

Inspection of Park School

Southcombe, Chipping Norton, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX7 5QH

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, safe and settled in this welcoming and nurturing school. They are polite and look very smart in their school uniform. Pupils feel comfortable talking with adults, who they treat with respect. For example, during the inspection, one pupil politely challenged the headteacher to a game of chess, while another invited him to have a conversation about motor racing.

Adults have a deep understanding of pupils' personal and academic needs. They establish strong and trusting relationships with pupils. This ensures that pupils feel secure and valued. They quickly grow in self-esteem. During the inspection, pupils talked perceptively, and with understandable pride, about some of the challenges they have overcome since joining the school. One pupil, for example, spoke about significant improvements in his own behaviour, and the difference this has made.

Pupils are keen to learn. They behave well most of the time and socialise happily during breaktimes. For example, during the inspection, pupils enjoyed playing football. Adults' skilful support meant that any minor disagreements were quickly forgotten. Pupils say that everyone usually gets on well together, although sometimes, they are upset by unkind comments. They spoke confidently about the steps adults take to sort this out when it occurs.

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

Leaders have revised the school's curriculum since the previous inspection. The curriculum's content is carefully sequenced to ensure that pupils learn the knowledge and skills they need to achieve well. However, plans to implement the updated curriculum have been hampered by the pandemic. The curriculum is now largely in place, in English and mathematics, for instance. However, a few subjects, such as history, are less well established.

The school gives reading a high priority. Pupils have often had negative experiences of reading prior to joining the school and dislike reading as a result. Some are at an early stage of learning to read. Teachers assess pupils' reading skills carefully and so are clear about their needs. They use a wide range of approaches to reignite pupils' enjoyment of reading. For example, adults use regular reading sessions well to immerse pupils in stories. High-quality books in the school's library have been chosen with care to appeal to pupils' interests. The school's phonics programme was updated last year. The new programme provides staff with a secure framework for teaching early reading skills. However, some staff lack the subject knowledge needed to teach phonics consistently well, so some pupils make less progress than they could. The older pupils study a range of qualifications, including English GCSEs, BTECS and functional skills.

The school's well-established and effective mathematics curriculum ensures that pupils learn consistently well in this subject. Teaching builds strongly on pupils'

different starting points. Adults use questioning skilfully to check and explore pupils' understanding. They adapt lessons and activities well in response to pupils' needs.

Pupils behave well in lessons most of the time. Pupils' additional needs mean that sometimes they become anxious or frustrated. Staff respond sensitively and proportionately when this is the case. As a result, disturbances to lessons are kept to a minimum, with little learning time lost. The school's approach secures notable improvements in pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school. The proprietor and headteacher are committed to reducing the use of physical intervention as a behaviour management tool. Together, they have secured significant success in this aspect of the school's work in the past few months.

The school's curriculum supports the needs of its pupils well. Subjects such as cooking and art help pupils to discover and develop personal interests. The school usually provides a wide range of trips and visitors, such as rock climbing and farm visits, which help to bring learning to life. These have been paused during the pandemic. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these activities and miss them a great deal. Leaders are keen to reinstate the school's usual range of activities as soon as possible.

The school's personal development curriculum helps pupils to respect different points of view. For example, staff encourage discussion and debate and make sure that pupils understand the impact of their words on others. Regular relationships and sex education and health education lessons help to equip pupils for their future lives. Pupils learn about, and respect, different family contexts. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Pupils learn about a number of world religions through the school's religious education curriculum. The school's well-established careers guidance helps pupils to develop ambitions for the future.

The headteacher has established a strong staff team. He is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and other leaders. Staff report notable improvements in the school's work since his appointment. They feel listened to and respected. One member of staff said, 'The headteacher has put the passion back in what we do.' Parents are very appreciative of the school. They refer to strong partnership work between home and the school.

The proprietor and governing body have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They have established a reliable structure for monitoring the school's work, including the independent school standards, and holding leaders to account. The proprietor has ensured that the recently acquired additional premises are safe and fit for purpose. The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the proposed material change is implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established robust safeguarding policies and procedures which are followed consistently. Pupils are supervised properly during lessons, breaktimes and at the beginning and end of the school day. The proprietor provides timely training for staff and governors, who are knowledgeable about what to do if they are worried about a pupil's safety. Leaders act swiftly when a safeguarding concern arises. They maintain strong links with parents and agencies such as social care and the police. The school's safeguarding policy complies with current guidelines and is published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Planned training to support staff in delivering the updated curriculum in some subjects, such as history, has been delayed by the pandemic. This means that staff sometimes lack the subject knowledge needed to deliver the revised curriculum effectively. As a result, pupils sometimes make less progress than they could in these subjects. Staff are keen to teach the new curriculum and are looking forward to the opportunity to strengthen their subject knowledge. Leaders intend to provide training to ensure that all staff are able to teach the curriculum consistently well. They should make sure that training is delivered as planned.
- The school provides additional phonics input for individual pupils who need extra help. These sessions are working well. They are tailored to pupils' needs and delivered by a teacher trained in teaching phonics. However, the content of these sessions is not always practised and reinforced well enough in the main classrooms. This is because some staff have not been trained in the teaching of phonics. As a result, pupils sometimes make slower progress in reading than they could. Leaders intend to provide training for staff in the coming months. They should ensure that this training takes place.

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

Unique reference number	123326
DfE registration number	931/6115
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10213812
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Outcomes First Group
Chair	Gemma Mann
Headteacher	James Davis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,020 to £80,140
Telephone number	01608 644621
Website	www.parkschooloxfordshire.co.uk/
Email address	office@parkschooloxfordshire.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 to 22 February 2018

Information about this school

- Park School is an independent day special school. It is registered for up to 40 pupils aged seven to 18 years who have social, emotional and other needs.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most have an education, health and care plan and some are looked after by local authorities.
- Most pupils are placed in the school by local authorities, including Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire.
- Pupils have often spent considerable periods of time outside formal education prior to joining the school.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider, Prospect Training Services
- The proprietor has recently secured the use of premises located in Shipton-under-Wychwood, approximately eight miles away from the main school site.
- The previous Ofsted inspection took place in February 2018, when the school's overall effectiveness was judged outstanding and all of the independent school standards were found to be met. A material change inspection took place in July 2018.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.

- The inspector held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included meetings with the headteacher, the proprietor and other school leaders. She also met with the proprietor's regional director.
- The inspector spoke with staff and pupils during the inspection. She held a telephone conversation with two parents and considered 10 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey and accompanying free-text messages. The inspector also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector looked closely at the following subjects when considering the quality of education: reading, mathematics and history. She met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and reviewed curriculum plans.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- The inspector checked the single central record and talked with leaders responsible for safeguarding. She also considered a range of documentation associated with the independent school standards, including the school's safeguarding policies and records.
- The inspector was based at the main school site for this inspection. However, she also visited the premises which the proprietor intends to use to accommodate the proposed increase in the number of pupils on roll.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department of Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- The proprietor wishes to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 40 to 54. This was the school's second material change inspection.
- The proprietor has acquired additional premises to enable the school to increase the number of pupils. The intention is to develop the new building as a specialist therapeutic centre to support pupils who have specific needs such as autism spectrum disorder.
- The new accommodation has been renovated to a high standard. It will provide suitable accommodation for educational use. The classrooms are light, airy and furnished appropriately. The building has suitable toilet facilities. Lighting is fit for purpose, both indoors and out. A small, lawned area provides a secure place for pupils to relax and get some fresh air. The proprietor also intends to use a local park for outdoor activities and walks and will continue to use a sports centre for physical education. Leaders have paid close attention to pupils' safety. For example, the building has a keypad entry system and suitable fire precautions are in place.
- The school is likely to meet the needs of pupils with SEND if the proposed increase in number on roll is approved. The school's curriculum provides a secure framework. It will be supplemented by a range of bespoke therapies. The proprietor has made appropriate staffing arrangements.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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