

Inspection of Chilworth House School

Thame Road, Wheatley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX33 1JP

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 November 2023

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?

From the moment pupils join this exceptional school, their sense of self-worth, self-confidence and happiness grows rapidly. Pupils experience an excellent level of nurture and support because staff expertly build strong and trusting relationships with them. Pupils learn highly effective strategies to regulate their emotions, manage their behaviour and communicate their feelings successfully. As one pupil rightly explained, 'At Chilworth, we can just be ourselves. We know that we are not going to be left out because we are seen as naughty or out of control.'

Pupils blossom at this highly inclusive school. The inspirational curriculum is brought to life through thrilling trips to the zoo, the theatre, a goat sanctuary, a theme park in France and the boxing academy. Pupils also cherish the extensive range of opportunities and the chance to discover new hobbies. Clubs such as chess, bingo, knitting, horticulture and animal husbandry are special highlights.

Pupils play a vital part in the community. They regularly organise and run a stall at the local market, where they sell ornaments and trinkets they make. Pupils volunteer at the soft play centre nearby. They thrive and achieve in this highly caring school where expectations of what they can accomplish are uncompromisingly high.

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

The school engages extremely effectively with parents and carers. They are full of praise about the 'incredible and transformational' difference this school makes for their child and family. Many pupils have previously struggled in other school settings or may not have attended for a variety of reasons. When pupils first join, parents are anxious and apprehensive about the lack of consistency in their child's education. This school goes the extra mile to ensure that any barriers to learning are addressed quickly. Consequently, pupils and their families look forward to a fulfilling and rewarding future.

The curriculum is superbly structured to enrich pupils' learning step-by-step. They learn a rich breadth of subjects in great depth. Staff know precisely what knowledge and skills pupils need to secure and how. For example, in lessons, teachers use a wide range of high-quality resources to help pupils to learn exceptionally well. Specialist staff and therapists provide expertly crafted individual support and guidance which enhances pupils' experiences significantly. Consequently, pupils excel in all aspects of school life. They achieve highly from their individual starting points.

Pupils' excellent commitment to their education is reflected in their high levels of attendance and punctuality. Classrooms are abuzz with interesting and highly engaging discussions around the different subjects that pupils study. Activities are expertly crafted around pupils' individual needs and their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets. Teachers carefully break down learning into specific, achievable goals for each pupil. They know precisely when pupils need some time out and when they are ready for greater challenge. This means that every moment of the

school day becomes a meaningful opportunity for learning. Pupils' experiences of school life are not overwhelming or off-putting. Most pupils describe their learning at this school as 'a fun journey'.

Staff go out of their way to help parents understand what their children are learning, for example through sharing the school's approach to reading and nurturing pupils' love of reading. From the word go, pupils are immersed in an environment that helps them secure their phonics knowledge and comprehension skills. Those pupils who are at the earlier stages of learning to read are well supported to develop a strong grasp of phonics. Consequently, pupils learn a range of effective techniques to decode words. Before they know it, pupils become confident and independent readers. They cannot wait to explore the new books in the library and are excited to listen to the diverse texts that staff read and share.

Staff are exceptionally well trained. They are highly skilled at adapting the school's excellent environment to meet the sensory, emotional and behaviour needs of each pupil. Staff support pupils to learn positive strategies to help them regulate some of their complex emotions highly successfully. One Year 6 pupil echoed the views of many by saying, 'We know that to be happy we have to feel safe in our heads and to do that it is important that we learn that we can ask for help.'

Pupils' personal development is first class. They experience a wide range of rich opportunities which foster their independence and develop their self-esteem. Through working with the police, the local member of parliament, visiting authors, engineers and nurses, pupils learn about the different jobs and careers they can choose. They are proud of their leadership roles, such as being peer mentors and members of the school council. Pupils have a strong understanding of healthy relationships and healthy living. They learn about the diversity of modern Britain, including about different families and religions. The school ensures that it is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The proprietor body and governors have close oversight of the school's work. Together, they ensure that the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently and securely. The school prioritises staff workload and well-being. It is a harmonious and a highly supportive place for staff to work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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| Unique reference number | 131064 |
| DfE registration number | 931/6125 |
| Local authority | Oxfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10286393 |
| Type of school | Other Independent Special School |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 36 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Witherslack Group |
| Chair | Marcella Bird |
| Headteacher | David Willcox |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £83,567 to £101,695 |
| Telephone number | 01844 339077 |
| Website | www.witherslackgroup.co.uk |
| Email address | chilworth-house@witherslackgroup.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 12 to 14 November 2019 |

Information about this school

- Chilworth House School is an independent special school for pupils aged 5 to 11. It is part of the Witherslack Group. There are currently no pupils enrolled in the early years phase.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational and/or disabilities needs, including autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan and many have suffered significant trauma.
- Many of the pupils who attend here have either been previously excluded or are unable to attend mainstream schools. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority.
- The previous standard inspection took place in November 2019.
- The school does not currently use any 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, and teaching and support staff in the school. The lead inspector met with the chief operating officer of the proprietorial body and the regional director. She also met online with the chair of governors. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with an officer from one of the local authorities which places pupils at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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 also carried out a work scrutiny of pupils' work in other subjects.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed on Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with some parents. Inspectors also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Maria Roberts

His Majesty's Inspector

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