

Inspection of Overton School

Hereford Road, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 4AD

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 September 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Overton School form trusting relationships with staff. They feel safe. Staff are caring and kind. They take the time to get to know their pupils well. They pay serious attention to meeting pupils' individual needs, and to their wishes and feelings. This all helps pupils to enjoy school and achieve well.

Leaders want the best for every child. There is a strong emphasis on maximising independence and preparing pupils for their future lives. As part of this work, many pupils participate in a wide range of activities outside of the classroom. These activities are extensive. They include horse riding, a gardening club and many more.

The school environment is very calm. Pupils are eager to learn. They listen closely to the adults that work with them. For some pupils, their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) mean that they sometimes find it hard to control their behaviour. Staff manage this well. They work with pupils in a patient, respectful and consistent way. Very occasionally, pupils fall out with each other. Staff are alert to this. They work quickly to help pupils put things right.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They have designed a rich, broad curriculum that promotes pupils' independence and prepares them for their next steps. All pupils study a wide range of subjects. Subject leaders plan these subjects logically. They build pupils' knowledge step by step. For example, in mathematics, pupils get lots of practice recognising numbers before learning how to add single digits. This approach is helping pupils to remember what they have learned.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum takes pupils' individual needs and interests into account. All pupils have an individual education plan (IEP). These IEPs describe how best to support pupils to achieve their short-term targets. Adults consistently use the information in these plans well. As a result, pupils regularly complete work that is closely matched to their specific needs.

Teachers and leaders make good use of assessment. For example, they make regular checks on pupils' phonics knowledge. As a result of these checks, leaders know that some pupils have specific gaps in their knowledge. Leaders make sure these pupils get the help they need from well-trained adults. This is helping pupils to become more confident and fluent readers. Leaders promote reading well. Every classroom has a wide selection of high-quality books. Furthermore, every morning pupils enjoy reading to a familiar adult or listening to stories.

The headteacher models calm, nurturing and respectful behaviour. Other adults follow her lead. This helps to create a purposeful and orderly learning environment. Every pupil has a personal behaviour support plan. Leaders base the plans on a comprehensive knowledge of each pupil. They include ways to manage pupils' behaviours and helpful information about the early signs a pupil may need help.

Adults use the information in these plans consistently. This works well. It means that pupils get the help they need before behaviours escalate.

Pupils work closely with a small number of adults. Pupils develop positive and trusting relationships with these familiar adults. These adults know how to communicate effectively with the pupils they work with. However, this is not the case for all staff across the school. Some adults lack confidence and expertise in using pupils' preferred communication approaches with pupils they do not know so well. This means that some pupils cannot consistently develop and practise their communication skills throughout the school day. This slows their learning and broader development.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is a strength. Leaders know pupils very well. This means that they provide opportunities to pupils that match their interests and talents. Pupils relish these opportunities. Where possible, leaders link these opportunities to accredited courses, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. In addition, leaders ensure that all pupils get independent careers advice. Many pupils complete relevant work experience. These opportunities are helping to prepare pupils well for their futures.

The proprietor body has clear oversight of the school's work. It has established effective systems and processes to check that the independent school standards are consistently met. It has also established shared values and policies that staff understand well. This is helping to realise the school's vision to maximise pupils' independence.

Governors regularly gather the views of parents, pupils, and staff. They also receive helpful information about the school from the headteacher. This means that governors have an accurate picture of the school. They use this information to celebrate successes and to hold leaders to account. They fulfil their statutory duties well. For example, the safeguarding policy that has regard to the latest government guidance, is published on the school's website. Leaders have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Adults are very mindful of the specific safeguarding risks to pupils with SEND. They are vigilant to the signs that pupils may need help. For example, they pay close attention to changes in pupils' behaviour and swiftly pass on any concerns. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get help when needed.

As part of the school's curriculum, pupils learn to keep safe when using the internet. Leaders strongly emphasise teaching pupils how to communicate their feelings about any worries they may have. This is helping pupils learn to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Not all adults are confident and competent in using pupils' preferred communication methods. This means that some pupils are not able to consistently practise and use their preferred communication approaches. Leaders should ensure that all staff are expert in meeting pupils' communication needs.

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	146340
DfE registration number	893/6036
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10250584
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Nicola Chokkuea
Annual fees (day pupils)	£79,000
Telephone number	01584 707091
Website	https://overtonschool.org.uk
Email address	nicola.chokkuea@brynmelyncare.com
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 October 2019

Information about this school

- The school's last standard inspection was in October 2019. An emergency inspection took place in October 2020.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a change to the proprietor body. The school is now part of Acorn Care and Education.
- The school is situated in a rural setting a few miles from Ludlow in Shropshire.
- The school caters for pupils with complex and multiple special educational needs.
- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school does not have a religious character or ethos.

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher of the school and assistant headteachers. In addition, inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and the managing director of Acorn Care and Education.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. As part of this focus, they met with subject leaders, class teachers and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons, accompanied by the headteacher. They also looked at pupils' work and did off-site visits.
- The lead inspector carried out a tour of the premises to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors explored safeguarding arrangements by checking safeguarding records, checking the safety of the school site, reviewing physical intervention records and talking to staff and pupils about how they keep safe.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.

- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to carry out the standard inspection earlier in the inspection cycle that previously planned.

Inspection team

Christopher Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Huw Bishop

Ofsted Inspector

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