

Inspection of Athena School

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Insufficient evidence

The quality of education

Insufficient evidence

Behaviour and attitudes

Insufficient evidence

Personal development

Insufficient evidence

Leadership and management

Insufficient evidence

Sixth-form provision

Insufficient evidence

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils that join this recently opened school have experienced much turbulence to their education previously. The school is a safe space for pupils to start to re-engage with their learning. Staff encourage pupils to have a voice at school. Pupils value this. This helps the school to identify pupils' needs and interests. Staff are starting to build learning around these. This helps pupils develop a positive attitude to education.

The school expects pupils to engage with learning. Pupils are beginning to rise to this. For example, they learn in the local community. This supports pupils to secure some of the important knowledge for their next steps. For example, they grow their understanding of healthy eating and the benefits of a balanced exercise programme through using the local gym. These visits help pupils learn to be responsible when outside school.

Pupils get support from staff to manage their feelings and mental health. Typically, there are positive relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils develop respect towards adults. The school works well with other professionals. Pupils benefit from this external support.

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

The school has recently opened and only just admitted its first pupils. It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of its work as much of it is in its infancy. While the school has begun to have a positive impact on the very small number of pupils on roll, this is in the early stages. There is insufficient evidence to make graded judgements during this inspection.

The school identifies the most important knowledge pupils need to understand given their gaps in learning. The curriculum breaks this knowledge down into smaller chunks. This provides staff with useful information to help them plan effective lessons.

The school has just begun to use a range of tools to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. In most cases, they then use this information to adapt future teaching. That said, there are occasions where pupils do not fully engage with the schools' assessment systems. When this happens, the school does not get a clear enough insight into some of these specific gaps as soon as they might.

Mostly, teachers link learning together across different subjects. They also use pupils' interests to teach important content such as in reading, writing and mathematics. This helps pupils to begin to make some connections between their learning. It also starts to address some of the many gaps in learning they have. However, much of this work happens in the moment as staff are teaching. Work to proactively identify these links within curriculum design is in its infancy. This leads to some missed opportunities for pupils to secure important knowledge.

The school prioritises reading. There is a range of books for pupils to access in the school library. The school ensures they train staff in how to support pupils who need extra help with their reading.

The school understands the importance of pupils attending regularly. There are clear systems in place to ensure regular monitoring of any patterns of absence. The school has built positive relationships with other attendance professionals who work with pupils. This helps leaders to identify effective ways to help pupils to attend and re-engage with learning.

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is an integral part of the curriculum. Pupils learn about important content such as the rule of law. PSHE knowledge connects well with enrichment opportunities. It also links with useful careers guidance and opportunities for relevant work experience. This helps pupils to secure their understanding of important values. For instance, they begin to understand the importance of acting responsibly. Working alongside staff, pupils also learn to empathise with others. Litter picking in the community or baking cakes for residents of local care homes are examples of this.

Staff value the way leaders support them with their workload and well-being. Staff appreciate the training the school provides them in how to support pupils to manage their behaviour.

The school keeps a close eye on how well pupils are faring. This helps leaders identify ways to support pupils better. The school understands the need to identify priorities for school improvement proactively as numbers on roll grow.

The proprietor ensures the independent school standards (the standards) are met. This includes the requirements under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Robust checks on the premises ensure the building is safe. Classrooms are bright, inviting spaces for pupils to learn in. Appropriate checks on new staff are undertaken and recorded accurately. The proprietor makes sure school staff work collaboratively with other professionals so that any safeguarding information is shared promptly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In some curriculum areas the school has not identified opportunities for pupils to make connections between their learning across different subjects. This means there are some instances where pupils do not have the chance to secure important knowledge. The school should ensure they identify where important knowledge links across different areas of the curriculum. This is so pupils have more chances to secure the important outcomes they need for their next steps.

- There are instances where pupils do not engage with the school's checks on learning. This means assessments do not identify pupils' specific gaps as quickly as they could. The school should ensure staff have the guidance they need to use assessment well. This is so they can quickly identify what gaps pupils have and use this information to inform future teaching and close these gaps swiftly and securely.
- The school is currently identifying priorities for future curriculum improvements. As numbers grow, the school should ensure they have clear systems for checking on the effectiveness of the curriculum. This is so leaders can accurately identify school improvement priorities.

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	150238
DfE registration number	881/6096
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10323200
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Proprietor	Oak House Children's Home Ltd
Chair	Saheena Saeed
Headteacher	Fatima Patel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£78,000
Telephone number	01268 479155
Website	n/a
Email address	saheena@careoffice.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The proprietor body is Oak House Children's Home Ltd. The proprietor operates two other schools. The headteacher works across all three schools. Key workers from the care home support with the teaching of pupils as and when needed.
- The school had its first pre-registration inspection in April 2022. At this inspection it was concluded that the school was not likely to meet the standards should it open as a school. In October 2023, at the second pre-registration inspection, the school was found to be likely to meet the standards should it open. It was subsequently opened as a school in January 2024. A small number of pupils joined at the end of April 2024. This is the first standard inspection of the school.
- The school provides education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities linked to social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils are children looked after. Currently, no pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school uses a small number of supply staff to support with the teaching of the curriculum.
- There are currently no pupils on roll in key stage 5.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- 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.
- The school has only recently begun to admit a small number of pupils onto roll. There was insufficient evidence to make graded judgements during this inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the proprietor body, the headteacher, staff, key workers and the deputy duty manager.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects; English including early reading, mathematics, physical education and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans,

reviewed evidence of pupils' work and spoke with staff. Inspectors met with pupils throughout the school day including during some learning time.

- 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.
- To check compliance with the standards, inspectors spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors visited classrooms and toured the school site, reviewed pupil records, school policies and records relating a range of aspects of the school such as behaviour and health and safety.

Inspection team

Michael Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Steve Woodley

His Majesty's Inspector

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