

Inspection of The Chalet School

Liden Drive, Liden, Swindon SN3 6EX

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend The Chalet School enjoy a caring, nurturing ethos. Staff form strong bonds with pupils and go out of their way to ensure that pupils are happy and have a positive time while at school. Pupils say they feel safe at school. They know who they can talk to if they need help with any friendship issues. Many parents and carers agree, saying that the school cares for their children and supports families well.

Pupils particularly enjoy their play and social times outside. The space is stimulating both for physical play and for exploring the natural world. The woodland and garden areas are newly developing outside learning spaces. These areas really add to pupils' overall experiences.

Recent improvements to how well pupils learn phonics are starting to support pupils to learn to read. However, the overall quality of education at the school is not yet good. Leaders are working to improve the curriculum so that it is relevant for pupils and planned in a logical way. However, many subjects are still at an early stage of development. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the expectations of what pupils can achieve. Therefore, some pupils do not make the progress they could.

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

Despite leaders' best efforts, the school continues to experience an extended period of staff turbulence. There are significant challenges in retaining and recruiting staff. Trust leaders recognise the impact of these staffing issues and have organised additional leadership support.

Leaders, including those in the trust and the local governing body, have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. An appropriate action plan aims to remedy the issues that exist. Leaders work to reduce the impact of staff changes on pupils' day-to-day experiences, but this reduces their capacity to work on some of the school's weaknesses. Consequently, the curriculum across several subjects is not well-developed. Some subjects have an outline of the important knowledge that pupils will learn, but do not have the detail or teaching resources needed.

Most pupils in the school need extra support to learn to read, and reading is rightly prioritised. There are high-quality fiction and non-fiction books available for pupils across the school. The literacy leader has successfully overseen a new phonics programme. Staff receive phonics training and appropriate feedback.

However, other areas of the school's work do not receive such successful scrutiny. The mathematics curriculum sets out the learning for each year group. However, there are a variety of approaches in the implementation of mathematics. At times, expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Consequently, pupils repeat methods they have already grasped. This slows their progress.

The inconsistencies in approaches are also seen in the expectations for behaviour. Some pupils experience clear routines from the team of adults supporting them. Pupils respond well to this. Elsewhere, expectations are not as reliable. At times, pupils are not supported well to develop their resilience and to work towards becoming independent learners. Some pupils are over-reliant on adult support. This can result in pupils becoming less interested and engaged in their learning when the adult support is not available. This does not prepare pupils well for their futures.

Leaders gather information about behaviour incidents, including when staff need to intervene to support pupils with their behaviour. However, too little is done to spot patterns of incidents across the school. As a result, opportunities to improve behaviour for some pupils can be missed.

A new assessment system has recently been introduced. It aims to support staff to be able to identify the small steps of progress that pupils make as they learn the curriculum. However, pupils' individual learning needs are not clearly identified, planned or reviewed. This lack of clarity can slow the progress that pupils make towards their desired outcomes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Trust leaders and governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities. The trust provides regular safeguarding audits to check that processes remain secure. Recruitment processes are robust.

Staff have a strong understanding of how to keep children safe. They are vigilant to notice and report signs of abuse or concerns about pupils' well-being. Designated safeguarding leaders know pupils and their families well. They ensure that a range of agencies are called on to support any child when needed. However, leaders need to ensure that they are clearer about the thresholds for contacting social services when there are concerns raised.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in some subjects lacks detail about how learning builds over time. This means that leaders cannot be sure that pupils will learn and remember agreed important knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum for all subjects is well-sequenced and includes sufficient detail to support teachers to plan learning in an organised way.
- Some areas of the curriculum are not implemented well enough. In mathematics, some staff do not have the knowledge they need to ensure that pupils move on to new learning when ready. This means that, at times, pupils do not make the

progress they could. Leaders must ensure that the agreed curriculum is implemented well across the school.

- There is a lack of consistency to the setting of routines and expectations for behaviour. Pupils experience a mix of approaches. Where expectations are lower and there is a lack of clear routines, pupils do not engage in learning as well as they could and therefore do not make the progress they should. Leaders must ensure that there is a robust system to check that behaviour is managed consistently and effectively across the school.
- The system to identify pupils' next steps for learning is not clear. This means that staff do not have the guidance they need to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' exact needs. This can lead to pupils losing interest in learning tasks and not moving forward as they could towards their desired outcomes. Leaders need to ensure that pupils' precise next steps in learning are identified and reviewed effectively.
- There are inconsistencies in how well staff support pupils to be as independent as they can. This weakens how well the school helps pupils to develop their characters and to grow in confidence and resilience. Leaders need to ensure that staff use an agreed approach to developing pupils' independence so that pupils are prepared well for their futures.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146668
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10267836
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	William Wyldbore-Smith
Headteacher	Helena Knight
Website	www.chalet.swindon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Chalet School is a special school which caters for pupils with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and associated learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- In December 2018, The Chalet School joined Brunel Academies Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other school staff, including support staff.
- The lead inspector had meetings with the deputy director of education from the trust and a telephone call with the chief executive officer of the trust. The

inspector also met with an improvement partner who works to support the school and with the chair of the local governing body.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, including the checks made when recruiting new staff. Inspectors considered how well the designated safeguarding lead acts on concerns about pupils' safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff, parents and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders to discuss how the school responds to behaviour incidents. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, when moving around the site and at play outside during breaktimes.
- Inspectors took the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, into account. They also considered the responses to staff and pupil surveys.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the end of the day and considered views expressed on correspondence that inspectors received.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Marsh	Ofsted Inspector

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