

Inspection of Oakwood School

Heath Road, Barlestone, Leicestershire CV13 0JD

Inspection dates: 23–25 June 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils value their school and like their teachers. Staff are caring and proud to work with the pupils. Staff know the pupils well and relationships are very positive. Pupils are usually polite. Staff ensure that classrooms are mostly calm. Pupils apply themselves well to their work. They say they are improving personally and academically. However, staff sometimes do not check carefully enough what pupils already know. They do not consistently use this information to plan lessons that builds pupils' knowledge over time. Work to ensure that pupils can read fluently and have positive attitudes to reading is at an early stage.

Pupils understand the importance of respecting others. They typically say, 'I don't base people on their gender or race. I think of them as a person.' Some pupils' understanding of different cultures and beliefs is not as strong as it should be. Pupils say bullying is rare. They are confident that there is a member of staff they can speak with if they are worried about something. Staff expect all pupils to behave well. Staff are positive and encouraging. However, leaders have not ensured that staff are as skilled as they could be in preventing some inappropriate behaviours.

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

Leaders and staff are passionate about their work. They are ambitious for all pupils to do well, have successful lives and make positive contributions to society. Leaders know that the school is improving and what needs to improve further. They have improved different curriculum subjects and provided training for staff to manage pupils' behaviour. High staff turnover and the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic have slowed some improvement work this year. However, leaders have not focused as sharply as they could on improving some aspects of the school's provision.

The school offers a broad curriculum. Nearly all pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders and staff identify what pupils need to work on to support their academic learning and personal development. Most pupils make progress in most subjects. Older pupils gain useful qualifications and have experiences that help them move on to college, training or the world of work. Staff usually have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. They present information clearly, use appropriate resources to support pupils' learning and usually structure lessons well. This is particularly the case in Years 10 and 11.

Leaders have not ensured that all subjects are planned well so that pupils' knowledge builds effectively on their previous learning. For some subjects they have not carefully identified the knowledge they want pupils to learn and the order in which pupils need to learn it. Leaders have not ensured that staff consistently check pupils' different starting points. Sometimes the work and tasks set for pupils are not well matched to pupils' specific needs and abilities. The knowledge and skills which pupils gain are inconsistent.

Leaders have introduced some initiatives to ensure that all pupils are taught to read and develop positive attitudes to reading. Some staff have received phonics training. Pupils are being encouraged to read texts that interest them. A mural is being created in readiness for the new library. However, supporting pupils' reading is at an early stage. While support for phonics has been put in place, some pupils are not being well supported to become fluent readers. Sometimes the books pupils read are not matched to their reading ability. Leaders have not checked carefully enough pupils' reading abilities in all classes. The support they provide is not as effective as it should be.

Staff generally promote pupils' personal development well. Leaders have introduced a new curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) that is providing pupils with more opportunities to support their personal development. Pupils learn about different career options and receive information, support and guidance to help prepare them for their next steps. For example, pupils interested in mechanics gain from the visiting motorcycle workshop. Pupils are taught about the importance of making the right choices. Pupils understand, for example, different families and relationships, and how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils grow in self-confidence and are taught to be more responsible and considerate of others. Pupils are given opportunities to develop social and teamwork skills when preparing ingredients, tending a fire and cooking a meal. They are taught the importance of respecting others. However, pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions is not as secure as it should be.

Staff use a calm approach to managing behaviour. They work to de-escalate situations that arise and discuss with pupils what happened and why. Staff review pupils' behaviour and attitudes daily. They use this information to support pupils individually. However, while improving, the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour is high. Leaders have not ensured that all staff are as effective as they could be in preventing inappropriate behaviours. Not all staff regularly reinforce high expectations.

Leaders and members of the proprietorial board have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards. The board is particularly effective in checking the standards relating to safeguarding and the safety of the school premises. The school's safeguarding policy is published on the website. The school complies with schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010. Leaders and staff evaluate possible risks and put measures in place to reduce them. They check the site carefully to ensure it is well maintained. However, the board is less effective in holding leaders to account for the quality of the curriculum.

Staff know the pupils well. They are encouraging and positive role models. They know their work is important and sometimes challenging. They say they work well together and support each other as a team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all pre-employment checks for new members of staff are completed and recorded accurately. They provide regular safeguarding training and staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Daily briefing sessions enable leaders and staff to share information about pupils' and staff's safety and welfare. When concerns are reported, leaders follow these up and record in detail the actions they take. They work with parents and carers, and external agencies when this is needed. The school's safeguarding policy is published on the website.

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

- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is planned and sequenced well for all subjects and in all classes. Some pupils do not build up their knowledge well enough. Leaders should ensure that plans for learning identify the most important knowledge pupils should learn by the end of each year group and key stage, and the order in which pupils will learn it in all subjects.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff consistently check pupils' starting points in different subjects. Sometimes, the work set does not match pupils' needs. When this happens, pupils do not gain knowledge and skills as well as they should. Leaders should make sure all staff use a consistent approach to assessing pupils' starting points to plan subsequent learning.
- Leaders' work to enable all pupils to become fluent readers and to develop positive attitudes to reading has not been sufficiently effective. Leaders have not checked carefully enough pupils' reading abilities. Leaders should ensure that pupils are taught to read fluently and develop an appreciation of reading.
- Leaders have not ensured that the management of pupils' behaviour is consistent. While showing improvement, the number of behaviour incidents is high. Leaders should ensure that all staff are confident and skilled in preventing and managing inappropriate behaviour.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development is inconsistent. Staff do not ensure that all pupils gain a deep enough understanding of different cultures and religions. Leaders should ensure that all pupils gain a sufficiently deep understanding of these areas.
- The proprietorial board is not as effective as it could be in challenging and holding leaders to account for the quality of education. The quality of education provided across the school is inconsistent. Members of the board should ensure they have the expertise to fulfil this role effectively.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	128078
DfE registration number	855/6021
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10197975
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	15
Proprietor	United Education Services Limited
Chair	Mandy Cheriton-Metcalf
Headteacher	Kate Stevens
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000
Telephone number	01455 273763
Website	https://ocschool.co.uk
Email address	info@ocschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–24 January 2019

Information about this school

- Oakwood School is an independent special school. The proprietor of the school is United Education Services Limited.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Nearly all pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection there have been significant staff changes. This includes three new assistant headteachers who were appointed from October 2020.
- The school works with one alternative provider. This alternative provision is GAZ Autoschool (Ed.&Trg.) Limited in Leicester, which is an unregistered provider.
- At the time of the inspection there were no pupils in the school's 16 to 18 provision.
- The school's last standard inspection took place on 22 to 24 January 2019. At this inspection, the school was found not to be meeting the independent school standards in full and was judged to be inadequate.
- A material change inspection took place on 4 November 2020. The Department for Education approved a second premises at Chantry Lane, Groby Road, Leicester LE3 9QJ.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

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. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

- We met with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and other senior leaders. We met with staff and pupils, both formally and informally. The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietorial body.
- We looked closely at the quality of education in reading, mathematics, design and technology, science, PSHE and humanities. We met with leaders for each subject. We visited lessons. We reviewed pupils' workbooks and met with pupils and staff.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader and other staff to discuss safeguarding. He considered documentation relating to the pre-

employment checks made on new staff before they start working at the school. Safeguarding records and processes were evaluated. Information about attendance, bullying and behaviour was reviewed.

- The lead inspector toured both school buildings and sites to check the school's compliance with Part 5 of the independent school standards.
- We took account of parental responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as the seven free-text comments. We reviewed the 13 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

John Lawson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janis Warren

Ofsted Inspector

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