

Chilworth House Upper School

Thame Road, Grooms Farm, Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1JP

Inspection dates

16–18 July 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies between year groups and subjects. Variations in teaching mean that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Teaching is not always strong enough to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, learn well.
- Historical weaknesses in teaching mean that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour are not consistently high enough.
- A number of staff changes during the past year have hindered the senior leadership team's work to secure consistently effective teaching across the school.
- The quality of pupils' behaviour during lessons is variable. Inconsistencies in behaviour management mean that some adults are more successful than others in maintaining good behaviour for learning.
- Subject leadership is underdeveloped. Subject leaders are not clear enough about the quality of teaching and learning across the school or about their roles in securing improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong leadership for the school. She is well supported by her knowledgeable team of senior leaders, who share her passion and commitment for securing the best education for pupils.
- Recent improvements demonstrate leaders' capacity to secure further improvements in the school's work.
- Pupils feel safe in the school. They know who to talk to if they are concerned or anxious and say that worries are sorted out quickly.
- Members of the school board bring a wealth of knowledge, skills and expertise to the school. They support and challenge school leaders effectively.
- Leaders make sure that all the independent school standards are in place.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that pupils make consistently strong progress by ensuring that:
 - recent improvements in teaching are fully established in all year groups
 - all members of staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour
 - subject leaders are clear about the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects of responsibility and understand their roles in securing improvements in the school's work.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons by ensuring that:
 - all staff have the skills needed to support and manage pupils' behaviour effectively and do so consistently well
 - the school's behaviour management policy is fully established and consistently followed throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has tackled an element of weak teaching with urgency and determination, since her appointment. She has worked hard to ensure that the right staff are in the right place and has made a number of promising appointments to the teaching team. However, while the quality of teaching has started to improve, it is still early days, and variations in teaching and learning remain.
- Subject leaders are passionate about their subjects of responsibility. However, their leadership roles are at an early stage of development. For example, while they have a thorough grasp of how well pupils in their own classes are progressing, they are not clear enough about how well pupils in other groups are learning, about aspects of teaching which need improvement more widely in the school, or about their role in securing developments in the school's work.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. They are extremely knowledgeable about pupils' needs and highly experienced in supporting pupils' development. However, variations in staff expectations more widely across the school mean that pupils do not always achieve as well as they should.
- Senior leaders have a strong understanding of their roles in securing improvements in the school. They work as a cohesive team and complement each other's strengths well.
- Senior leaders have made good progress in identifying priorities for improvement and have begun to share their vision for the school's future with the staff team. In the past few months, they have worked constructively with staff to review and update the school's aims for its pupils and have started to formulate a school development plan.
- The leadership team gives pupils' behaviour an appropriately high priority. Leaders are currently focusing on making sure that staff have the skills and expertise needed to support pupils' behaviour in lessons consistently well.
- Leaders have improved assessment procedures in the past few months. As a result, teachers have acquired a more complete view of pupils' personal, social and academic development than previously.
- Senior leaders have high aspirations for the school's future and are keen to move the school forward. During the past few months, the headteacher and her team have ensured that members of staff have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- The school's broad and balanced curriculum ensures that pupils have opportunities to develop a range of skills. Courses in subjects such as cookery are very popular with pupils and provide them with valuable life skills which support their growing independence. The older pupils work towards nationally recognised qualifications, including functional skills, GCSE qualifications and BTEC National Diplomas. Leaders are currently working with staff to review and update the curriculum, so that learning is tailored even more closely to pupils' needs and interests.
- Pupils are well prepared for the move to the next stage of their education. Leaders provide pupils with good-quality careers advice and opportunities to undertake work experience. Effective links with colleges of further education enable leaders to support

pupils well in the process of choosing a course and preparing for the move to college when they leave the school.

- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders make good use of lessons, assemblies and visits to focus on issues such as equal rights, personal responsibility, British values and respect for others.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the independent school standards and other statutory requirements are met.

Governance

- The headteacher provides the school board with comprehensive and honest reports of the school's work. In addition, the school's use of a centralised computer system ensures that members of the school board are fully informed about all aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding. They routinely ask searching questions about the school's performance and respond promptly and seriously to any incidents or issues requiring action.
- The regional director is a regular visitor to the school. As a result, he knows the school and its pupils very well. The regional director works closely and constructively with school leaders, staff, and members of the school board to check, review and develop the school's work.
- The proprietor's quality assurance department provides an additional layer of accountability for school leaders. It regularly scrutinises specific aspects of the school's work, such as safeguarding and inclusion, in depth and provides leaders with a detailed picture of strengths and improvement priorities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is highly knowledgeable about safeguarding matters. She makes sure that she is up to date with safeguarding developments nationally, as well as keeping a close eye on pupils' safety in the school. The DSL provides good-quality guidance for staff and is their first point of call if they have a concern.
- Leaders use a wide range of activities to ensure that staff are regularly updated about safeguarding issues. For example, the DSL provides regular bulletins about safety procedures and focused training on aspects of safeguarding legislation, such as child sexual exploitation and the 'Prevent' duty.
- Leaders ensure a continuous professional dialogue among staff about pupils' safety, including daily briefing and de-briefing sessions. Leaders have rightly prioritised further safeguarding training to ensure that all staff, including those new to the school, are equally knowledgeable about ensuring pupils' safety.
- Leaders use the school's centralised system for recording safety, behaviour and attendance well to identify patterns and trends over time and to adjust training and support for pupils accordingly.
- The DSL has developed strong links with the local authority during the past two years, including with health care professionals, children's services and the designated officer.

She plays a central role in bring agencies together to review and support pupils' ongoing needs.

- Leaders make sure that staff are trained effectively in the use of physical intervention, which has reduced significantly during the past few months. Parents and carers who spoke with inspectors during the inspection said that they have no concerns about the use of physical intervention and are confident that the school uses it sparingly.
- The pastoral-care lead maintains a close check on the use of physical intervention and reports back to leaders and board members regularly. She is understandably proud of the reduction in the use of physical intervention during the past year.
- Leaders make sure that pupils are suitably supervised during the school day, with additional arrangements in place for pupils who are particularly vulnerable due to their additional needs. The installation of a good-quality perimeter fence during the inspection has strengthened existing arrangements to keep pupils safe on the school site.
- Most parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View feel that the school responds well to any concerns they raise.
- Leaders ensure that staffing and recruitment checks are completed promptly, so that the workforce is secure. The school's safeguarding policy reflects government requirements and is published on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Inconsistencies in teaching have led to weaknesses in some pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science. Adults' expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour, including for the most able pupils, are not consistently high enough.
- There are variations in the quality of English teaching. Some teaching is very effective and uses a wide range of texts, poems and newspaper articles well to ensure that learning is purposeful and engaging. However, some teachers lack the subject knowledge and expertise needed to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress.
- As in other subjects, the quality of mathematics teaching varies. Historical weaknesses in teaching mean that some pupils are behind where they should be and need to catch up quickly. However, recent improvements in mathematics teaching have made a notable difference to pupils' learning.
- Until recently, the teaching of science provided insufficient coverage of the knowledge and skills needed for pupils to achieve well, particularly in the younger year groups. Effective science teaching is now making up for lost time.
- Some teachers expect pupils to work hard and to do their best. They are skilled in capturing pupils' interest and in engaging them in learning. For example, during the inspection it was clear that pupils new to the school were keen to do well. They were seen working hard while exploring their surroundings and completing a plan of the school. Careful consideration of pupils' individual needs ensured that all were busily engaged throughout. However, this positive picture of teaching is not consistently the case across the school.
- The school's team of health specialists, including an educational psychologist, occupational therapist and speech and language therapist, work well with teachers to

assess pupils' needs and to identify appropriate support. In the last few months, teaching has taken greater account of pupils' needs when they join the school and consequently builds much more securely on pupils' learning.

- Teaching in some year groups challenges and extends the most able pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively. For example, strong English and mathematics teaching ensures success for the oldest pupils taking nationally recognised qualifications. Teachers make sure that pupils know what to expect in test conditions and that they are familiar with the layout of examination questions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Differences in pupils' attitudes to school detract, at times, from the school's otherwise positive and hard-working atmosphere during lesson times. Many pupils work hard. They want to do well, are proud of their school and are ambitious for their future. Some, however, show little interest in learning.
- Adults do not always provide pupils with sufficiently strong role models to support pupils' social development. For example, while some adults make good use of informal times, such as lunchtimes, to chat to pupils about their day, or to join in with their football games, others play a limited role in developing pupils' personal and social development.
- Pupils often lack confidence and have low self-esteem when they join the school. Adults develop positive relationships with pupils. They know pupils well and warmly welcome them at the start of the day. As a result, those new to the school settle in quickly and are relaxed and comfortable.
- Many pupils make strong progress in developing the personal and social skills which will support them in their future lives. They are responsible, polite and understandably proud of their achievements. One pupil commented: 'Teachers help me to keep calm and that makes my life easier.'
- The oldest pupils speak enthusiastically about their plans for the future and look forward to the next stage of their education. Parents who spoke with the inspector were highly appreciative of the school's work in helping their children to become more confident and independent. The large majority of parents who completed Parent View say that their children are happy in the school.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with regular reminders about everyday risks, such as those related to road and internet safety. Most pupils take note and behave with increasing responsibility for their own welfare. Pupils know what bullying is and say that it is rarely a problem in the school. Most parents who completed Parent View feel that pupils are safe in the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well supported for the move from school to college at the end of Year 11. For example, the assistant headteacher meets with college staff to discuss suitable courses and often accompanies pupils who are attending open days or interviews.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Many pupils behave well in lessons. They listen to adults carefully, get to work promptly and concentrate hard, including when they find the work is trickier. However, some rapidly lose interest during lessons and disengage from learning.
- Leaders have rightly identified the need to develop staff expertise in behaviour management during lessons. They have made a good start, by delivering staff training. However, it is too early for this to have improved staff skills fully, and variations in behaviour management remain.
- Most pupils behave well during unstructured times of the school day, such as playtimes and lunchtimes. Adults respond calmly and professionally to any incidents of misbehaviour, including when the use of physical intervention is required.
- Pupils say that behaviour in the school is generally good, and the large majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire agree. However, a small minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour, and some pupils commented that they are sometimes distracted by misbehaviour in lessons.
- Leaders expect pupils to attend regularly and set suitably ambitious targets for pupils' attendance. Leaders are quick to identify any pupils whose attendance is a concern and put appropriate support in place where needed. The family liaison officer pays a central role in checking and analysing trends in pupils' attendance over time and maintains good links with parents. Pupils' attendance continues to improve.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Historical weaknesses in teaching, combined with a number of staff changes during the past year, have led to inconsistencies in teaching and learning. As a result, pupils' progress is uneven between subjects and year groups. While some pupils achieve well, others do not make the progress they should.
- Pupils have often had an unsettled time in education in the past. As a result, some have gaps in their knowledge and understanding when they join the school, which hamper their progress. Until recently, weaknesses in teaching meant that pupils did not always catch up quickly enough.
- A legacy of weak teaching in science means that some pupils have not learned well enough. However, marked improvements in the teaching of science during the past few months have made a significant difference to the quality of pupils' learning.
- Recent improvements in mathematics teaching have made a notable difference to the quality of pupils' work. Confident and effective mathematics teaching ensures that pupils make strong progress and achieve well, particularly in the older year groups.
- In the past few months, pupils have learned how to use an increasingly wide range of strategies, such as number lines, to help them to tackle number problems. As a result, they are developing a more secure understanding of mathematics than previously and using skills which enable them to work more independently of adult support.

- In English, pupils make strong progress where teaching is consistently effective. High expectations of pupils' learning challenge and motivate pupils to do their best, so that they complete their work with increasing care and pride. Where this is the case, pupils develop the positive attitudes and skills needed to write successfully for a range of purposes and audiences.
- The school is very successful in ensuring that pupils achieve nationally recognised qualifications in a wide range of subjects, including history, art, science, cookery, construction and the performing arts, by the end of Year 11. Qualifications such as functional skills, GCSE qualifications and BTECs ensure that pupils are well equipped to access the next stage of education or future employment. In 2018, all pupils achieved a GCSE qualification in English and mathematics.
- Pupils go on to study a range of subjects in colleges of further education. During the inspection, one pupil enthused about her plans to go on to study performing arts, commenting: 'I wouldn't have been able to do that if it hadn't been for this school!'

School details

Unique reference number	137334
DfE registration number	931/6000
Inspection number	10097295

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Jayne Carter
Headteacher	Tracy McEwan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£58,960 – £90,030
Telephone number	01844 337 720
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/chilworth-house-upper-school/
Email address	chilworth-house-upper@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–29 September 2016

Information about this school

- Chilworth House Upper School is a small school and is owned by the Witherslack Group.
- The school is a special school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. It operates on two sites. One site focuses on key stage 3, and the other on key stage 4.
- The school is registered for pupils between the ages of 10 and 18 years of age. There are currently no pupils over the age of 16.

- There are 78 pupils on roll in the school, all of whom have an education, health and care plan. All pupils are placed in the school by a number of local authorities.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- Pupils go on to attend a number of colleges of further education when they leave the school.
- Chilworth House Lower School is adjacent to Chilworth House Upper School and shares the same site. However, each school has its own entrance and drive. Both schools are owned by the same proprietor.
- The headteacher was appointed in October 2018.
- Governance is provided by the school board.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in September 2016, when its overall effectiveness was judged good.
- A fence was erected on the school's perimeter with the main road during the inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons and activities.
- The inspection met with a number of senior leaders, including the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the DSL. They also met with four members of the school board.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils during the inspection.
- The inspection team analysed a sample of pupils' work, as well as looking at pupils' work during lessons.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including school improvement plans, safeguarding documents, policies, and information about pupils' behaviour over time.
- The inspection team considered the views expressed by 27 parents in Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. They also spoke informally with parents during the school day.
- Pupils were visiting their new classrooms and teachers on the day of the inspection.
- The inspection was carried out with no notice to the school.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Janis Rogers

Ofsted Inspector

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