

The Shires at Oakham

3 Uppingham Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6JB

Inspection date

2 May 2024

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. The school has ensured that pupils' welfare and safety are a high priority.
- Staff know pupils well. They understand how pupils' additional needs can add complexity and make them more vulnerable. Staff are quick to pick up on any small changes to pupils' behaviour that might indicate a concern.
- Daily briefings ensure that all staff are kept well informed about any concerns about pupils' welfare. Staff use the start of the day to help pupils to settle and to check on their well-being.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at the school. They say that there are lots of staff they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils know staff will listen to them and act on what they hear to help keep them safe.
- Leaders work closely with members of the school's clinical team to ensure that staff have information about how pupils may be communicating unmet needs or worries through their behaviour.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know that keeping pupils safe is everyone's responsibility. They know how to record and pass on any concerns they may have.
- Staff communicate regularly with parents and carers and staff in children's homes. This regular dialogue ensures that no concerns are overlooked. This sharing of information means that staff can prioritise pupils' welfare when pupils arrive at school each day.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They are helped to understand when they may be particularly vulnerable, for example when they are gaming online with other unknown players. They are also taught important life skills and how to stay safe in their communities.

- Leaders work with a range of agencies external to the school to share information about concerns and to ensure that pupils get the right support at the right time.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website. It reflects the latest national guidance.

Paragraphs 11, 12

- Clear and comprehensive health and safety and fire safety policies are in place. The school ensures that these policies are followed.
- Leaders regularly undertake their own health and safety and fire safety checks. They carefully record the outcomes of these checks and quickly resolve any identified issues.
- Staff hold regular fire drills. They ensure that all pupils know what to do in the event of a fire.
- The proprietor's central support team provides annual inspections, as well as conducting monthly health and safety meetings.
- The proprietor has ensured that professionals external to the school regularly check the school's health and safety and fire safety arrangements.

Paragraph 14

- There is a sufficient number of staff to provide appropriate supervision of pupils.
- Additional teachers have been appointed to start in September. The school is also in the process of securing additional leadership capacity.
- Some pupils require one-to-one supervision, and there are plans in place to recruit more support staff if any new pupils require this level of support.

Paragraphs 16 to 16(b)

- There is a clear and detailed individual risk assessment policy in place that guides staff to produce accurate assessments of risk for each pupil. These risk assessments detail the risk rating for a wide range of behaviours and activities. They provide comprehensive and up-to-date information for all staff. These assessments are reviewed at least termly and updated after any new incident or change in pupils' behaviour. This ensures that staff are informed, in a timely manner, of any new strategies they should adopt to support pupils to help keep them safe.
- There are appropriate risk assessments in place in relation to the school site, including the outdoor play equipment. However, these assessments are not as thorough as the individual pupil risk assessments as they do not always calculate the likelihood and severity of any risk.
- There is a rigorous procedure in place to assess risk when taking pupils out of school. There is a range of risk assessments produced for all aspects of any trip, including staff taking into account pupils' individual risk assessments and their behaviour support plans. All staff are briefed about the trip in the morning and sign to indicate they have read all the relevant risk assessments. Leaders closely monitor this process to assure themselves that pupils are kept safe and that staff fully consider pupils' additional needs when taking them off the school site.

- The school is likely to continue to meet the independent school standards (the standards) checked in these parts if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(6)

- Leaders know what checks must be undertaken to reassure themselves of any new member of staff's suitability to work with pupils. These checks are completed before new staff begin working at the school.
- Leaders have undertaken all the necessary checks required for members of the proprietor body.
- Leaders record all recruitment checks on the school's single central record.
- The school is likely to continue to meet the standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 28(1)(a) to 28(2)(b)

- There are appropriate toilet and shower facilities for the sole use of pupils. The hot water in these facilities does not pose a scalding risk to pupils.
- The number of these facilities across the school is sufficient to cater for the increase in pupil numbers that the proposed material change would bring about.
- Pupils have access to drinking-water from water coolers situated around the school site and from clearly signed taps which are available at all times. There are also signs to indicate taps that are not suitable as sources of drinking-water.

Paragraphs 24(1) to 24(1)(b)

- There is an appropriate medical room on the school site. The room, which is used solely for the purposes of providing medical care, is located near a toilet.

Paragraphs 25 to 27(b)

- The school site is maintained to a very high standard. There is sufficient lighting, both internally and externally. The acoustics in each room are appropriate.

Paragraphs 29(1) to 29(1)(b)

- There are two large outdoor spaces on the school site for pupils to exercise and play. One of these areas includes the outdoor exercise equipment. The other is not yet in use by pupils as gated access is yet to be installed. When both of these spaces are available, they will accommodate the increase in pupil numbers that the proposed material change would bring about.
- The school is likely to continue to meet the standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor and leaders have a secure understanding of the standards that were checked as part of this inspection. They have ensured that the school consistently meets these standards.
- All pupils who currently attend the school are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Leaders have ensured that the education and care that the pupils currently receive at the school are appropriate to their additional needs. They have thought carefully about the impact of additional pupils on the school site and the current pupil population. They plan to increase numbers slowly from September 2024 to limit the impact on pupils' welfare and education. Leaders have focused on ensuring that the school will continue to meet the standards that were checked as part of this inspection.
- The school is likely to continue to meet the standard in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	142635
DfE registration number	857/6006
Inspection number	10341219

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Michelle Jordan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£76,500
Telephone number	01572 720357
Website	www.oakhamshires.co.uk/
Email address	infoOakham@theshires.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	8 to 10 March 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 19	11 to 19	11 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	29	40	40

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	29	40
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	29	40
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	29	40
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	29	40

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	8	11
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	0

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils with autism and severe or moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is registered to provide education for up to 30 pupils. There are currently 29 pupils on roll.
- Pupils who are above compulsory school age pursue a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs, including preparing them for adulthood.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place from 8 to 10 March 2022.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, to check the school's likely compliance with the standards relevant to the proposed change to increase to 40 the maximum number of pupils that the school is permitted to have on roll.
- This was the school's first material change inspection for this proposed change.
- The Department for Education commissioned the inspector to inspect the suitability of the school's provision in relation to policies and procedures relating to safeguarding, health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment; supervision of pupils; recruitment of staff; the suitability of the premises and accommodation; and the quality of leadership and management.
- The inspector met with the head of service, the headteacher, a senior leader and some staff.
- The inspector met with some pupils. He undertook a tour of the school site.
- The inspector considered school documentation in relation to safeguarding, health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment. He looked at the school's single central record and the system for undertaking checks on new staff.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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