

School inspection report

14 to 16 May 2024

Oakwood School

Chichester

West Sussex

PO18 9AN

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. Leaders and governors work together effectively because they have a shared vision for the school. They understand their roles and responsibilities and carry them out diligently. They assess risk and consider ways in which the school could improve the education it provides. Leaders have appropriate knowledge and skills enabling them to develop a suitable, broad curriculum, which is taught by experienced and knowledgeable teachers.
2. Many lessons are well planned and meet the individual needs of pupils at the school. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from effective teaching which helps them to make good progress from their starting points. However, in some lessons teaching does not consistently take into account the full range of abilities and aptitudes among the pupils, resulting in less good progress being made.
3. Children in the early years benefit from a range of learning activities which promote their development in a safe and nurturing environment. Pupils of all ages enjoy their work and develop their skills in creative subjects such as art, drama and music because of the encouragement they receive from their knowledgeable teachers. Pupils enjoy taking part in outdoor learning and physical education which helps them to develop an appreciation for exercise and the natural world.
4. Leaders and teachers articulate and reinforce the school values on a regular basis so that they become second nature to the pupils. As a result, pupils behave well and are committed to their lessons and activities.
5. Pupils develop an appreciation for how they can be active participants in shaping the school community. Leaders listen to pupils' views through the school council and a number of initiatives have been forthcoming as a result of their discussions. Pupils also develop their understanding of wider society beyond the school community through planned activities which bring them into social contact with children from other schools as well as residents from local homes for the elderly.
6. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to learn to appreciate and respect a variety of cultural and religious practices which are shared with them by members of their community. However, their appreciation and respect for other cultures in the wider world is limited.
7. Pupils have a range of age-appropriate opportunities to develop their economic education.
8. There is an embedded culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are put into practice and that staff are suitably trained to promote the wellbeing of pupils.

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

The proprietor / leaders should ensure that:

- learning activities are consistently adapted to meet the needs of pupils across the ability range so that they are appropriately challenged
- pupils develop a wider appreciation of and respect for a range of cultures.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders engage in effective self-evaluation to further improve the quality of education provided, for example in considering refinements to the curriculum. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities by ensuring that suitably qualified and experienced staff are employed to teach and supervise pupils effectively. Leaders monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning through observation and professional dialogue with teachers, in order to share effective practice and encourage further professional development.
10. Leaders have adopted a set of values known as 'The Oakwood Way' and consider how to effectively make them accessible and relevant to pupils of all ages, including children in the early years. Leaders and teachers plan activities to reinforce the key themes and, pupils are able to articulate how these values make their community a positive environment in which to learn.
11. Leaders proactively consider the wellbeing of pupils, for example by creating new 'hub' spaces where pupils can go to relax. Leaders listen to and act on the feedback pupils give them through a variety of means including through the school council.
12. Governors assure themselves that leaders are fulfilling their roles effectively through regular meetings and reports. Governors question and challenge leaders appropriately, and listen to feedback from teachers and pupils when they visit the school. Governors have expertise in a range of areas including educational leadership, and appropriately oversee all aspects of school's operations. The wide range of experiences and expertise of the governing body is utilised and positively contributes to the school's effective self-evaluation process.
13. Leaders develop, monitor and implement school policies effectively and ensure that staff understand and follow school policy. Leaders in the early years ensure that the relevant statutory guidance is followed and that the setting provides a positive, nurturing start to children's education in line with school aims.
14. Leaders assess risk at a strategic level and ensure that practical arrangements promote the wellbeing and safety of pupils. For example, leaders put a number of security measures in place to mitigate the open nature of the school site. Leaders and governors have assessed the need to adjust the size and shape of the pastoral management team and have taken action to better meet the needs of pupils.
15. Leaders understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and commission external audits to review procedures and facilities to ensure that pupils can attend the school if they have additional needs. Subsequently, leaders have responded to this review by devising and regularly updating an accessibility plan.
16. Leaders share information with parents, for example by placing policies on the school's website, and sending parents regular written reports on their child's progress. Formal complaints are rare but, when they arise, they are dealt with in a timely fashion in line with school policy, as are informal concerns.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. The broad curriculum effectively promotes pupils' learning in the core areas of linguistic, mathematical and scientific understanding alongside a broad range of other subjects which teach the pupils creative, technological, physical and life skills. Curriculum leaders explore and facilitate links between subjects, for example Year 3 pupils study ancient Egyptians in history and art and older pupils learn about owls in science and use this knowledge as a creative stimulus in writing and art.
19. Leaders evaluate and adapt the curriculum effectively, for example by increasing the time given to personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education in Year 6 and by varying the modern foreign languages taught at various ages. For example, Japanese, German and Spanish have been introduced at various ages in addition to French.
20. Leaders arrange appropriate provision for pupils who have SEND through an experienced learning support team led by a qualified SEND co-ordinator. Pupils who have SEND are supported within their curriculum lessons or through individual or group sessions. The SEND co-ordinator observes and assesses pupils who have SEND on a regular basis and ensures their needs are being met. Classroom teachers adapt resources effectively to meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
21. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and mostly deliver lessons which enable pupils to make good progress. In many of these lessons, high-quality planning, tailored to meet the needs of all pupils and fostering in them self-motivation, results in teaching which leads to pupils making rapid progress from their starting points. For example, Year 5 pupils, having been taught the key elements of how to conduct a scientific experiment, are successfully challenged by their teacher to plan, conduct and record the results of their own experiments into wind and air resistance. Pupils make progress in their numeracy skills, with many developing high levels of skill when solving mathematical problems with and without the use of a calculator.
22. Teachers adjust their planning to take into account gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding demonstrated in previous work. This helps teachers to correct misconceptions and supports pupils to make further progress. Pupils make good progress in creative subjects, for example in art pupils complete a self-portrait at the start of each year with increasing sophistication and a growing understanding of proportion. Teachers challenge pupils to learn and use technical vocabulary which enhances their knowledge and understanding of topics across the curriculum.
23. However, in some lessons, including those where pupils are divided into classes based on their prior attainment, teachers do not plan their teaching sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils within the class. This means that some pupils find the work too easy whilst others find it too challenging. Further tasks are sometimes provided to challenge pupils with higher prior attainment, and teachers help pupils who need additional support. However, these interventions are not always effectively planned and pupils do not make as much progress in these lessons.
24. Leaders in the early years ensure that children experience a range of activities which suitably promote the development of their motor and communication skills, and their growing understanding of the world around them. For example, the children use sand trays for mark making and have a 'tea table' at which adults encourage children to interact socially. Children develop their

numeracy skills, by for example, finding number bonds to ten and progressing to using numbers in sentences. The children develop their problem-solving skills in a variety of ways, for example, when considering how to make a drawbridge for a model castle.

25. There is a suitable assessment framework in place which leaders use to monitor the progress of each individual pupil. Teachers use the marking policy and feedback process effectively to feedback to pupils about their work and this supports pupils to improve their work.
26. Pupils progress to a range of senior schools, many of which have competitive entry requirements, and a number of pupils achieve scholarships for their academic potential as well as in sport and creative disciplines.
27. A wide range of extra-curricular activities are made available to pupils including children in the early years, and many pupils engage in the programme. Pupils develop their physical and creative skills in dramatic productions, music ensembles such as the choir, the ukulele group and a number of sports. Pupils extend their learning through computer programming and additional language clubs.

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

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

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

29. The physical education curriculum is comprehensive and teaches pupils skills in a range of athletic and sporting disciplines. All pupils including children in the early years have weekly swimming lessons. The detailed and knowledgeable coaching provided by experienced teachers helps pupils to develop their skills appropriately. For example, children in the Nursery class make rapid progress in their use of resources such as bikes and climbing equipment, whilst older pupils are taught about a range of athletic jumping techniques. Pupils enjoy their physical exercise sessions and appreciate the positive impact this has on their wellbeing.
30. Pupils are aware of their emotional wellbeing and that of their peers. Through the values of kindness and sharing embedded in 'The Oakwood Way', they understand how they play a part in having a positive influence on those around them. Pupils appreciate the praise and encouragement their teachers give them and, in turn, pupils of all ages are supportive and encouraging of one another in lessons. For example, in physical education, pupils feedback on their peers' technique to help them improve. Teachers embed 'zones of regulation' into classroom routines so that pupils increase their self-understanding of how to be 'ready to learn' and the introduction of 'hubs' has been appreciated by those pupils who use them as a quiet space in which to relax. Teachers carefully support pupils' transitions to their next year group or senior school so that pupils feel ready to take the next step in their education.
31. Many pupils develop high levels of self-motivation, resilience and confidence in their lessons, in their recreational time and in extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 show a love of singing during their hymn practice, and they concentrate to great effect as they silently 'sing' the school hymn whilst using sign language.
32. Pupils are taught a suitable curriculum of relationships and social education which incorporates learning about how bodies change, with the oldest pupils learning about human reproduction. The curriculum takes account of pupils' prior learning and also any contextual challenges they face, with additional lessons scheduled when these are felt beneficial to reinforce key areas of learning. Pupils learn to understand and respect how people are different, or may have different family backgrounds. Pupils demonstrate a positive awareness of the need to treat all people equally. For example, Year 6 pupils articulate how their current drama production is about being different but equally valued, and pupils learning about the history of the Titanic consider the impact privilege played on survival rates in the context of that disaster.
33. Leaders and teachers actively promote the school's values and pupil behaviour is very positive. Pupils are responsive and respectful towards their teachers in lessons and move purposefully yet thoughtfully through the school between lessons. Pupils successfully resolve most of their friendship and other playtime difficulties with effective adult intervention in place to support pupils when needed. Systems such as behavioural 'traffic lights' and the 'yellow triangle' are consistently used by teachers to encourage pupils to make the right choices.
34. Instances of bullying are rare but, when they do occur, leaders are swift to act. Pupils are taught to be aware for signs of unkindness and to share any concerns that they have, which they can do to teachers or via an online reporting tool.

35. Attendance levels at school are high but are nevertheless monitored by leaders for any potential pattern of absence which might be a cause for concern. Pupils are appropriately registered twice daily and any unknown absence is followed up promptly to ensure the school knows that pupils are safe. Leaders ensure that the local authority is notified of pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard transition points.
36. Leaders deploy an adequate number of adults to monitor various outdoor areas and pupils are effectively supervised throughout the school day, including during recreational times. Staff monitor outside areas at the beginning and end of the school day to ensure that pupils arrive and leave school safely.
37. The school buildings and grounds are well maintained, with any defects promptly rectified. Health and safety measures are appropriate, for example doors to rooms which might present risks to unsupervised pupils are kept locked, and access to the swimming pool is carefully controlled. Pupils understand that they are not allowed in certain spaces, for example near the playground climbing equipment, without adult supervision. A rigorous programme of testing ensures that standards of hygiene and water safety are well-maintained.
38. Fire risks are appropriately monitored and action is taken in response to external assessments to reduce risks. Those with responsibility as fire wardens have appropriate training and alarms are tested on a regular basis. Periodic fire drills ensure that pupils know how to respond in an emergency and leaders discuss feedback to further improve safety procedures. Teachers and other adults are appropriately trained to meet the immediate medical needs of children and pupils whilst they are at school.

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

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

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

40. Leaders ensure that through both the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum and the assembly programme, pupils are aware of British values such as democracy, the rule of law and mutual respect, which are also embedded in the school values. Leaders ensure that pupils take part in national events such as the act of remembrance of armistice day and D-Day so that they understand the significance of these occasions. Teachers present sensitive topics, including current geopolitical issues, with care so that no bias is inferred.
41. Through their understanding of and affinity with the school values, pupils have the ability to distinguish right from wrong, and take responsibility for their behaviour.
42. Pupils learn about careers from an early age, which includes lessons designed to counter gender stereotyping of career pathways.
43. The school council, membership of which is the result of pupil elections, is an effective forum for pupils to offer suggestions to leaders in order to make improvements to the school. For example, younger pupils have instigated a 'buddy bench' in the playground to help those who might feel left out, and older pupils have successfully requested that leaders rename PSHE lessons to help pupils understand more clearly what they are learning about. The council has also introduced a successful system for pupils to clearly articulate to one another when they are no longer enjoying a game or other playtime activity. Pupils value the opportunity both to contribute in these ways and to participate in a meaningful democratic process.
44. Pupils support a number of charities, which are selected by the school council, for example, through activities such as 'fun runs' and appropriately supervised and risk-assessed outdoor sleepovers. The 'green team' encourages sustainable practices by everyone at school, for example setting up a bin for soft plastics, and collecting used pens for recycling. Year 2 pupils write persuasive letters, as part of their English curriculum, to the government on the subject of pollution.
45. All pupils in Year 6 act as mentors to a counterpart in Year 3, and older pupils volunteer to help with playtime at the pre-prep school. Pupils at various stages but particularly in their final year at school are given additional responsibilities and appreciate the opportunity to be role models and to have a positive influence on the school community.
46. Pupils have opportunities to develop their understanding of other cultures. For example, in language lessons teachers shares their experiences of living in different countries, and pupils learn about how the school day of pupils in other countries is different. Members of the school community who practise different faiths and cultures speak about these in assemblies. The school library prominently displays books by a diverse and inclusive range of authors. However, pupils' understanding of different groups of people is limited beyond those groups represented in the school.
47. Pupils learn about money and economic education at an age-appropriate level. For example, teachers of younger pupils preface school trips which might involve a visit to a gift shop with discussions about how to spend pocket money wisely. Calculating with money is taught at various stages of the mathematics curriculum, and pupils learn in PSHE lessons about financial literacy. The 'entrepreneurs' programme successfully encourages Year 6 pupils to engage in thinking about how a

business idea is formed, shaped and brought to reality. Pupils learn about planning and executing their ideas, considering marketing, costs and sales as they aim to make a profit, and additional factors such as sustainability and ethical practice are also considered. Pupils in younger years consider how to spend their budget when they choose which Year 6 'entrepreneurs' stalls to interact with. As a result of these activities, pupils grow in their understanding of how to use and value money.

48. Pupils develop an understanding of the wider community in the school's locality because leaders plan events and activities which draw them together. For example, pupils take part in workshops alongside those from local schools, and residents from care homes are welcomed at events such as the summer tea party which pupils host as well as perform to the guests.

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

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

Safeguarding

50. Leaders, staff and governors understand their responsibilities to promote the safeguarding of pupils through the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures. Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training as well as a thorough induction when they join the school. This includes updates of the latest statutory guidance, for example keeping children safe in education (KCSIE).
51. Safeguarding procedures particular to the early years, for example restricting the use of mobile phones and other similar devices in the setting, are followed rigorously.
52. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are suitably experienced and trained. They have the time and support necessary to effectively lead the school's provision. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding practices at the school. Governors review safeguarding reports and attend regular meetings. The governor responsible for safeguarding is highly trained and has relevant experience.
53. Staff are vigilant for signs that a pupil's safety might be at risk. Staff also understand the need to be vigilant with regard to the behaviour of other adults. Pupils are confident that they can speak to adults at school about any worries they may have. The recent addition of an online reporting tool has given pupils an additional pathway to share their concerns.
54. Any concerns are recorded and shared promptly appropriately using a system which gives leaders effective oversight of individual situations whilst also being able to look for any patterns or trends. Leaders communicate appropriately with parents and liaise effectively with external agencies whether to seek advice or to engage additional support for pupils and their families.
55. Pupils learn about online safety in lessons at an age-appropriate level and understand both the risks of being online and how to mitigate them. For example, younger pupils know to keep their password safe and to be sensible in their use of search tools. In a PSHE lesson Year 6 pupils consider hypothetical scenarios relating to abuse of social media and online grooming to raise their awareness of these issues. Leaders ensure that appropriate filtering and monitoring software is in place to keep pupils safe when using connected devices at school.
56. Processes for the recruitment of new staff, governors and activity providers are appropriate. The necessary checks are undertaken and recorded on a single central record of appointments. The swimming school which provides lessons to pupils at the school completes their own suitable pre-employment processes.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Oakwood School
Department for Education number	938/6005
Registered charity number	1105033
Address	Oakwood School Chichester West Sussex PO18 9AN
Phone number	01243 575209
Email address	office@oakwoodschool.co.uk
Website	www.oakwoodschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Oakwood School
Chair	Mr Richard Geffen
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Bradbury
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	336
Date of previous inspection	5 to 6 February 2020

Information about the school

58. Oakwood School is an independent co-educational day school. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of trustees. Since the last inspection the senior leadership team has been expanded and restructured.
59. There are 108 children in the early years, comprising a Nursery class, a Kindergarten class and two Reception classes.
60. The school has identified 41 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. English is an additional language for seven pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to provide a family environment and develop happy, confident pupils. It seeks to provide an all-round education of the highest quality to enable pupils to have the best start in life and achieve their potential. It endeavours to inspire pupils with a lifelong love of learning through a broad, creative curriculum intended to challenge, engage, and make the most of the outdoor learning environment.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

14 to 16 May 2024

63. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, 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.

65. 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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