

Inspection of Oakfield Lodge School

Warmingham Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 4PP

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 July 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Emma Thompson. This school is part of the Manor Hall Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Philip Harrison, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Fitchett.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive here. They make a positive contribution to the calm and settled atmosphere that exists at the school. Pupils form respectful and trusting relationships with staff, who care for them extremely well. Pupils are happy.

Pupils join the school following a significant period of disruption to their education. They benefit from the warmth and kindness of staff. Pupils quickly transform their views of the world and of themselves. They rise to the high aspirations that the school has for their achievement and conduct. Most pupils achieve well.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' character. It prepares pupils exceptionally well for adulthood. Pupils receive the support that they need to overcome the challenges that they face. The school's 'Forever Tree' provides a personalised celebration for each pupil who makes a successful transition from the school to another setting.

Pupils access an extensive range of opportunities that help them to become confident and independent young people. As school councillors, pupils make a strong contribution to improvements at the school. They appreciate that staff listen to their ideas. Activities such as cooking, sports, art, outdoor learning and fundraising for charity help pupils to develop their talents and interests.

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

Trustees have a precise understanding of the performance of the school. They provide strong support and challenge to the school to ensure that it makes decisions in the best interests of pupils. Collectively, trustees and the school have created an aspirational culture where everyone is valued.

Most pupils are inspired by the ambitious curriculum that the school has designed. Staff receive training that enables them to deliver the curriculum with expertise. They design activities that are well-matched to pupils' needs. This helps pupils to build a secure body of knowledge about the subjects that they study. As a result, pupils are well-prepared for each stage of their education. Pupils move on to meaningful destinations that include further education, apprenticeships or employment with training.

Staff use their very strong subject knowledge to make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. They address any gaps or misconceptions that pupils may have about their learning quickly. Staff ensure that pupils secure a range of qualifications and awards that sets them up well for future study.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), accurately. Staff value the time, training and support that they receive from the school. They use this to adapt activities with success and ensure that pupils with SEND achieve well. This also supports their workload.

The school's reading programme is at the early stages of development. Some pupils, who have gaps in their phonics knowledge, do not receive the help that they need to become confident and fluent readers. These pupils are not able to access the school's ambitious curriculum sufficiently well and they do not achieve as well as they could. However, the school has prioritised the development of pupils' verbal communication. Pupils speak with enthusiasm and accuracy about mental health, alcohol and healthy relationships. This contributes well to the development of pupils' ethical and moral understanding of the world.

The school ensures that pupils are highly motivated by their studies. Pupils routinely demonstrate positive attitudes in lessons. The absence rate for some pupils is high. The school's strategies to improve attendance are beginning to have a positive impact on the attendance of some pupils. Pupils with severe absence do not receive the help that they need so that their attendance improves quickly. Consequently, these pupils do not benefit from all that the school has to offer.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development demonstrates its commitment to developing independent, resilient young people who are ready to make the most of life in modern Britain. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. They know the importance of treating others with respect and value the differences that may exist between people. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers education that prepares them well for their next steps.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not provide some pupils with the support they need to quickly become confident and fluent readers. These pupils struggle to access some parts of the school's curriculum. The school should implement a suitable reading catch up programme so that pupils can achieve well.
- The attendance rates of some pupils are persistently low. This means that they miss out on important learning. The school should ensure that its approach to tackling absenteeism is implemented successfully and brings about the desired improvements in the attendance of these pupils.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148886
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10378032
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Fitchett
CEO of the trust	Philip Harrison
Headteacher	Emma Thompson
Website	www.oakfieldlodge.cheshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Oakfield Lodge School provides short term placements for pupils who have been permanently excluded from other school settings.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2025.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement. Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, art and personal, social and health education (PSHE). They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited some lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum and reviewed samples of pupils' work from some other subjects.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the trust, including the chair and the CEO. He also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss provision for pupils with SEND, the curriculum, assessment, reading, pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Farrent

Ofsted Inspector

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