

School inspection report

24 to 26 September 2024

Oaklands School

6/8 Albion Hill

Loughton

Essex

IG10 4RA

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 create a warm, open culture based on mutual respect and tolerance. They understand the needs of the pupils and receive effective support and oversight from the proprietor.
2. Leaders work successfully with well qualified and committed teachers to provide a quality of education which effectively supports pupils' intellectual, emotional, social and physical development. Staff implement policies to promote pupils' general health, wellbeing and safety.
3. Detailed assessment informs effective lesson planning which meets pupils' needs. All pupils make good progress.
4. There is an effective framework in place to help leaders identify pupils' strengths and this enables teachers to set targets for pupils' further development. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and their needs are met in class.
5. Pupils acquire new interests and skills through the varied programme of extra-curricular activities and the quality of physical education they receive.
6. Children in the Nursery and Reception benefit from a carefully planned curriculum which is taught by caring, well-qualified staff. As a result, they enjoy their learning and make good progress in an appropriately resourced environment.
7. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to hold formal and informal discussions with supportive adults. Time is allocated for pupils to raise concerns and they receive prompt and appropriate guidance. Pupils have opportunities to develop their leadership skills, enabling them to initiate a variety of activities, listen carefully to their peers and work together.
8. Pupils behave well. There is a fair, positive behaviour management policy in place which is used effectively. All aspects of health and safety, including online safety, are managed carefully so that pupils feel safe and secure.
9. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme promotes British values, such as tolerance and individual liberty. Pupils learn about financial and economic matters preparing them to play a part in wider British society. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to contribute positively within the local community.

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:

- provide opportunities for pupils to build their skills through contributing meaningfully to the local community.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders' consideration of pupils' wellbeing underpins the school's policies and practices. They know pupils well, understand pupils' needs and implement the school's values. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring further development. They listen to and involve all members of staff to ensure that areas for improvement carefully align with the school's aims.
11. The proprietor ensures appropriate oversight of leaders' work. There is effective scrutiny of safeguarding, the implementation of the school's health and safety practices and checking of the quality of educational provision and impact on pupils' progress.
12. The proprietor and school leaders understand the importance of risk management. They adopt a strategic approach to risk management in response to pupil needs and ensure that staff receive appropriate training in identifying and reducing areas of risk for pupils. There are detailed risk assessments in place to cover premises, educational activities, and pupil welfare. Leaders listen carefully to the pupils and respond promptly and supportively to their concerns. As a result, pupils feel secure in school and understand the importance of showing respect for different opinions.
13. Consistent behaviour management ensures that pupils are treated fairly. Discrimination is not tolerated and leaders ensure that adjustments are made to take account of the needs of pupils who have SEND. As a result, all pupils access the curriculum and participate in the opportunities available to them.
14. There is a detailed and appropriate accessibility plan in place. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 by creating an open culture in which all are valued.
15. The proprietor and leaders provide parents with access to the required school policies. Parents receive regular, helpful reports on their children's progress and attainment, including their next steps in learning, and have formal opportunities to meet the teachers. Leaders and other members of staff make themselves available to parents informally at drop-off and pick-up times.
16. Leaders in the early years plan an interesting and stimulating curriculum for children, which makes effective use of the indoor and outdoor learning environment. As a result, children build their knowledge and understanding of the world and develop new skills.
17. Any informal and formal complaints are managed carefully and effectively, in accordance with the school's policy. Detailed records are maintained and appropriately reported.

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. There is an age-appropriate curriculum in place which provides pupils with broad, interesting and well-planned learning across a wide range of subjects. The topics to be covered are set out clearly. Pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding successfully as they move up through the school.
20. Adults check pupils' understanding regularly and use this information to adapt what they teach, to challenge pupils and to help pupils make progress. In English, leaders have given careful thought to the literacy skills they want pupils to acquire from year 1 to year 6. The books and texts are chosen thoughtfully to interest and motivate pupils. Older pupils have good recall of the ideas and themes they have learned. They understand inference and the distinction between literal and figurative language. Younger pupils speak with interest about the books they read and successfully write simple sentences.
21. In mathematics, younger pupils learn to use column addition while older pupils are confident with long multiplication and a range of problem-solving methods. Those pupils with higher prior attainment and a clear aptitude for mathematics are given appropriate activities which help to challenge them so they can deepen their understanding.
22. Pupils are encouraged to take part in challenges such as national art and comic strip competitions. Teachers look for ways to interest pupils and enthuse them in their learning. Pupils participate eagerly in these competitions.
23. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular clubs on offer. Many pupils take part enthusiastically, acquiring and practising their skills in areas such as cooking, drama, dance, football and netball.
24. Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' work to assure themselves that high standards are maintained. In the early years, leaders discuss the children's needs, identify any concerns and consider individual teacher's training needs so that children benefit from thoughtful pastoral care and stimulating lessons.
25. Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points. This is because adults have put a well-designed curriculum in place and plan their teaching carefully. Effective teaching of early mathematics and reading helps children to make rapid gains. They quickly develop a secure understanding of number and enjoy learning to read through the effective use of phonics.
26. Pupils who have SEND receive planned support which is tailored to their individual needs. Teaching assistants provide suitable support in class and additional one-to-one support from specialists is provided when required outside the classroom. Specialists in teaching pupils who have SEND intervene early liaising closely with external professionals such as speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and occupational therapists. Pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points, especially in reading.
27. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are assessed on entry to the school. Their language acquisition and use is then checked annually to monitor the progress they have made. Teachers understand how to provide clear guidance to pupils and the importance of repeating instructions. Pupils who speak EAL make rapid progress in learning the English language.

28. Teachers provide regular feedback to pupils on their work and pupils are adept at reflecting and acting on the comments made. As a result, pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their learning and the next steps they should take. Formal baseline assessment and half-termly assessment in mathematics, creative writing, reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar, and science provide staff with precise information which is then used to plan pupils' academic programmes. Targets are identified for pupils in all subjects and communicated to parents through reports and parents' evenings. Pupils make good progress across the school. Pupils in year 6 typically achieve success in winning places and scholarships at academically selective senior schools.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. Leaders have created a school culture based on kindness, tolerance and compassion, in line with the school's aims and values. Teachers and pupils show mutual respect. Pupils are supportive of each other and respectful of differences. They are proud of their school's emphasis on these qualities and believe they contribute positively to their own emotional wellbeing.
31. PSHE education and the planned assembly programme provide focused guidance and resources which help pupils understand and respect equality and diversity, thereby contributing to the inclusive nature of the school. Key social and economic issues are addressed so that pupils build their knowledge of British society. Pupils are encouraged to see support for vulnerable families as morally right and valuable; they make a social contribution through events such as the harvest festival assembly.
32. Pupils behave well. There is a suitable policy in place which staff administer fairly and consistently. Staff understand the importance of prompt action to challenge any inappropriate behaviour and all are trained in helping pupils to manage their feelings and emotions. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour and the choices that they make. Leaders analyse data closely, identifying patterns in behaviour and taking appropriate action as needed.
33. Leaders implement an effective relationships and sex education (RSE) programme which is taught through the PSHE curriculum. Parents are consulted about the programme, provided with information on the topics for each term and invited to discuss these with leaders. Staff are appropriately trained to provide up-to-date information to pupils. Pupils develop their understanding of different family structures, online relationships, bullying and how to stay safe.
34. Leaders in the early years provide children with physical and emotional support. Children speak confidently with adults explaining what they are doing and what they have discovered, often inviting them and other children to participate in the activity. Leaders provide ample opportunity for children to be creative and imaginative while role playing and exploring the natural environment. Children develop their fine and gross motor skills successfully through painting logs, cooking and cleaning toy cars. Staff are appropriately trained in food hygiene and effective supervision to provide a safe and secure environment in which children can learn well.
35. Leaders ensure that pupils understand how exercise and a good diet can contribute to their mental and physical wellbeing. There are qualified staff who help pupils acquire skills in different sports. Pupils develop self-esteem and self-confidence through their involvement in physical activity. Pupils understand the importance of teamwork through participation in sports fixtures against other schools. Pupils learn about the importance of a healthy lifestyle through PSHE lessons. Science teachers reinforce healthy lifestyles through study of the different food groups and pupils enjoy the balanced diet provided in the dining hall.
36. Health and safety leaders ensure that the premises and accommodation are suitably maintained. Staff receive appropriate health and safety training, too. Leaders reduce risk and prepare pupils suitably through conducting regular fire drills.

37. Leaders ensure that first aid is administered appropriately. There is suitable medical accommodation and staff complete first aid training, including in the early years department where all staff are qualified paediatric first aiders. Appropriate records are maintained of any administration of first aid or medication.
38. Leaders implement a thorough process for registering daily attendance. Avoidable absences are challenged and leaders analyse patterns and trends. Admissions and attendance registers are suitably maintained and leaders inform the local authority promptly and appropriately when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

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. Pupils develop respect for their own and other cultures and for those who hold differing viewpoints through assemblies, PSHE education and discussions during pastoral periods with their form teachers. Pupils show an understanding of right and wrong, an appreciation of key British institutions and values, such as democracy and tolerance, and recognise the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions.
41. Leaders provide pupils of all ages with understanding of the democratic process. There are elections to the school and eco council and during a recent mock election pupils learned about democracy and how it works. Pupils' understanding of democracy and British institutions is further enhanced through a year 6 and school council visit to Parliament and contact with Essex County Council, for example.
42. Pupils learn about values such as individual liberty and tolerance in PSHE and religious education. Their work can be seen through the many displays around the building. Members of different faiths speak in assembly about their beliefs to help deepen pupils' understanding of the variety of religions.
43. Leaders help prepare pupils for life in wider British society. Visits from the police, fire service and Epping Forest rangers introduce early years children to key services and how they help in the community. Talks by dentists, vets and nurses give children early insight into different careers. Older pupils benefit from initial careers guidance provided by former police officers and representatives from professions such as medicine and farming.
44. As a result of many charity activities, pupils learn about the importance of helping others and develop a sense of social responsibility and of right and wrong. Leaders actively encourage pupils to participate in social initiatives, such as support of a food bank in Whitechapel following a year 5 assembly and publicity campaign.
45. Pupils contribute positively to the school community. Year 6 take on prefect roles, helping younger pupils with early morning activities. Pupils serve on the school council and the eco-council and act as tour guides during open mornings. They raise money to support local and national charities. However, although they take part in litter picking on a path into Epping Forest, pupils do not otherwise actively contribute within the local community, outside school.
46. Pupils of all ages are involved in activities which develop their knowledge of finance and economics. Early years children sell pancakes using cash registers and real money. Year 6 pupils develop their project management and budgeting skills when visiting a local supermarket to purchase items to provide a tea for their parents. Pupils organise a maths fair with stalls offering maths related activities in which other pupils pay to participate. The organisers then decide which charities should benefit from the funds raised.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

48. Leaders promote a positive and rigorous approach to safeguarding. There is an appropriate policy which is available to parents. Everyone is well trained in the most recent guidance. Members of staff understand how to report concerns regarding children in their care. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and act effectively when appropriate.
49. There is an effective partnership in place with the local authority, children's services and the police. Referrals are made to them in a timely and appropriate manner. Leaders have rigorous systems in place to take prompt and appropriate action in response to any instances of child-on-child abuse.
50. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities when recruiting staff to work at school. All required pre-employment checks are completed before any adult begins work at the school and an appropriate single central record of appointments is maintained.
51. Leaders ensure that staff receive training in online safety and that the school's internet is subject to appropriate filtering and monitoring systems, including weekly reports to the headteacher. The school curriculum also provides pupils with guidance on action they should take to stay safe, including when they are online. Pupils can raise any concerns with trusted adults, anonymously if they so wish. Staff respond promptly and effectively to any such concerns.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Oaklands School
Department for Education number	881/6025
Address	Oaklands School 6/8 Albion Hill Loughton Essex IG10 4RA
Phone number	020 8508 3517
Email address	info@oaklandsschool.co.uk
Website	www.oaklandsschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Oak Tree Holdings Limited
Chair	Mr Matthew Hagger
Headteacher	Mrs Gretchen Copeman
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	258
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 December 2021

Information about the school

53. Oaklands School is a co-educational day school. It is located in the town of Loughton in Essex. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2022. The school is a member of the Oak Tree Group and its proprietor is Oak Tree Holdings Ltd, which is owned by the Hagger family. Mr Matthew Hagger is the Group Managing Principal who acts as Chair of Governors.
54. There are 110 children in the early years comprising two Nursery classes and three Reception classes.
55. The school has identified 21 pupils who have SEND. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. English is spoken as an additional language for very few pupils.
57. The school states its aims are to create a secure, safe community in which pupils can develop personally and academically. It strives to help pupils understand right from wrong, foster positive attitudes, treat others with tolerance and understanding, develop the skills and attributes for future life, encourage independence and co-operation, and nurture the attributes required for leadership.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

24 to 26 September 2024

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

59. 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 proprietor
- 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.

60. 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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