

Inspection of Chilworth House Upper School

Grooms Farm, Thame Road, Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1JP

Inspection dates: 30 April to 2 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

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 flourish at this inclusive school, which they describe as a 'massive family'. They appreciate the difference that the school has made to them. Leaders' expectations encourage pupils to have aspirations for their future career goals and many leave with the skills and qualification they need to be successful.

Adults combine high expectations with warmth and understanding so that pupils feel happy and safe. They anticipate when pupils might struggle and make every effort to avoid such scenarios. All pupils have a 'safe space' in the school environment which they have chosen. Pupils make use of these spaces, while staff then support them to get back to learning quickly. As a result, most pupils' behaviour improves the longer they are at the school. One parent summing of the views of others stated, 'the strong trusted relationships with adults at the school have helped my child express their emotions in a more positive way'.

Leaders have created a range of opportunities alongside the curriculum to develop pupils' talents and interests. Whether tending the goats or chickens in the farm area or learning to cook onion bhajis in the food tech room, pupils are guided expertly, building their resilience and interpersonal skills.

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

Pupils' personal development is exceptional. This is the bedrock of the school's work and is successfully developing pupils' independence and preparing them for adulthood. Like much of the curriculum, provision is built deliberately to meet the personal needs and aspirations of individual pupils. The programme is also supplemented by annual events that include parents and carers visiting the school and pupils supporting a local charity cafe. The school also works with a wide range of outside agencies and professionals to help pupils learn about British values, for example. Visiting theatre groups or individual experts supplement the school's offer to highlight awareness of LGBTQ+ issues, male mental health and online safety.

The school's 'Futures Programme' provides work experience that goes beyond the norm and extends to working with multi-national companies. Work-related experiences are highly valued by pupils and includes motor mechanics, hair salons and a high-quality hotel and restaurant. Pupils get opportunities to write applications and attend mock job interviews. All of this provides pupils with helpful stepping stones on to their chosen career path.

Leaders and staff are determined that pupils will leave the school equipped with the skills they need to lead fulfilled lives. Leaders have established a suite of subject curriculums to provide pupils with appropriate qualifications. The key information that pupils should learn is set out in detail in most subjects. Assessment is used well to track pupils' progress across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils are supported well to gain GCSEs and other recognised qualifications that equip them for their next steps in education.

The school's curriculum is underpinned by an extensive therapeutic programme. The work of onsite specialists provides individualised guidance and support for pupils. The school's highly effective 'waves' approach ensures pupils access tailored provision in class, during extra help sessions or a part of individual support. Leaders use 'internal team around the child' meetings to bring teachers together with clinical specialists to review the impact of the school's work and adjust arrangements accordingly. This approach has a demonstrable impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning over time.

Staff use their subject expertise well to create activities that help most pupils to learn the curriculum that the school has designed. In most lessons, these activities build on what pupils already know and can do. Typically, pupils build their knowledge and skills securely over time. However, where some activities or adult explanations are less effectively planned, this can lead to disengagement for some pupils.

The school has a structured phonics programme in place. Well-trained staff provide effective extra help for pupils who find reading tricky. Pupils read books that are well matched to their ability. Across the curriculum, pupils are exposed to a range of engaging texts chosen to not only mirror their experiences but give them an insight to different cultures.

The proprietor shares the school's high aspirations for pupils. The decisions they take have the best interests of the pupils and staff front and centre. The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Sometimes staff do not deliver the curriculum as intended, with activity choices and explanations not supporting pupils' learning as well as they could. This can lead to some disengagement from learning and pupils not learning consistently well enough. The school should ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skill to deliver the planned curriculum consistently well.

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	137334
DfE registration number	931/6000
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10313669
Type of school	Special School
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Limited
Chair	Richard Wilkins
Headteacher	Michelle Johnson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£70,866.45
Telephone number	01844 337 720
Website	http://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/chilworth-house-upper-school/
Email address	chilworth-house-upper@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 to 9 December 2021

Information about this school

- Chilworth House Upper School is an independent school that caters for pupils with complex educational needs, including autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, communication difficulties and challenging behaviours. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school is part of the Witherslack Group Limited.
- The school is split over two sites. Older pupils are based at the Arts and Vocational Centre, Edon Park, Thame Road, Wheatley OX33 1JN. Younger pupils travel between the two sites by school minibus in order to make use of the specialist rooms, such as the food technology room and art facilities.
- The school is registered for male and female pupils aged 11 to 18 years. There are currently no pupils over the age of 16.
- The school is governed by a school board which reports to directors of the Witherslack Group. Regional directors and senior leaders from Witherslack Group provide a range of quality assurance measures and training support.
- The school makes use of a range of alternative providers as part of their provision for a small number of pupils.

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.
- Inspectors discussed the 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, other senior leaders, and teaching and specialist therapist staff in the school. The lead inspector met with representative of the proprietor, Witherslack Group. This included the regional leads for safeguarding and for therapeutic provision, the chair of the school board and the regional director.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of pupils' work and EHC plans.

- Inspectors spoke to pupils around the school and met formally with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection, including during breaks. They assessed the school's culture to keep pupils safe throughout the inspection. A wide range of documentation was considered, including policies, staff training records and documentation associated with the school meeting all aspects of the independent school standards. The single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children was also scrutinised.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to the safeguarding leader and scrutinised a wide range of information, including a selection of the school's records. They also spoke to staff about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep safe.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Laura James, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Clive Close

His Majesty's Inspector

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