

Inspection of Oakwood School

C/O Cambian Education, 4th Floor Waterfront, Chancellors Road, London W6 9RU

Inspection dates: 25–27 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

All staff are fully committed to the school's aim to help pupils 'aspire to excel'. The curriculum is planned carefully to help pupils to catch up after time out of education. Staff know pupils' needs and interests extremely well, so they also make sure that pupils have work that excites and interests them. As a result, pupils look forward to coming to school and are happy when they are there.

There are very positive and trusting relationships between all staff and pupils. Staff provide pupils with a caring and nurturing learning environment. This encourages pupils to believe in themselves and try hard in their learning.

Pupils behave well. Staff expertly help pupils to manage their behaviours when they become upset, which calms any problems quickly. Staff also intervene rapidly if any disputes arise between pupils. This means that bullying is dealt with quickly, although it very rarely happens. Pupils also have a strong bond with Megan the dog, who is a very calming influence on them.

Pupils' personal development is supported well through links with the community, such as the local nursing home. Pupils look forward to visiting the elderly folk and entertaining them with their singing and Christmas performances.

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

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides exceptional leadership. Her drive, vision and ambition have resulted in rapid improvements in all areas of the school. She has put in place a curriculum that can be adapted to meet pupils' complex and changing needs. This, along with the exceptional social and emotional support for pupils, is successfully re-engaging pupils back into education.

Many pupils have significant gaps in their phonic knowledge which limits their reading fluency. Leaders have ensured that the teaching of phonics and reading is a high priority to help pupils catch up quickly. Staff adapt teaching creatively to engage pupils in learning phonics. This is particularly effective for younger pupils. But older pupils are more reluctant to learn phonics. Leaders know this and have developed a more age-appropriate approach to teaching phonics. However, this has only recently been introduced and is still developing. While older pupils make good progress in reading, leaders know that their progress could be even better. Where pupils are reluctant to read to an adult, staff use innovative ways to encourage them. For example, some pupils enjoy reading to Megan the dog.

Leaders have developed a curriculum which is highly personalised to each pupil. The curriculum planning maps out how knowledge and skills will be developed in a logical order. All staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, but they also know that pupils have significant gaps in their learning. Staff identify and address these gaps well. This then enables pupils to progress through the curriculum and build on prior learning. For example, the 'Super Structures' topic

taught pupils about geographical features of different areas of the world. Pupils then developed their understanding of geographical features further in the 'Water' topic later in the year. Pupils' progress in mathematics is particularly strong. Opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical skills are provided across the curriculum. For example, in food technology pupils apply their measuring skills in weighing and measuring ingredients. They also budget for how much a meal will cost.

The well-designed curriculum means that pupils make strong progress in all subjects. Staff deliver the curriculum in creative ways to engage pupils in learning. They also supplement the curriculum well by utilising specialist providers of music, art and outdoor education. This gives pupils access to a wide range of additional experiences which enriches their learning.

The exceptional pastoral support helps pupils to develop into successful learners. Because staff know pupils so well, they are able to adapt their support and care to meet their changing social and emotional needs. This helps pupils to remain calm and more focused. Pupils understand the behaviour rules of, 'ready, respectful, safe' and reflect about their behaviour carefully when they have not followed them. Pupils strive to earn reward points through initiatives such as 'Marvellous March', where they are encouraged to show acts of kindness. They also enjoy planning the activities they will take part in through earning the reward points, such as going to the cinema and drinking hot chocolate afterwards.

Staff provide many opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. They see this as 'the backbone of all planning'. For example, pupils learn about the world's main religions and the different beliefs in each faith in religious education (RE). Pupils consider how people are 'the same, but different' and learn to appreciate and celebrate differences. A visit to the Houses of Parliament helped pupils to learn more about democracy. They then built on this learning by comparing a democracy to a dictatorship. The programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) supports pupils' understanding of safety. This is planned carefully to help prepare pupils for life after school. For example, pupils learn about how much they might earn in a job. They then learn how to budget so that they can afford to eat and pay rent. Careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is also exceptionally strong. Staff's high aspirations for pupils is helping them to become more positive about their futures.

The headteacher has created a climate where all staff feel valued and cared for. Staff receive exceptional support and professional development which enables them to carry out their roles very well. The staff are a close-knit team who show dedication and passion for what they do. They all stated that 'the children are at the centre of the school'.

The proprietor and regional leadership team contribute to the leadership of the school very well. They have a precise understanding of the school's strengths, but also where further developments could be made. Their support and challenge have helped to drive the rapid improvements in the overall effectiveness of the school.

They have also ensured that the independent school standards are securely and consistently met.

Leaders have ensured that the school has an adequate accessibility plan that complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding practices, policies and procedures are extremely robust. Staff's knowledge of how to keep pupils safe is exceptionally strong. They follow the school's guidance at all times. Staff have a precise understanding of all pupils' vulnerabilities and respond rapidly to their changing emotions and needs. This means pupils are kept as safe as possible.

Through the PSHE curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations, including when using the internet. The school works with a range of agencies to develop pupils' understanding of safety further. This work helps to develop pupils' understanding of the importance of keeping themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- When pupils join the school, staff identify quickly the gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. However, more age-appropriate resources to help older pupils learn phonics have only recently been introduced. This means that some older pupils do not make as strong progress as younger pupils when learning phonics. Leaders should continue to implement and embed the new phonics strategies so that all pupils make even stronger progress in learning phonics to enable them to become fluent readers.

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 are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	131033
DfE registration number	893/6097
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10119215
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Chris Strong
Headteacher	Lisa Lyon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000
Telephone number	0800 138 1184
Website	The school does not have a website.
Email address	lisa.lyon@cambianguroup.com
Date of previous inspection	5–7 June 2018

Information about this school

- The school's last full inspection was carried out in June 2018. A progress monitoring inspection was conducted in October 2019.
- The school uses one alternative provider: Jamie Drummond Outdoor Activities. Pupils are accompanied by staff during all visits to this provider.
- Oakwood School is an independent special school for pupils with complex trauma difficulties.

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.

- We met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the designated safeguarding leader and the English, mathematics, reading, PSHE, SMSC and CEIAG leaders. The lead inspector met with the regional leader of special educational needs.
- The lead inspector met with the regional headteacher and held a telephone conversation with the proprietor.
- We focused on English, mathematics, reading and PSHE as part of this inspection. We discussed the curriculum design with the headteacher and subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work in these subjects, spoke to teachers about pupils' learning and visited a number of lessons. The lead inspector also looked at SMSC, RE, art, music and food technology.
- We reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school. We looked at school policies, curriculum documents, health and safety documentation and documents relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises to check their suitability.
- We reviewed a range of safeguarding information including the checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment. We checked the school's safeguarding policy and spoke to staff about the school's safeguarding procedures. We checked staff's safeguarding training. We also checked the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe when in school. We checked the school's accessibility plan.
- There were no free-text comments and no responses to Parent View.
- The lead inspector considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the three responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

- We spoke informally to pupils throughout the inspection about their learning.
- We talked to staff to about their views of the school.

Inspection team

Ann Pritchard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Graham Tyrer

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 2020