

Odyssey House School - Wokingham

Buckhurst Court, London Road, Wokingham RG40 1PA

Inspection date

18 July 2023

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)–2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(g)–2A(2)

- The proprietor has ensured that a suitable curriculum policy, schemes of work and curriculum planning are in place. Leaders see this as a basis for the curriculum prior to the school opening. Leaders are also clear that the curriculum will need to be adjusted to meet the needs of individual pupils who might attend the proposed school.
- The curriculum will be based on the national curriculum, with appropriate adaptations to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes across all phases of the school from key stage 2 to the school's post-16 provision.
- Leaders see developing pupils' reading skills as a key component of the curriculum. They have plans in place for the school to use a suitable commercial phonics programme to support pupils across all phases of the school. They intend that staff will be trained to use the programme and be able to access suitable resources. Leaders recognise that many of the pupils will have been out of education for periods of time before joining the school and may need help to become fluent readers.
- The curriculum is designed to provide pupils with a breadth of experience across traditional subject areas. These include pathways that will enable pupils to gain GCSE qualifications. Leaders also plan for older pupils to access courses such as BTEC National Diplomas in home cooking or hospitality as well as other suitable courses to develop their life skills.
- Leaders do not intend that the school's post-16 provision will provide a traditional sixth-form experience. Students in the sixth form will likely be working towards suitable qualifications, including functional skills mathematics and English, to enable them to gain access to appropriate college or employment-based training courses.
- The proprietor has a suitable programme in place to provide for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE). This includes age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) across the school. A suitable policy for RSE is in place and

published on the school's website. The proprietor understands the requirement to consult with parents about aspects of this policy.

- Arrangements are in place for pupils to receive up-to-date careers information and guidance.
- Leaders understand the need to promote fundamental British values. Much of this will be covered by the school's PSHE programme as well as through daily timetabled tutor sessions and other opportunities such as assemblies or external visitors to the school.

Paragraph 3–4

- The proprietor has already appointed experienced key leaders. These include an inclusion manager and the headteacher.
- Most of the formal curriculum will be delivered by suitably qualified teachers. The proprietor is in the process of recruiting staff with the expertise and experience to ensure that pupils experience high-quality teaching across the curriculum. Leaders understand the importance of appointing the right staff with the right skill sets to deliver a high-quality curriculum.
- Leaders have plans to ensure that staff access appropriate opportunities to develop professionally. These plans include skills audits that will identify areas in which staff need to improve their practice, focusing on supporting pupils with complex SEND.
- The proprietor has put in place systems to monitor the performance of staff. The appraisal system will include traditional aspects such as lesson visits, scrutiny of pupils' work, checking staff planning and one-to-one meetings with senior staff. The school has a six-month probationary period, during which all staff will be expected to achieve set competencies, including in delivering the school's intended curriculum.
- Leaders know that the initial period of integrating pupils into school will be key to their future success. Plans are already in place to support this work, including through assessing pupils' prior learning across the curriculum. Systems to track and assess pupils' academic and social and emotional development side by side are ready.
- Leaders have ensured that all the relevant independent school standards (the standards) in part 1 are likely to be met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5–5(d)(iii)

- Leaders understand the importance of ensuring that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given a high priority. They are able to articulate a strong sense of the ethos of the proposed school, which will promote understanding, tolerance and respect.
- Because of the backgrounds of pupils who might attend the school, leaders and staff attach great importance to developing pupils' self-esteem and sense of self-worth. Staff will be expected to give this aspect of the school's provision a high profile in all they say and do.
- Aspects such as promoting fundamental British values are embedded across the school's planned curriculum. Leaders expect that all subject areas will promote

aspects of the school's values and culture. This includes the humanities and arts, giving pupils an understanding of different religions, cultures and beliefs.

- The PSHE curriculum underpins pupils' personal development. A multicultural staff team sits at the heart of the school's work to promote pupils' understanding and respect for other cultures and views.
- Leaders have planned a daily timetable that includes tutor time and 'my time' at the end of each day. These sessions will give staff and pupils opportunities to explore specific interests and themes. These might include aspects such as local and national news, or topics that will promote pupils' understanding of moral questions relating to international events.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in part 2 are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7–7(b), 9–10

- The school's policies, written guidance and procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are appropriate. The school's designated safeguarding lead and his deputy have already completed suitable training to carry out these roles.
- Key staff will undertake safeguarding training appropriate to their levels of responsibility prior to the school opening. Leaders have a clear understanding of current government guidance linked to keeping children safe in schools. They are experienced in aspects of safeguarding such as ensuring that systems to report and record concerns are used effectively by all staff.
- The safeguarding policy is compliant with current guidelines and is published on the school's website.
- Leaders have appropriate behaviour and anti-bullying policies in place. These are based on those in use in the proprietor's other school, which is open and was judged to be good at its last standard inspection. Leaders intend that the good practice already in place at that school will be replicated here. This includes setting clear expectations and ensuring that staff are consistent in their approach to managing the behaviour of pupils.

Paragraph 11–16(b)

- The school has an appropriate health and safety policy in place. At the time of the last pre-registration inspection, this policy was not fully in place due to the premises not yet being ready to occupy. The school's health and safety policy is now fully enacted following completion of the first phase of building work.
- The school's fire risk assessment had not been fully realised at the time of the last inspection because refurbishment work had not been completed. This has now been rectified. An independent fire risk assessment was completed shortly after the last pre-registration inspection.
- Leaders have established reliable procedures to maintain fire safety equipment, including fire alarms and fire extinguishers. Other elements such as checks for asbestos or legionnaires' disease have been completed.

- An appropriate first-aid policy is available. Some staff have already completed first-aid training. Other staff will undertake first-aid training as and when they are appointed.
- Discussions with leaders indicate that appropriate admission and attendance registers will be maintained. The proprietor's plans for safe supervision of pupils at all times of the school day are sensible. This is particularly the case when pupils' social and emotional needs are taken into account.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in part 3 are likely to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6)–20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(5)(c), 21(6)

- The proposed school has an appropriate single central record. Some staff have already been appointed and the correct checks are underway to ensure that these early appointees are suitable to work at the school. Some recruitment checks are complete.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the requirements of part 4 of the independent school standards. They know what checks need to be made and why. Recruitment procedures appear to be suitable. Leaders are knowledgeable about the way part 4 links to current government guidance on recruitment of staff. Leaders have attended appropriate safer recruitment training.
- Leaders understand the need for appropriate checks on agency staff.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in part 4 are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1)–23(1)(c), 24(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2), 25–29(1)(b)

- The proposed school will occupy what was until recently a modern building occupied by a technology company. The premises are bright and inviting.
- Leaders intend the necessary building work to be completed in two phases. At the time of the last inspection, work had only just started on making the necessary alterations to the building. As a result, the accommodation was not ready and a number of standards in part 5 were not met. The first phase of building work has now been completed so that all parts of this standard are likely to be met.
- Accommodation refurbished in phase one of the building work has been finished to a high standard and is suitably equipped to meet the needs of staff and pupils. A medical room has been installed that is suitably equipped with a bed, sink and lockable cupboard. Toilets are located nearby. Hot and cold water is now available in showers, toilets and medical facilities. Drinking water is clearly labelled as such.
- The second phase of building work is well under way. Leaders intend that, once completed, this part of the school will provide further classroom space, as well as a range of specialist and therapeutic areas. Leaders have ensured that this part of the site is separate from the rest of the building while the second phase of building takes place. A locked door ensures that no one can access this part of the school. The outdoor area relating to this part of the building is securely fenced.

- The grounds are spacious and afford ample parking and wooded and grassed areas that are very suitable for pupils to play outside. Some of the school's physical education will take place in the grounds. Some will take place off site at local sports facilities.
- The accommodation provides for separate toilet and washing facilities for pupils and staff. The acoustics and lighting, both internal and external, are suitable for the intended use of the building.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in part 5 are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)–32(1)(d), 32(1)(f)–32(2)(b), 32(b)(ii), 32(2)(d)–32(4)(c)

- The proposed school's website is already available. Key policies are published on the website as required. This includes the school's complaints procedures and the safeguarding policy, which is compliant with current guidelines. Other policies are available on request.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the requirements of part 6. Regular updates and written reports will be provided for parents or carers, as well as for local authorities placing pupils at the school.
- Leaders are fully conversant with the requirements to report on pupils' progress and attainment, as well as to support the annual review process of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in part 6 are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33–33(k)

- The school's complaints policy meets the requirements of part 7. It sets out clear timescales for the management of any complaint. Leaders demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of the policy and how it will be implemented.
- Leaders plan to keep any copies of complaints confidential and available for inspection on the school premises.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in part 7 are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- The proprietor's rationale for the proposed school is sound. The school will be run on a similar basis to the proprietor's school in London, although leaders acknowledge the subtle differences in some aspects of the context of the proposed school.
- The proprietor has already appointed key leaders for the school. The chair of the proprietor body was involved in every meeting of this pre-registration inspection. All leaders present at this inspection have relevant experience of running an independent special school and demonstrate a clear understanding of the requirements relating to the standards.
- Governance will be provided by the school's joint directors. Processes and systems are in place to ensure that the proprietor has close oversight of aspects such as the

quality of education the proposed school will provide. Suitable oversight of safeguarding and the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff is in place.

- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in part 8 are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has a suitable accessibility plan in place. The proprietor intends to update the plan at appropriate intervals to take into account the school's pupils and staff. The school is likely to meet paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	149977
DfE registration number	872/6014
Inspection number	10299068

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Odyssey Education Services Ltd
Chair	Charulata Kashyap
Headteacher	Nick Hall
Annual fees (day pupils)	£75,000 to £101,000
Telephone number	0118 229 3000
Website	www.odysseyleducationgroup.co.uk
Email address	info@odysseyleducation.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	7 to 19	7 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	48

Reason for inspector's recommendations

- The building work required to accommodate 60 pupils is being completed in two phases. The first phase of building work has been completed so that there is suitable accommodation for up to a maximum of 48 pupils, with the second phase scheduled for the coming months.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	Up to 60
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	Up to 60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	Up to 60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	3	20
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	10

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located in a modern building with its own attractive grounds, recently vacated by a technology company on the outskirts of Wokingham. The building is currently being refurbished so that it meets all the requirements of the independent school standards, particularly those in parts 3 and 5.
- The proprietor is Odyssey Education Services Limited, a company registered at Companies House with two joint directors. Odyssey Education Services Limited currently runs two other independent special schools situated in Highgate, London and in Bloomsbury, London.
- The school proposes to cater for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. It is likely that most, if not all, pupils will have an EHC plan and be placed at the school by local authorities.
- There are no plans at present to use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the second pre-registration inspection of the proposed school. The purpose of the inspection was to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Schools must comply with the independent school standards to be registered.
- The inspection focused on compliance with the regulatory requirements of the independent school standards, safeguarding procedures and Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
- The inspector had a tour of the school's premises and grounds. She reviewed a wide range of documents, including the single central record, policies, curriculum and assessment information.
- The inspector met with the chief executive officer (who is also a director and chair of the proprietor body), the headteacher and the company's human resource business partner.
- The inspector viewed the site plans that have been drawn up by the proprietor. These provide a clear vision of the school after the refurbishment work currently under way is completed.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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