

School inspection report

5 December to 7 December 2023

Oxford House School

2–4 Lexden Road

Colchester

Essex

C03 3NE

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as ‘the Standards’.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietary body maintains a thorough and effective overview of the school, enabling leaders to fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.
2. Leaders ensure that the school provides a suitable curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils. Leaders regularly monitor and evaluate teaching, which is effective. This supports pupils to make good progress and to attain highly.
3. Leaders and staff communicate their high expectations of pupils' behaviour effectively and implement suitable behaviour and anti-bullying policies. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare.
4. Leaders and the proprietor closely monitor the school's health and safety and fire safety procedures. As a result, they ensure that all fire safety and health and safety requirements are met.
5. Positive values of inclusion and respect are actively promoted throughout the curriculum. As a result, pupils develop a strong sense of social responsibility and are well prepared for their future steps in education and for life in British society.
6. Leaders ensure that the school meets its aims effectively. However, leaders do not always ensure that the provision for pupils who do not take the local county 11+ examination meets pupils' social, emotional or educational needs consistently.
7. Pupils have several ways to express their views and ideas, such as the school council. However, pupils are not confident that their voice will always be heard effectively in such forums.
8. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is effective and all requirements are met.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- review the curriculum provision for any pupils who do not take senior school entrance examinations to ensure that provision meets their educational, emotional and social needs
- strengthen the clarity of safeguarding records so that key information is easily accessible when needed.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of the school's provision. For example, members of the proprietary body regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the school's health and safety, fire safety provision and safeguarding procedures. The combination of this scrutiny and the support provided to school leaders, helps to make sure that leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders provide appropriate additional support for leaders newer to their role.
10. Leaders promote the wellbeing of the pupils actively and efficiently. For example, they ensure that the pastoral work of the school is effective and that the premises are maintained to a suitable standard. They also liaise effectively with external agencies, when appropriate, to support pupils' welfare.
11. Leaders maintain a well-informed evaluation of the school's provision. This evaluation is supported by work in partnership with other schools overseen by the proprietary body. Such partnership work includes moderation of the quality of work from the early years upwards to inform leaders' evaluation of pupils' attainment and progress.
12. The proprietor monitors the school's risk assessment measures carefully. Leaders ensure that risk assessments, such as those for trips and the premises and accommodation, are suitable. For example, risk assessments include due consideration of individual pupils' medical and other needs, when appropriate. Leaders systematically check risk assessments in order to identify any potential risks and include suitable measures to mitigate against them.
13. Leaders fulfil their duties under current equality legislation. For example, leaders have appropriate plans to enable any disabled pupils to access the school. These plans include a suitable timetable of actions to facilitate such inclusion.
14. Leaders implement a suitable complaints policy effectively. For example, leaders respond to any complaints swiftly and courteously. Leaders keep clear records of any concerns raised and actions taken in response.
15. Leaders provide parents and prospective parents with all required and useful information, most of which is published on the informative school website.
16. Leaders ensure that the school meets its aims effectively, particularly those relating to high academic achievement. For example, they ensure that the provision for pupils taking the local county 11+ examination is of high quality.
17. The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 18. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Pupils have access to a suitable curriculum that enables them to develop skills, knowledge and understanding across a broad range of subjects. Planning across different subjects covers a wide range of appropriate themes and topics. For example, the history scheme of work includes work on the Victorian era, which links to the study of Dickens in English.
20. The curriculum provides academic challenge and reflects the high expectations of staff throughout the school. As a result, many lessons, such as English, mathematics and science, become increasingly pitched above the level expected for each different age group as pupils progress through the school. This contributes to pupils' high attainment.
21. Children in the early years learn well through a carefully designed curriculum suitable for their age. Teachers carefully plan topics in each of the areas of learning which capture children's interest. They make sure that areas such as the relationship between letters and sounds and number values are planned well.
22. Staff make efficient use of clear success criteria to consistently assess and evaluate pupils' work and to check pupils' understanding of what is expected of them. Staff also use success criteria effectively to enable pupils to develop their ability to assess the quality of their own work.
23. Teaching supports pupils to make good progress, with many pupils attaining above the level expected for their age. The proportion of children in the early years who attain a good level of development is consistently higher than the national average. Year 6 pupils attain high levels of success in passing the county 11+ plus examination, obtaining places at the senior and secondary schools of their choice. Several pupils are awarded scholarships to their next schools.
24. The most effective teaching features tasks at a high level of challenge, with well-pitched questioning and clear explanations. These features of teaching enable pupils to deepen their learning and to make rapid progress. Pupils progress less well when planning does not take into account pupils' prior ability.
25. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make progress in line with their peers due to the effective support that they receive, both in and out of the classroom. This support is informed by leaders' accurate identification of pupils' individual needs.
26. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive useful and targeted support in class if needed, enabling pupils who speak EAL to make good progress and to attain well.
27. Alternative arrangements are made for the few pupils who do not take the 11+ examination, while their peers prepare for examinations. However, these arrangements do not always support pupils with their learning or socialisation with peers.
28. Although provision for pupils who do not take the county 11+ examination meets their needs, leaders do not always consider the impact of arrangements made for these pupils while their peers prepare for examinations.
29. Leaders provide a suitable programme of extra-curricular activities, such as cookery, dance and age-appropriate fencing. These enable pupils to develop a wide range of skills and interests.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

30. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

31. Pupils learn about and develop their understanding of the importance of maintaining good physical and mental health through appropriate personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons. The effective physical education programme enhances pupils' physical skills. Pupils develop basic skills early, such as those related to balance, co-ordination, throwing and catching and different kinds of movement. Pupils then progress to applying these skills effectively in various types of sport.
32. Leaders support pupils to monitor and regulate their own emotions through the introduction of an effective dedicated scheme. Pupils refer to this scheme frequently and actively make use of its visual representations of emotions to articulate how they feel and moderate their own behaviour as a result.
33. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum is appropriately matched to the age of pupils. They learn at an appropriate time about puberty, healthy friendships and relationships and consent. The school consults appropriately with parents about its RSE provision and staff inform parents in advance of themes that are planned to be taught.
34. Staff consistently communicate high expectations of behaviour. They implement a suitable behaviour management policy and anti-bullying strategy effectively, with a focus on promoting positive behaviour and supporting pupils to make sensible choices about their own behaviour. As a result, there are very few incidents of poor behaviour or bullying.
35. Staff supervise pupils effectively by providing support to pupils in all areas of the premises. Leaders ensure that the required early years ratios are maintained as a minimum, at all times.
36. Leaders and the proprietor monitor the school's health and safety and fire safety procedures regularly, systematically and effectively. As a result, the school makes sure that all required checks and maintenance are carried out in a timely manner and that a regular fire risk assessment is conducted and acted on when required. Staff receive appropriate fire safety training, including at induction, and fire evacuation drills take place at least termly.
37. The premises are well maintained and provide suitable facilities to meet the needs of pupils.
38. The first aid provision and procedures are suitable, including for early years children. For example, any medicines are stored and administered suitably and parents are informed of any administration of medication.
39. The school maintains the admission and attendance registers as required and ensures that all absences are followed up swiftly in line with its children absent from education and attendance policy. As a result of these effective procedures, pupils maintain a high level of attendance.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

41. The positive values of inclusion and respect for all groups of people are promoted throughout the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about important figures representing different cultures, backgrounds and genders in a number of related subject areas.
42. The PSHE, religious education and humanities curriculum develop pupils' social and cultural awareness; for example, pupils learn about the harmful impact of racism. As a result, pupils understand and actively articulate why respect for diversity is important and valuable.
43. Staff provide older pupils with tailored guidance that helps to prepare them for transition to senior schools. Visiting speakers come to the school to introduce pupils to a variety of interesting careers. Pupils also engage in activities such as a life skills award scheme, road safety and first aid training. These activities contribute to the development of pupils' readiness for life in British society and support pupils to be well prepared for the next stages of their education and for life in British society.
44. Pupils develop a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Pupils value the opportunity to develop good friendships and to belong to a harmonious school community.
45. Pupils learn about fairness, justice and the rule of law in a range of subjects, such as PSHE and history. As a result, pupils' understanding and respect for the rule of law is strengthened. Visits to the local town hall and to the Houses of Parliament support pupils to develop their understanding of, and respect for important British institutions.
46. Pupils begin to develop their understanding of economics effectively. For example, thematic curriculum days develop pupils' consideration of how best to fundraise and engage pupils in buying and selling activities with the proceeds going to charitable causes. Staff also begin to develop pupils' understanding of ethical issues relating to economics, for example, by exploring the economic impact of life during Victorian times.
47. Pupils demonstrate a well-developed sense of responsibility toward their peers. For example, the oldest pupils take on various roles as 'ambassadors', which see them support other pupils across the school. Pupils often choose to look after others during break time, should they seem in need of support.
48. Pupils develop their understanding and appreciation of democracy through participating in various forums such as the school council. This requires pupils who wish to be voted in by other pupils to put forward manifestos explaining which issues they would represent.
49. Leaders provide several forums for pupils to express their views and ideas about school provision, such as the school council. However, pupils do not have confidence that their views shared in these forums will lead to action because these processes are not embedded.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures through a comprehensive safeguarding audit and regular meetings with school leaders. This ensures that the school's safeguarding arrangements comply with current statutory guidance.
52. The proprietor and school leaders ensure that all necessary safer recruitment checks are carried out efficiently and that records are maintained as required in a suitable and clear single central record of appointments.
53. Leaders ensure that the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSLs receive up-to-date additional training suitable for their role, and that any staff new to such a role receive appropriate support.
54. All staff undertake regular and up to date safeguarding and child protection training. Staff follow an appropriate code of conduct and know how to report any safeguarding concerns they may have about a pupil Staff also understand how to report any safeguarding concerns or allegations about staff in line with school policy and statutory requirements.
55. Leaders take swift and appropriate action when a safeguarding concern is raised and liaise with external agencies when required.
56. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, for example, when crossing the road and when online. The proprietor checks that internet usage is appropriately filtered and monitored.
57. Safeguarding records are maintained in line with current statutory requirements. However, these records are not always kept clearly enough so that key information is easily accessible when needed.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 58. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Oxford House School
Department for Education number	881/6030
Address	Oxford House School 2–4 Lexden Road Colchester CO3 3NE
Phone number	01206 576686
Email address	info@oxfordhouseschool.net
Website	http://www.oxfordhouseschool.net
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Leyshon
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	121
Date of previous inspection	12 to 13 June 2019

Information about the school

59. Oxford House School is an independent, co-educational day school in Colchester. It was originally founded in 1959 as a small day nursery and moved to its current premises in 1984. The school is overseen by the Cognita group of schools.
60. There are 30 children in the early years, which comprises one Reception and two Nursery classes.
61. The school has identified ten pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language for twenty-nine pupils.
63. The school states its aims are to encourage high standards in behaviour and manners as well as in academic achievement, and provide an outstanding curriculum that inspires and promotes success academically, while at the same time instilling a love for art, music, dance and drama in the hearts of all pupils.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 December 2023

64. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

65. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and a nativity performance
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with a representative of the proprietary body
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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