

Inspection of Overton School

Hereford Road, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 4AD

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Overton School transforms the lives of pupils. The school has high expectations. Pupils develop trust, resilience and determination because of the aspirational goals that the school sets. Pupils make remarkable progress both academically and socially.

Pupils learn with success because the school knows them as individuals. Staff hear the pupils and get to know their strengths and needs. The school expertly supports pupils through communication systems and enabling environments. Pupils thrive and experience positive emotions. Pupils who have previously found it challenging to engage with education demonstrate impressive attitudes to learning and developing new skills and confidence. This helps them flourish and develop highly respectful attitudes to their work, staff and peers.

There is a sharp focus on developing the important skills that pupils need to learn. The enrichment programme is exceptional, sparking the interests and talents of pupils. Pupils rise to the challenge, learning musical instruments, taking on work experience in the school's Swiss Rhino café, managing the tuck shop and mentoring younger pupils. As a result, pupils are ambitious for their future and leave Overton School well prepared for their next steps.

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

The school recognises each pupil as an individual. Staff use their in-depth knowledge of each pupil to design a curriculum that precisely meets their personal needs. Pupils build trust in the staff team and confidence in themselves as learners. As a result, pupils achieve impressive outcomes from their starting points and succeed in a range of qualifications, including GCSEs. The school's vocational offer inspires pupils to have high aspirations for their futures as budding sports specialists, catering and landscapers.

The school offers intensive therapeutic support through its clinical team. There is exceptionally strong collaboration between teachers, support staff and the clinical team. The proprietor ensures that staff receive high-quality professional development. This begins through the induction process when staff join the school. As a result, staff build their expertise in teaching pupils with autism. Teaching and support enable pupils to navigate the ambitious curriculum opportunities while promoting positive well-being. Over time, pupils grow in confidence, learn to reflect, receive feedback and set their own goals with a growing 'can-do' attitude.

Staff know how to weave the personalised targets from pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) into the work they set for pupils. The adaptations that staff make support pupils to succeed. For example, the use of visual prompts and British Sign Language helps pupils communicate how they feel and what they understand. Staff are adept at stretching and challenging each and every pupil.

There is a strong culture of reading. The well-designed reading curriculum allows pupils to develop as readers. Staff are resolute in their determination to introduce pupils to a wide range of authors and reading experiences. Pupils know reading routines and settle well into morning reading time. Pupils enjoy reading to the school dog, Sky, a valued member of the team, which develops their confidence in reading aloud. Pupils recognised how reading helps them to be successful in the wide range of subjects they study.

The school is typically calm. Pupils are greeted with a warm welcome from the taxis in the morning. The school's well-established routines help to settle pupils on arrival. There is consistency in how all staff have high expectations of behaviour. The conduct of pupils improves the longer they attend the school. Relationships are warm and reassuring. The school prioritises building the trust of pupils, as many find this challenging when they join. Staff teach pupils the skills to communicate and reflect when things do not always go as expected. This supports pupils in the choices that they make and prepares them for life beyond school.

The school works closely with parents to ensure they are extremely well informed about the school's curriculum and expectations for behaviour and attendance. The school is sensitive to the needs of individual pupils while still setting the highest expectations of regular attendance. The bespoke support in place for pupils who are experiencing attendance issues is effective. This helps pupils to improve their attendance over time. The school ensures that pupils access the same ambitious academic and pastoral support both in school and through at-home tutoring.

The school's excellent personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum helps pupils learn about a wide range of important issues. The school's enrichment programme involves pupils getting out and about in the local community and wider afield. Pupils' engagement through the student council leads to constant improvement of the school's extensive offer. For example, British Sign Language pupil champions are promoting this new communication system throughout the school.

Pupils benefit from individualised careers advice. Well-planned work experience opportunities in school and off-site support pupils to develop aspirations for their futures.

The proprietor provides strong oversight in all aspects of the school's work. It works effectively to ensure the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor and governors provide strong support and challenge. This helps the school to meet the independent school standards securely and consistently.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, typically describing it as transforming the lives of their young people.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	10391787
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Nicola Chokkuea
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,000 to £82,000
Telephone number	01584 707091
Website	https://overtonschool.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@overtonschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 September 2022

Information about this school

- The last standard inspection took place on 13 to 15 November 2022. Since this inspection, there has been a material change inspection. This took place on 4 July 2023. The Department for Education approved the proprietor's request to increase the age range and number of pupils on roll.
- The school is registered to accept 45 pupils between the ages of seven and 18. There are currently 36 pupils on roll.
- The school operates from Hereford Road, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 4AD.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.
- Pupil places at the school are commissioned by a range of local authorities including Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs, predominantly autism. All pupils at the school have an EHC plan.
- The school is part of Outcomes First Group, which is part of Acorn Care and Education Ltd.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement of the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule of Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, subject leaders, the chair of governors and a representative of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PHSE and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at the curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey. They met with staff to find out about their experiences of working at the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also spoke to some parents in person to gather their views

of the school.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- To check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors reviewed relevant documents and policies such as the health and safety policy and risk assessments. The lead inspector also completed a tour of the school premises.

Inspection team

Pamela Matty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Huw Bishop

Ofsted Inspector

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