

Inspection of Oaklands School

Norgate House, Tealgate, Charnham Park, Hungerford RG17 0YT

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 June 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Oaklands is a school where pupils thrive. Staff have high expectations for pupils' achievement. In a short space of time, pupils make exceptional and rapid progress in all areas of their personal development. This includes working together, listening, communicating and managing emotions. The personal development offer is exceptional. Pupils make strong progress towards achieving their individual targets which are set out in their education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

School has not always been a positive experience for pupils. Pupils told inspectors that life here is different. Pupils love this school. One said, 'The teachers are so nice, they do not shout or get mad, and they listen and help you.' Another said, 'My teacher is the best I have ever had. She is my safe adult.' Parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey were equally very happy with the school. One parent said, 'This school has changed our lives.'

Pupils make friends and feel safe and included. The highly nurturing environment means that pupils want to come to school. As a result, their attendance is good. Those who struggle to attend receive helpful support which helps them to spend increasing amounts of time in school.

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

The school has crafted an ambitious curriculum. Three distinct pathways mean that pupils are grouped according to their needs and follow a highly personalised curriculum. Pupils make great strides in English and mathematics. These aspects of the curriculum are well planned, and important knowledge and skills are taught in a logical order. Pupils routinely revisit key learning so that it is lodged in their long-term memory. As a result, they remember what they have learned and use this to help them understand new concepts.

Pupils enjoy their lessons, and most actively participate, answering questions and working independently, in pairs or in small groups on appropriate tasks. Staff explain new learning clearly and ask questions to check pupils' understanding. They use helpful strategies to support pupils' learning, for example visual prompts, now and next boards and sensory items. However, staff subject knowledge and the use of the most effective teaching approaches are not as consistent as they could be.

Staff know pupils very well. A deep understanding of what is in pupils' EHC plans helps staff to set specific, measurable, achievable and realistic targets. This is a key focus of the school's work. Pupils make rapid progress in their development, which means they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Some areas of the curriculum, such as art, music, cooking and physical education, contribute very highly to pupils' personal development and the many 'learning to learn' skills pupils develop. However, leaders recognise that they need to identify the

important knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn in these subjects more precisely.

Some pupils have significant communication barriers. The school has carefully identified how each pupil communicates. Sometimes this is through facial expressions, body language or vocalisations. Now that staff understand pupils' diverse communication needs, they are beginning to use pictures and symbols and other appropriate strategies to help pupils communicate more effectively.

Reading is a high priority. The school has thoughtfully organised a range of books for pupils to read in classrooms. Staff also read to pupils. The lead inspector saw pupils taking a keen interest in books. Staff are trained well in phonics teaching. The school follows a well-planned phonics programme which helps pupils learn to read. The programme is tailored well to individual pupils. As a result, they develop appropriate reading skills over time; consequently, pupils learn to read and write well.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving all the time. The school uses the 'Oaklands Way' to make the school's values of respect, honesty, kindness, commitment and creativity clear. Pupils do their best to live out the school's values. They help each other by providing helpful reminders about what is expected. Well-thought-through routines mean that pupils know what they should do and when. Behaviour in lessons and at social times is typically calm. When pupils become more unsettled, staff know how to respond and do so swiftly and with success.

The school's personal development offer is exceptional. The carefully designed personal, social, health and economic education programme ensures that pupils learn about an extensive range of topics. This includes road and water safety, British values, religion, relationships and so much more. Pupils receive helpful and appropriate careers education. Several visits and activities help pupils develop their social, emotional and communication skills. Therapy, such as play therapy and Dinky Ponies therapy ponies, and a focus on positive mental health all help pupils to recognise and manage their own emotions. As a result, pupils rapidly make up for lost time and are ready to learn more effectively than in the past.

A local advisory board offers challenge and support to the school. It regularly visits and works with staff to ensure the school's work is effective. The school has ensured compliance with the independent school standards and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Staff feel happy and well supported. While staff workload is high, useful coaching and mentoring are provided to support staff with this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not identified the precise knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn in some of areas of the curriculum. While these areas of the curriculum contribute very highly to pupils' overall personal development, pupils make slower progress academically. The school should ensure that the content in these subjects is more precisely identified.
- There is some inconsistency in how well some areas of the curriculum are implemented, including staff subject knowledge and the use of teaching approaches. As a result, pupils do not learn as much as they could in some subjects within the academic curriculum. The school should ensure that staff receive additional training that develops both their subject knowledge and the use of the most effective teaching approaches.

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	150269
DfE registration number	869/6025
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10342221
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Proprietor	P5E Limited
Chair	Dr Julie Smith
Headteacher	Georgios Chatzakis (Acting Headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,500 to £72,000
Telephone number	01488 757367
Website	www.oaklands-school.co.uk
Email address	info@oaklands-school.co.uk

Information about this school

- Oaklands School is an independent special school catering for up to 40 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school specialises in providing education for pupils with autism and associated needs. Some pupils have significant communication needs.
- All pupils have an EHC plan and their places are funded by a local authority. The school currently works with West Berkshire and Reading local authorities.
- P5E Limited is registered at Companies House and has two directors, who are also members of the local advisory board.
- The school has an acting headteacher who is supported by an executive headteacher.
- 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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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.
- This was the school's first standard inspection since its pre-registration inspection in September 2023.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the acting headteacher, senior leaders and teaching and support staff at the school. The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body. He also spoke on the telephone with a representative of Reading local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and reading, mathematics and creative curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and support staff, spoke to a few pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour on arrival at school and during visits to classrooms.

- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey. Inspectors considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey. Inspectors also considered a very small number of responses through the pupil survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jason Philipsz

Ofsted Inspector

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