

# Inspection of Octavia House Schools, Essex

High Street, Great Baddow, Essex CM2 7HH

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Inspection dates: 4 to 6 July 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

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 get a fresh start at Octavia House and thrive. They love coming to school, which is reflected in their high attendance. They build positive relationships with the staff. They feel welcome and cared for. Pupils are supported, step by step, to build up their resilience and tolerance. This makes them confident to be in the classroom for longer and longer periods.

Pupils' academic needs are well understood by their teachers. Pupils are taught what they need to fill previous gaps in their learning. They are expected to work hard, and they do. Pupils also have fun. They enjoy their regular movement breaks, playing football together or digging in the sandpit. Their learning is well planned and they benefit from lots of trips out and visitors to school.

All pupils have therapy sessions that help them to understand their emotions better. As a result, they react well to things that make them upset or worried. Their behaviour improves substantially with time at Octavia House. Parents describe the school as having 'transformed' their child's experience of education.

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

The proprietor body has taken the excellent practice of their London schools and successfully transferred it to Essex. They started this school with staff familiar with their ethos and values. This, the strong curriculum and other effective practices mean that they have made a racing start and are already providing outstanding provision.

The curriculum is of very high quality. Important key themes are revisited on a regular basis. Teachers use detailed assessment systems to track where pupils have gaps in their previous learning. Every child's learning in each topic is personalised to help them either fill gaps or to move on to new knowledge.

Expectations of pupils' achievement are high. Teachers do not let pupils opt out of learning. If pupils are upset and leave the classroom, they are normally supported to settle back in quickly. If they are finding being with others hard, the teachers will take the learning to another space. As a result, pupils make rapid progress.

Pupils love sharing books with their teachers. They benefit from the school's location next to a large library, so they choose lots of books to borrow to read for pleasure. They are enthusiastic about reading and have favourite books. All pupils who join the school are at risk of falling behind with reading. They are supported to catch up through the teaching of phonics in highly focused small groups. Teachers have extensive and regular training in the teaching of early reading. The books pupils use to practise are well matched to the sounds they know.

Staff ensure they show pupils that they truly care for and value them, even when pupils' behaviour is difficult. The use of therapeutic interventions is fully integrated

into the planned curriculum. Pupils are taught how to take turns, to share and to understand social situations. Their underlying needs are addressed, such as weak hand control or speech and language difficulties. All pupils have had previous adverse childhood experiences. Other therapies through play and talk are highly focused on the help that an individual pupil needs.

Learning about moral and cultural issues is a high-profile part of the curriculum. Pupils learn about different relationships and how to keep their bodies healthy. They are interested and polite when they listen to visiting speakers, for example a leader from the local Jewish community. They have trips to local museums and regularly walk to the local park. Leaders have ensured that the requirements for teaching relationships and sex education are met.

Pupils sign up for daily extra-curricular clubs and enjoy activities such as cookery, sports and science. They like spending time with friends from the other class in these sessions.

The staff work as a highly cohesive team. Whatever their role, they all interact with pupils throughout the day. Their use of language is highly consistent and optimistic and, again, shows the pupils they value them as individuals. There is a real sense of community, for example when all staff and pupils come together to eat and chat over lunch.

All teachers and therapists are fully qualified and experienced. They benefit from an extremely strong professional development programme, which brings them together with specialists from the London schools. Staff really appreciate the training that they receive and the support on offer from leaders.

The proprietor and school leaders have excellent knowledge of the independent school standards (the standards). They have ensured that the standards are met consistently. The proprietor employs education and therapy experts to form a governing body. Governors provide external checks and validation on standards, the quality of education and therapy. They have ensured that the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are met.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know the pupils extremely well. They are highly aware of any changes in behaviour. They know the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding is a training priority. Very regular updates keep staff well trained.

Leaders work closely with families and carers to address any concerns. They are tenacious in making sure that pupils get the help they need from external agencies if required.

All the appropriate checks are made on members of staff before they begin employment.

### **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148934
<b>DfE registration number</b>	881/6080
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10267711
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	15
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	None
<b>Proprietor</b>	Octavia House Schools Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Leonard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Patrik Foster
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£50,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 3651 4396
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ohs.uk">www.ohs.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:hello@ohs.uk">hello@ohs.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This school is for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Their placements are arranged by their local authorities.
- The school is registered for up to 50 places, for pupils in Years 1 to 9. Currently, there are only pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- The school works closely with Octavia House Schools, in London, owned by the same proprietor body. Several staff work across all schools.
- The school opened in June 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school does not make use of supply staff.

## 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. 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 executive principal and other members of the leadership team. They met with members of staff. They also spoke with directors of the proprietor company, the chief executive officer, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social, health and economic education. For each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors also visited a sample of other lessons and looked at a wide range of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding files. Inspectors spoke to leaders, including the designated safeguarding leads, staff and pupils.
- To check compliance with the standards, inspectors undertook a site check. They scrutinised a wide range of professional reports and policies.

- Inspectors considered the 10 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They considered the 12 responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Damian Loneragan

His Majesty’s Inspector

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