

Inspection of Octavia House Schools, London

214b Kennington Road, London SE11 6AU

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school that puts pupils and their needs front and centre. Pupils are very pleased that they attend this school. It gives every one of them, all with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the very best education it can. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe.

There are countless ways in which staff go beyond the ordinary to help pupils reach their full potential. The therapeutic and academic curriculums are woven together seamlessly. A key principle of the school's approach is ensuring that pupils have the personal and emotional skills that they need to access learning. The focus on enabling pupils to self-regulate and manage their emotions is highly successful. As pupils move through the school, they become increasingly skilled at managing their own behaviour and taking part in learning. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. Staff are skilled in helping pupils understand how their behaviour might affect others.

The school's approach enables pupils to follow an academic curriculum that is matched closely to their needs and interests. Where pupils have an interest in, for example, sport or cooking, they are able to follow these as 'pathways' in Years 10 and 11. They achieve highly in the subjects they study, including English and mathematics. When pupils leave the school, they all continue with their education or training.

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

Octavia House does everything well. From providing pupils with high-quality care and support, to ensuring that the curriculum is carefully designed, the school is highly effective. A key feature of the school is the way that all staff work together so efficiently. Their work enables pupils to learn exceptionally well and be fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities of their future lives.

Leaders' decisions about the curriculum and therapeutic provisions are based on their expert knowledge of how best to support pupils' additional needs. All staff are qualified as either teachers or therapists. They work together in each class to identify and meet pupils' needs. This way of working means that the therapeutic and academic curriculums come together seamlessly. They both work in tandem and contribute significantly to pupils being able to learn and achieve so successfully.

Reading, including phonics, is taught effectively. Leaders ensure that pupils have the knowledge they need to sound out words and learn to read. Leaders' firm belief that reading is the gateway to learning pays dividends. Older pupils read fluently and are able to access formal qualifications. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is planned very effectively. They have identified carefully what pupils need to be taught and how. Subjects are planned deliberately in order to go over previous work and to help pupils remember what they have learned. For example, in physical education (PE), subject content is repeated and built on so that pupils get to grips with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

One of the school's many strengths is the personal, social, health and careers education (PSHCE) programme. This programme includes a wide range of topics, including mental and sexual health, keeping safe, equalities, self-regulation, personal skills and British values. Leaders ensure that government guidance about careers and relationships and sex education is followed effectively. These aspects are taught throughout the curriculum and linked purposefully to the therapeutic work of the school. This all helps pupils to behave very well. Pupils become increasingly fluent in using their social skills to self-regulate their behaviour. They become more and more adept at moderating their behaviour, even when they are confronted with a difficult task or situation.

Most, if not all, pupils come to the school with very significant barriers to their learning, whether through early trauma or from missing large chunks of their schooling. Leaders ensure that the deliberate focus on pupils' wider and personal development goes hand in hand with the broad and ambitious academic curriculum. Staff work together efficiently in order to check all aspects of pupils' learning and development, including pupils' personal targets and goals.

The proprietor, chief executive and governors carry out their roles effectively. The expertise of the governors is used to hold leaders and staff to account rigorously. Governors ensure that they have detailed, up-to-date information about the school. The procedures to monitor how well the curriculum supports pupils' learning are especially rigorous. Leaders and governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. The independent school standards are met in full and the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff are positive about the support they get from leaders for their well-being. They appreciate the actions leaders and governors take to ensure that their workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is at the top of their agenda. The procedures for checking the suitability of staff are secure. Record-keeping is detailed and up to date. Safeguarding training for staff is comprehensive and ongoing. Staff are alert to the potential risks to pupils. They know what to look out for and understand how to refer their concerns to leaders.

Leaders and other staff have an in-depth knowledge of their pupils. They use their considerable expertise to ensure that pupils are kept safe in school and feel safe.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and reflects the most up-to-date government guidance.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	138803
DfE registration number	208/6001
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	10226779
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Proprietor	Octavia House Schools Ltd
Chair	Richard Leonard
Principal	Patrik Foster (executive principal)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000
Telephone number	020 3651 4396
Website	www.ohs.uk
Email address	hello@ohs.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 to 26 April 2018

Information about this school

- Octavia House Schools are a group of independent special day schools in the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark. The school has three sites. The first is located in Kennington Road, London SE11 6AU and caters for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The second, situated in Larcom Street, London SE17 1RT, caters for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The third site is in Vauxhall Street, London SE11 5LG and caters for pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in April 2018 when it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school caters for boys and girls aged from five to 17 with a range of SEND. The school specialises in providing for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils are placed by local authorities and have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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.

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, PSHCE, mathematics and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. They met with subject leaders, teachers and therapists to discuss the curriculum. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss their views about the school, including behaviour and safety.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, vice-principal and assistant principals, the leaders responsible for safeguarding and the lead psychotherapists. Inspectors also held telephone discussions with governors.

- Inspectors spoke to representatives of local authorities that work with the school, to discuss the school's provision.
- Inspectors toured the premises and reviewed additional information in relation to the independent school standards. They met with the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of policies and documents, including curriculum plans. They also checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation related to safeguarding, including records of vetting checks and procedures.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sam Hainey

His Majesty's Inspector

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