

Inspection of Lavender Lodge School

224 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HD

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 December 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well looked after here. Staff are caring and attentive to pupils' needs. They make sure that every decision is made with pupils' best interests in mind.

Staff prioritise the safety and well-being of pupils. The school is a secure and nurturing place to be. Pupils have trusted staff to go to if they have any concerns and get help from staff if they need it.

Routines help pupils to feel comfortable and safe here. For example, each morning pupils are welcomed by staff. This is followed routinely by various activities, such as breakfast club and time in the classroom with their friends. This helps pupils to feel settled for the school day and ready for learning.

The school encourages pupils to prepare for their next steps in education. Pupils go on outings to help build their independence, for example to the local shops and library. Staff take account of pupils' interests when planning enrichment clubs. These include chess, choir and various sports. The school encourages pupils to stay physically active, for example through timetabled swimming lessons and use of the playground equipment.

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

Underpinning the school's curriculum is the support that pupils get to understand and manage their emotions and behaviour. A team of therapists and specialists in special educational needs and/or disabilities works with teaching staff to personalise targets and strategies for pupils. They check the impact of these carefully and amend them as necessary to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Learning is logically sequenced and suitably tailored to pupils' individual needs. The school recently made changes to the curriculum and these are still being embedded. In some subjects, the essential knowledge and skills that pupils need to know are not as clearly identified as in other subjects. Where this is the case, pupils do not build knowledge securely over time.

The school develops pupils' language and communication effectively. The use of visual resources strengthens pupils' communication skills. From an early age, pupils are taught the language of sequencing, which helps them to follow school routines. For example, younger pupils are encouraged to join in a countdown at the end of playtime and to take off their coats before they sit down in the classroom, ready for learning.

Teachers and support staff understand and use the school's agreed strategies to help pupils to learn. For example, they follow a consistent approach to lesson structure so that pupils know what to expect at each point in the day. Staff are skilled in getting pupils interested in their learning. Teaching approaches help to

keep pupils focused. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to recall their previous learning and then apply what they already know to new learning. Staff professional development is supported effectively by leaders and the proprietor group. Staff are positive about working here.

The school promotes reading for pleasure and is committed to helping pupils become fluent readers. Staff use a structured phonics scheme effectively to teach pupils how to read. Pupils have individual support with their reading to help them practise their reading skills. They make use of the school's library and attractive 'reading corners' around the school and read a wide range of texts. Staff often use stories to help pupils' understanding of feelings and emotions. For example, younger pupils enjoyed a story about a polar bear, and recognised when the polar bear was angry, sad or happy.

The school is a calm and positive place. Staff model respectful behaviour through their warm professional relationships with pupils. They teach pupils to be kind and patient with each other. Pupils are taught about other cultures and religions, including through music and art lessons. Pupils apply for and take on volunteer 'job opportunities' in school, such as a printing assistant or gardener. The school helps pupils to express their views through membership of the school council and 'Girls' club'.

Behaviour incidents are analysed to identify what may have caused them and staff evaluate and enhance where needed the support strategies in place. Attendance rates are high. The school has robust systems in place to monitor attendance and staff act promptly to address any frequent absence. Staff involve parents and carers in their children's education and build strong working relationships with them.

The proprietor body has effective systems in place to ensure that the school meets the independent school standards consistently. The school has ensured that the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are met. The school meets all the standards of the early years foundation stage.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders are in the process of developing the school's curriculum. Some of the changes that they have introduced are not embedded. In some subjects, subject content is not broken down into the small steps needed to ensure that pupils achieve ambitious end points. This affects how well pupils learn curriculum content. Leaders should ensure that they continue to refine their curriculum thinking.

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	134594
DfE registration number	315/6081
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10299198
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Ltd
Chair	Richard Wilkins
Headteacher	Lorraine Titchener
Annual fees (day pupils)	£62,028 to £79,076
Telephone number	020 8687 7050
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk
Email address	lavender-lodge@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 to 8 November 2019

Information about this school

- In January 2022, the school was acquired by Witherslack Group Ltd. The school was previously called Eagle House School and has been renamed Lavender Lodge School.
- There have been a number of changes in leadership since the previous inspection. The headteacher took up the substantive role in January 2020, having previously been acting headteacher. The deputy headteacher took up post in September 2022. Two new assistant headteachers have also been appointed.
- The school caters for pupils who have a primary diagnosis of autism. All pupils 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.

- 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 impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of their school.
- There are too few pupils in the early years to make a judgement about this aspect of the provision without the risk of identifying individual children.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the pastoral manager, and various groups of staff. Inspectors spoke with the regional director and the chair of the school board as representatives of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, humanities and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

- Inspectors reviewed various documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, school self-evaluation, and behaviour and attendance. Inspectors reviewed a range of evidence to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered online survey responses from parents and staff.

Inspection team

Jude Wilson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Brian Oppenheim

His Majesty's Inspector

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