils are respectful and friendly to each other. When there are occasional 'fallings-out', pupils are confident in their abilities to resolve matters through, for example, problem-solving sessions called 'sticky feet'. However, their relationships are generally characterised by a warm regard for each other and a secure sense of comradery.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils take responsibility for their actions and their school. They take pride in completing jobs around the school to help keep things well organised. Pupils are extremely polite to staff, peers and visitors. Pupils greeted the inspector with a friendly welcome and were keen to share their learning throughout the inspection.
- In lessons, pupils pay attention to their teachers and show a desire to learn. They listen respectfully to the views of others, ask insightful questions and set to work quickly when they need to. As a result, pupils make the most of their time in school and are highly productive.
- Pupils attend well. They are keen to come to school. Occasionally, their absences are not recorded accurately in school documentation.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Leaders' successful actions have led to an improvement in pupils' outcomes. Across the school, current pupils are achieving well in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils read with accuracy, understanding and enjoyment. Younger pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge of phonics, which they use with confidence and zeal to pronounce new words correctly. This approach is carefully balanced with a growing number of words pupils can recall on sight to enhance reading fluency well. As a result, pupils access a wide range of texts.
- Older pupils can discuss their reading choices insightfully due to their wide and rich reading diet. They confidently discuss the techniques used by authors, for instance how they engage the reader or build tension. This supports pupils well when analysing texts and when reading for pleasure.
- Written outcomes in pupils' books demonstrate their capacity to write for a range of purposes across the curriculum. Pupils display a secure understanding of how to write, for example, plays, stories, letters and reports. Their writing is fastidious, with carefully formed handwriting and accurate punctuation. It demonstrates a secure understanding of grammatical conventions.
- Pupils' mathematical outcomes are good. Work in their books demonstrates that they develop secure computational skills, such as knowing their multiplication tables, which

they can apply to solving a variety of problems. Pupils have a wide body of mathematical knowledge which allows them to select from a range of methods. They can apply their knowledge to practical activities. For example, they carefully chose which methods were the best to use when taking part in a national birdwatch study.

- Pupils who need extra support make good progress from their starting points across the curriculum. This is because teaching and support are well matched to their needs.
- Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. They develop wide-ranging skills, knowledge and understanding, which they apply confidently to a range of activities. Pupils have produced, for instance, skilled artwork, detailed maps and well-reasoned scientific hypotheses. However, pupils' understanding of how to stay safe online is less well developed.
- The most able pupils typically make good progress from their starting points across the curriculum. They benefit from a wealth of opportunities to develop their thinking and interests, through, for instance, the regular 'choice and challenge' in which pupils have designed models and completed research projects. Nevertheless, occasionally, the most able pupils are not challenged to extend this thinking even further.

## School details

Unique reference number	138873
DfE registration number	931/6011
Inspection number	10056678

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 school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Treehouse Trust c/o Slade Legal
Chair	Alison Robertson
Headteacher	Lee Ryman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£0
Telephone number	01491 652000
Website	<a href="http://www.thetreehouseschool.org.uk">www.thetreehouseschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@thetreehouseschool.org.uk">office@thetreehouseschool.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	16–18 May 2017

## Information about this school

- The Treehouse School opened in 2012. It is a non-fee-paying primary school. It was established by the headteacher and the teacher and is managed by a group of trustees from The Treehouse Trust. There is no governing body. The school's motto is 'nature, nurture, nourishment'.
- The school is registered as an independent co-educational day school for boys and girls. It is registered to accept 15 pupils aged five to 11 years.
- There are no pupils who have been identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.



- There are no disadvantaged pupils at the school.
- The last inspection was in May 2017. At the time of the last inspection, the school was judged to be requiring improvement.
- The school does not provide or use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with a group of trustees, including the chair of trustees, the headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead, the class teacher, and consultants used by the school to inform its work.
- The inspector considered the views of pupils through informal discussions and during a meeting with some pupils together.
- Observations of free time, lunchtime and the start of the school day took place throughout the inspection. The inspector also shared lunchtime with pupils.
- The views of parents were considered through the 10 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, including three free-text responses, and through a meeting with some parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspector heard three pupils read.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including the school's development plans, curriculum plans and schemes of work, and records of pupils' achievement.
- Information about safeguarding arrangements was checked, as were the single central record, risk assessments and a range of policies.
- All the independent school standards were checked during this inspection.

## Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school must meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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