

# Inspection of Queensmead House School

Kings Road, Windsor, SL4 2AX

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Inspection dates: 23–25 November 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy at this well-resourced school. Classrooms are calm places where most pupils are relaxed and work independently. Pupils work flexibly in class, either on their own or with their peers.

Some pupils told inspectors that they do not always feel safe. They told inspectors that the communal areas are noisy and at times chaotic. Pupils find the behaviour of some of their peers intimidating and disruptive.

Staff's expectations of behaviour are not always high enough. Pupils do not feel that staff consistently help them deal with their concerns and worries. Pupils say that there is some bullying. Staff deal with it quickly but sometimes their actions are not effective.

Leaders provide a rich and interesting range of experiences to broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils are especially proud of their forest school which they visit regularly. One pupil said, 'It teaches us about how to keep ourselves safe, making decisions and work with others to solve problems.'

Pupils enjoy taking leadership roles, such as being members of the proactive school council. They have successfully used their democratic voice to help organise events to raise money for their choice of charity.

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

Queensmead House opened its doors to pupils during the pandemic in March 2020. There has been a high turnover of staff and leaders since. This means that some of the strategic plans around curriculum implementation are not as well embedded. As a result, the school does not yet provide pupils with a good enough quality of education. The newly appointed executive headteacher and her team have quickly identified the areas that need to improve swiftly. They are taking rigorous action to address the inconsistencies.

Leaders have developed an interesting, stimulating and ambitious curriculum. It is well designed in all subjects. However, leaders have an overly positive view of how well the curriculum is taught. They have not made sure that all staff have the training to deliver learning effectively. Teachers do not use the information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans carefully enough to help pupils learn as well as they should. Consequently, pupils' learning is not sufficiently adapted to meet their individual needs.

Often pupils have fallen behind in their reading before joining the school. Although the phonics programme is well sequenced, most staff who teach phonics do not do so effectively. For pupils at an early stage of learning to read, books are not always matched to the sounds that pupils learn in lessons. This slows pupils' ability to read

with increased fluency and comprehension. Leaders are in the process of addressing these issues.

In mathematics, pupils gain an appropriate depth of knowledge and are well supported. For example, leaders have planned a curriculum that builds on what pupils know already. Teachers are well trained. They skilfully help pupils make links in their work. Each new topic fits into a logical sequence of learning. Teachers identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and revisit important concepts. Pupils learn and do well in this subject.

Many parents and carers shared their view that they often hear about incidents of poor behaviour from their children. This causes them concerns about the safety, well-being and welfare of their child. The communication from school has not been helped by staff turnover. The executive headteacher is taking swift action. Together with the proprietor, she has introduced several initiatives to address the concerns raised.

Provision for pupils' personal development is good overall. Leaders often take a personalised approach to this work, depending on what a pupil needs. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities to develop their interests and talents. These include horse riding, graphic designing, playing the piano, kayaking, working out at the gym and gardening. Pupils decide with their peers which enrichment activities they wish to do. They know their opinions are valued by leaders. Work experience opportunities have been affected by the pandemic during the past 18 months. Leaders are reinstating these as quickly as possible. The school has appropriate plans in place to comply with Department for Education statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education.

The executive headteacher is well placed to bring about the necessary improvements, with the support of the proprietorial board. She has galvanised the team. Staff support the executive headteacher and morale is high. They value the training that is now being delivered as well as the twice daily staff briefing.

Leaders have made sure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders' checks on the staff who work at or visit the school meet requirements. Leaders ensure that staff receive the necessary training about important safeguarding information. Staff know the signs to look out for to check that pupils are safe. Records show that leaders get help from experts to stop concerns becoming more serious. For example, if a pupil stops coming to school, leaders know to contact the local authority quickly and not take the pupil off the school's roll. Pupils have a secure knowledge of how to keep themselves safe when online.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not made sure that staff use the information in pupils' EHC plans to identify the best way to help pupils learn the curriculum. The work in most subjects does not always match pupils' individual needs well enough. Leaders need to ensure that all staff use the information about pupils' specific learning needs within their curriculum planning. This will ensure that all pupils learn and achieve as well as they should.
- Most staff who teach phonics do not deliver the school's phonics programme effectively. The books that pupils read do not help them to read with increased fluency. Leaders need to make sure that all staff are trained to deliver phonics effectively and that the books pupils read match the sounds pupils learn. This will help all pupils learn to read confidently and with comprehension.
- Staff do not have consistently high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour in communal areas are not dealt with efficiently. It also means that pupils do not feel that all staff deal with incidents of bullying as effectively as they could. Leaders need to make sure that staff consistently apply the school's systems for managing behaviour with greater rigour. This will ensure that pupils feel safe and well looked after at all times.
- Most parents and carers say that communication with school is not always as efficient and supportive as they would like. Leaders are addressing these concerns and making inroads in improving links between school and pupils' families. Leaders need to continue focusing on strengthening this aspect of their work.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147663
<b>DfE registration number</b>	868/6026
<b>Local authority</b>	Windsor and Maidenhead
<b>Inspection number</b>	10202291
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	81
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Witherslack Group Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Judith Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Melissa Farnham (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Annual fees</b>	£76,381 to £101,358
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 989100
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk">www.witherslackgroup.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	Queensmead-house@witherslackgroup.co.uk
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Queensmead House School is an independent special school which is part of the Witherslack Group.
- The school was first registered by the Department for Education in February 2020. This inspection was its first standard inspection.
- The school is registered to accept up to 130 pupils from the age of five to 16 years. Pupils are referred to the school from local authorities.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in July 2021.
- The school currently has 81 pupils on roll. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Pupils attending the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example behavioural and emotional needs, learning difficulties and/or an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. Some have spent significant lengths of time out of education.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was using an alternative provider.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 carried out this inspection with one day's notice.
- Inspectors considered reading, mathematics and computing as part of the inspection. Inspectors met groups of pupils in the primary and secondary sections of the school to discuss their learning in these subjects and looked at their work. Inspectors also met the teachers of these subjects.
- The inspectors held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included meetings with the proprietor, the chair of the governing body, school leaders, staff and pupils. Telephone discussions were also held with the placing local authorities.
- To inspect safeguarding inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including behaviour and safeguarding records, and held discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey.

- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the free-text comments. The lead inspector met with a small number of parents during the inspection.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation, including policies and documents associated with the independent school standards. The lead inspector reviewed the school's website.

### **Inspection team**

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Claire Prince

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
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