

Inspection of Oakwood Community School

Heath Road, Barlestone, Bagworth, Leicestershire, Leicestershire CV13 0JD

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 February 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming countryside school. They have time to settle in and gradually engage more with their education. Due to the support they receive, over time pupils attend school more than they did at their previous setting.

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils know staff will look after them and keep them safe. Staff help pupils to manage their emotions. They are very effective at recognising when pupils are becoming distressed. On such occasions, staff provide options to support pupils, such as visiting Mandy and Jayne, the therapy chickens. This helps pupils to stay calm.

Most pupils engage well with their learning. Lessons are sometimes disrupted, but staff respond quickly to restore a calm atmosphere. Records show that bullying rarely happens. Most pupils are certain that if bullying did happen, staff would deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils say they feel safe.

Leaders have an ambitious vision to prepare pupils for their future. They regularly consider how they can improve the provision. The recent changes to the curriculum are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. The improvements leaders have made to the personal development curriculum mean pupils are now better prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

Leaders have recently introduced an ambitious and well-structured curriculum. They have ensured that what is taught meets the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. Teachers take time to understand the starting points of pupils when they first arrive at the school. They find out what pupils already know and then plan to fill in any gaps pupils have in their knowledge.

Leaders have supported teachers to think carefully about what they teach and the order in which they teach it. As a result, most teachers' lessons build towards preparing pupils for their next steps in learning. However, teachers do not always clearly explain to pupils what they need to do so that they learn what they should. This leaves pupils unsure about how they can be successful in the lesson. At times, this leads to pupils becoming frustrated.

Leaders have recognised that some pupils need a very different curriculum. They have recently introduced more therapeutic interventions to support these pupils. Leaders have also developed a vocational and life skills curriculum on a separate school site. These adaptations, as well as the careful use of various alternative provisions, have been successful in engaging with pupils who previously were very reluctant to attend school.

Leaders have recently evaluated the range of special educational needs detailed in pupils' education and health care (EHC) plans. They now have a clearer picture of

how they are meeting the needs of all pupils. However, not all staff are aware of the specific targets in pupils' EHC plans. Staff do not know what small steps they should be focusing on to help pupils achieve their long-term targets. This reduces the progress pupils make towards achieving their EHC plan targets.

Leaders have developed an ambitious reading curriculum to ensure that all pupils are able to read fluently before leaving the school. The phonics-based reading scheme teachers use helps the pupils they support to become more confident readers. Well trained staff provide effective daily interventions for these weaker readers. The books these pupils read are well matched to the sounds they know. This supports them to become accurate and fluent readers as soon as possible. Leaders have invested in books that cover a wide range of topics, to cater for pupils' interests.

Leaders and teachers have focused on understanding and providing effective support for pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs. Each pupil is well known by staff and has a detailed behaviour risk assessment. These risk assessments and associated support plans provide clear strategies that help pupils manage their emotions. Staff apply a consistent, nurture-based approach to the support they provide each pupil. As a result, pupils are able to manage their behaviour and engage with learning.

Leaders have revised and updated the programme to support pupils' personal development. They have planned a programme that considers what pupils need to know and be able to do to be prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils benefit from personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. Older pupils have started to work towards completing a life skills qualification. They receive effective independent careers guidance. Teachers ensure that pupils learn to respect people who are different to them. The opportunities at the school for pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures have increased. Leaders have organised different 'event days'. These provide opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of moral, social and cultural issues. Lunchtime clubs provide a range of activities for pupils to develop their interests and talents.

Leaders provide well for pupils' physical health. Pupils enjoy the sports facilities as well as the open spaces and woodland on the school grounds. Pupils benefit from regular cooking lessons.

Staff value the support leaders give them. They say that leaders care about their well-being and are considerate of their workload. Many appreciate the 'community feel' of the school.

The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school's site promotes pupils' welfare, health and safety. Leaders have made sure that effective policies and procedures are in place. This ensures that staff take a consistent approach to caring for and educating pupils. Leaders risk assess effectively any activities in which pupils engage, including when at alternative provision.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding are knowledgeable about pupils' individual needs and particular vulnerabilities. Close working relationships between school leaders, care home staff, social workers and other professionals mean any early indicators of concern are identified quickly. Staff are well trained to recognise any signs that might cause concern about pupils' welfare. Leaders ensure that pupils who are educated off site are kept safe.

Safeguarding records are accurate. Leaders act on any concerns in a timely manner. Leaders have appropriate procedures in place to manage any allegations. Staff work with pupils to ensure that they understand how to keep themselves safe, including when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The recently introduced curriculum is still in the early stages of being implemented. Not all teachers have clearly identified for pupils what they should achieve in their lessons to be successful in their learning. As a result, pupils do not always know what they need to achieve to be successful in their lessons and can lose focus. Leaders should ensure that all teachers know best how to communicate what they want pupils to learn in lessons, so that pupils focus successfully on their studies and achieve as highly as they can.
- Staff, including those in alternative provision, do not consistently receive the precise information they require about pupils' additional needs and their targets, as outlined in their EHC plans. Because of this, the staff do not always know how best to plan pupils' learning to achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff receive the necessary information to know how best to support pupils who have EHC plans so that these pupils achieve consistently well, and in line with the targets they have in their plans.

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	128078
DfE registration number	855/6021
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10258196
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	48
Number of part-time pupils	7
Proprietor	United Education Services Limited
Chair	Mandy Cheriton-Metcalf
Headteacher	Kathryn Stevens
Annual fees (day pupils)	£53,000
Telephone number	01455 273763
Website	https://ocschool.co.uk
Email address	info@ocschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	23 to 25 June 2021

Information about this school

- Oakwood Community School is an independent special school that provides education to pupils aged five to eighteen with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The primary area of need for most pupils is social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils also have moderate learning difficulties and/or a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. There is also provision for pupils with a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and those who have had adverse childhood experiences. Nearly all pupils have EHC plans.
- A significant number of the pupils are children who are in the care of a local authority.
- Pupils who are above the compulsory school age study a curriculum that is appropriate to their stage of education. Most of these pupils are taught at the Cedarwood site, Chantry Lane, Leicester LE3 9QJ.
- The school makes use of eleven unregistered alternative provisions.

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.

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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The Department for Education commissioned this inspection due to receiving information that raised a concern relating to pupils' welfare. This welfare concern was thoroughly considered as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, English, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the PSHE curriculum with leaders and visited vocational lessons.
- Inspectors also looked at individual pupils' EHC plans and checked these against the school's provision.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor.

- The lead inspector visited one of the alternative provisions.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school self-evaluation and school improvement plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted surveys for pupils and school staff. Inspectors met with small groups of pupils to gather their views.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the safeguarding leader. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered relevant documentation and reviewed the school facilities on both sites, to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Ashbolt

His Majesty's Inspector

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