

Inspection of Chilworth House School

Thame Road, Wheatley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX33 1JP

Inspection dates: 12–14 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a wonderful school that makes a significant difference to pupils' lives. Pupils, who were previously uninspired, simply flourish during their time here. A strong and caring ethos permeates the school. Leaders have created a haven where pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, kept safe and thrive.

Pupils learn to manage big feelings. They successfully learn to self-regulate their emotions. Nonetheless, bullying does take place from time to time. Without exception, when such incidents occur, pupils are supported strongly. Those involved always receive direction to reflect upon their actions. This guidance enables pupils to gain a deeper appreciation of the impact they have on others. Over time, pupils develop a clear understanding of how bullying can have harmful effects on others. For instance, one pupil commented: 'This school has helped me to contain my anger.'

Pupils love their time here and work hard. Staff get the best out of pupils, offering reassurance. They want pupils to succeed. Phrases of encouragement like 'yes you can' reverberate through every classroom. Everyone holds pupils' best interests at the forefront of their work. Staff hold very high expectations and go the extra mile to ensure that pupils succeed.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

This school has many strengths. Here, success emanates from the top. The headteacher leads with a passion for establishing better life chances for all pupils who attend. The proprietorial body supports leaders' work exceptionally well, helping to make sure that all of the independent school standards are met. Leaders have created a learning community of the highest calibre.

Pupils enjoy a well-constructed curriculum that is effectively adapted to meet their individual needs. There is a very strong emphasis on the development of pupils' personal skills, which has a notable impact on pupils' achievement. The experiences that pupils enjoy are first class and help to fully overturn the negative impact of their previous time in education. Pupils achieve well.

Communication between staff who hold different responsibilities is exemplary. Staff work in unison, helping to focus pupils' energies into learning. Staff know what they want each pupil to learn. Relationships with pupils are extremely positive and behaviour is managed expertly. Praise is used often. This encourages pupils onto more independent work, building their confidence in what they can achieve.

Pupils learn to read in a multitude of ways. This is because staff know what works well for each individual and show flair in adapting pupils' learning. For each pupil, staff know whether sight reading techniques or phonics-based learning approaches are the best way forward. From the outset, pupils' reading needs are identified. Many pupils, including those who need to catch up, rapidly develop a love of

literature. Pupils enthusiastically told inspectors about their favourite books.

Pupils transfer into the school with a record of poor attendance and behaviour and underachievement in education. Many join the school with low levels of confidence and self-worth. Staff are adept at promoting pupils' independence and in turn diverting unsociable behaviours. Pupils buy into the school's ethos of sharing success. Humour, praise and reward abound. Pupils feel that they belong.

The school's extra-curricular offer is dynamic and rich. Staff do not allow potential barriers such as pupils' reliance on taxi transport arrangements to get in the way. Additional activities are further enhanced by the expertise of staff. During the inspection, for example, a story telling session had pupils on the edge of their seats. All were captivated by the characterisation and tension that the staff member created when reading aloud.

There is a high level of job satisfaction across the staff team. Staff describe their work as 'rewarding and enriching'. One member of the team commented: 'I feel very proud to work at this school. I believe this to be a very special place and that every single member of staff cares deeply about the well-being of every single pupil... I love my job and working here.'

Pupils told inspectors that they believe they can continue to engage in schooling as they get older. Such reflections represent a turnaround in pupils' self-belief. One parent commented: 'The school staff work hard to give support, guidance and use very personal learning goals and strategies to help [my child] achieve. This is the first school to accept him for the person he is and go above and beyond to make him feel a valued person in school and out.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's single central record is well maintained. Safer recruitment processes are followed to the letter. Leaders ensure that the school's policy and training programme are rigorous. As a result, staff possess a strong understanding of their responsibilities and enact these confidently.

The additional challenges posed by managing drop-off arrangements are considered carefully. Staff collect pupils from taxis, check them in and hand them over to appropriate personnel. This process is overseen meticulously.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. They are extremely knowledgeable about risks associated with digital technology. Parents, too, say that their children feel safe at school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	131064
DfE registration number	931/6125
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10103861
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Jayne Carter
Headteacher	David Willcox
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,375–£90,030
Telephone number	01844 339077
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/chilworth-house-school
Email address	chilworth-house-lower@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–7 October 2016

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Many pupils have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school was not using any alternative provision at the time of this inspection.
- The school's designated safeguarding lead was absent during the inspection.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent

school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other staff who hold significant responsibilities and all teaching staff who were present during the inspection.
- A meeting was held with four representatives, including the chair of the board, from the Witherslack Group, who act as the proprietorial body.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, science and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and discussed the school's approach to curriculum delivery with teaching staff. Some pupils read aloud to staff while an inspector observed.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements were reviewed. Inspectors met with the school's deputy designated safeguarding lead, scrutinised the school's single central record and talked to pupils about safety. The inspection team also considered how well adults in the school act on emerging concerns about pupils' welfare.
- Inspectors observed pupils during the school day including at lunchtime and playtimes. A range of documentation was scrutinised that included: behaviour logs, records relating to bullying; the school's log of restrictive physical interventions and attendance records.
- A meeting was held with pupils to discuss their views about the school. Inspectors also talked to pupils informally about the school.
- We took account of the 14 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and nine additional free-text responses.
- We considered the views of 15 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rosemarie Kennedy

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019