

# Octavia House School

Vauxhall Street, London, SE11 5LG

**Inspection dates** 10–11 July 2013

|  |             |          |
|--|-------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>               | <b>Good</b> | <b>2</b> |
| Pupils' achievement                        | Good        | 2        |
| Pupils' behaviour and personal development | Good        | 2        |
| Quality of teaching                        | Good        | 2        |
| Quality of curriculum                      | Good        | 2        |
| Pupils' welfare, health and safety         | Good        | 2        |
| Leadership and management                  | Good        | 2        |

## Summary of key findings

### This school is good because

- Pupils' academic achievement is good. Pupils progress well in literacy and numeracy, as well as other subjects such as information and communication technology (ICT).
- Pupils' personal development is good. In particular, their behaviour improves considerably as a result of being in the school.
- The quality of teaching is good, enabling pupils who have not attended school for some time to make good progress.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs and includes both academic and therapeutic elements. It encourages pupils to re-engage with learning. Good attention is given to pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The school's leaders have ensured that teaching and pupils' achievement are good. They are well aware of the next steps needed to move the school forward and are successfully pursuing them through the improvement plan.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- What the school provides is new and evolving. Staff have done well to reach the present good standards, but further developments are required to achieve the highest quality.
- Standards in writing are not yet as good as those in reading.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent school Standards)(England) Regulations 2010, as amended by the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with a day's notice.
- The inspector observed a range of lessons taught by two members of staff and was accompanied by the headteacher.
- The school's documentation was examined. Teachers' plans and schemes of work were reviewed. During the course of lessons, pupils' ongoing work was viewed and pupils heard read.
- Discussions were held with staff, management and pupils. There were no responses from parents/carers recorded on Ofsted's Parent View website, but a recent school survey of parents' and carers' views was considered. The inspector took account of the views expressed in staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Jill Bainton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Octavia House School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from five to 11 years. It is registered for up to 32 pupils. There are currently 18 pupils on roll, aged from six to 11 years. All have a statement of special educational needs. A very few are looked after. All the pupils have severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and some have moderate learning difficulties. All pupils are placed by their local authorities.
- The school is held on the second floor of a primary school in Vauxhall, London. It uses the main school playground, local parks and a leisure centre for recreational activity.
- The school aims to 're-engage the pupils in schooling, improving their social and emotional well-being and their core skills'.
- The school was first registered in September 2012 and this is its first inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring that pupils achieve as well in writing as they do in reading by:
  - increasing the emphasis on writing to match that on reading.
- Improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum by:
  - integrating the therapy and teaching programmes to achieve a seamless programme of activities.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - fully implementing the challenging school improvement plan.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

**Good**

Pupils' achievement is good, due largely to good teaching and a good curriculum. From very low levels of achievement when the pupils start at the school, the majority have quickly made up for lost time and are now making good progress. This achievement is reflected in their improved attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Pupils' low levels of attainment when starting at the school are due to earlier disrupted education, with frequent changes of school due to their very difficult and challenging behaviour. When the pupils arrive in the school, staff begin to address pupils' difficulties in literacy and numeracy and especially in reading. The teaching focuses on these key skills and the effort the staff put into this is clearly beneficial with all pupils now reading or beginning to read with confidence and for pleasure, and using their developing numeracy skills. As a result of this effective teaching and support, which includes constant reinforcement and practising of numeracy, reading, writing and speaking, the vast majority of the pupils make good progress in their learning. Those moving on to the next stage of their education are better equipped with the skills needed for their continued education. In literacy, the school's most notable success has been in raising pupils' reading levels and engaging pupils actively in reading. But the school has correctly identified that it needs to include an increased emphasis on improving pupils' writing skills if progress in literacy is to be outstanding.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

**Good**

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. All the pupils can be extremely disruptive in relation to their own and others' learning, as they have shown in their previous schools, but the vast majority are now gaining in self-esteem and confidence. Pupils' attitudes to learning can vary from lesson to lesson but pupils generally understand and abide by the simple school rules of listening and respecting each other and following instructions. Staff constantly re-enforce the behaviour management procedures and challenge inappropriate behaviour and attitudes. Overall, the pupils behave well and instances of more challenging behaviour are being reduced. This improvement in their behaviour has had a marked impact on their learning and achievement. Pupils confirmed that they had settled in well, wanted to come to school and were making good progress, especially in reading.

They are developing a greater awareness of the ways in which they need to behave, both in school and among the general public. Pupils are realising that there are trusted adults to hand who understand their difficulties and are always willing to lend a hand to help support them. This is evident in the lessons when the pupils turn to adults for support. This help is given willingly and with good humour by adults and sets the tone of the school day.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils have the opportunity for spiritual reflection through end-of-day assemblies, which encourage them to reflect on their behaviour and its impact on others and introduces moral stories. They visit places of interest which extends their understanding of how society works and gives them a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. Pupils regularly spend time in the local city farm where they help to feed and care for the animals, and some have riding lessons, demonstrating their empathy for both the animals, themselves and a consideration for others visiting the farm.

The school is a sociable community with pupils eating lunch with staff and being reminded of how to behave in a group. Both staff and pupils come from different backgrounds and this helps to promote racial harmony and pupils' cultural awareness. No biased political views are expressed or promoted.

**Quality of teaching****Good**

The quality of teaching is good and helps promote pupils' good achievement, as is evident in their work and in lessons. Teachers plan lessons appropriately, taking into account the very wide range of ability within each group. Lessons begin with a clear starter activity, which helps to engage the pupils in learning and links to the lesson objective. The activities are generally interesting and supported with appropriate resources to help the pupils to access the learning. For example, in ICT, the pupils designed a poster to illustrate their visit to the coast. They were given a range of options from which to choose the picture and text which reflected what they wished to achieve and this support gave them a measure of success. ICT is used well to support learning.

Work is mostly well suited to the different needs of the pupils. This was evident in a numeracy lesson on multiplication and division, with younger pupils using a wide range of supportive resources when needed or when rapidly doing mental calculations if they were more capable. The more able pupils are challenged with appropriate independent tasks and the less able are well supported through careful explanations to ensure that they understand the lesson. Overall, the pupils behave well in lessons, those who need additional time out are rapidly identified and appropriate action is taken so that the other pupils' learning is not disrupted. The learning and behaviour support workers, who are guided well by teaching staff, provide effective and well-judged help and behaviour support based on a sound knowledge of the pupils and their individual learning and behaviour needs.

On the whole, lessons end with a planned plenary which checks the pupils' learning and ensures a calm and purposeful conclusion. During all the lessons seen, an outstanding feature is the very positive relationships between staff and pupils and, even when managing challenging behaviour, the staff maintain a high level of respect for the pupils.

Assessment procedures are good. The marking of pupils' work is helpful and gives the pupils guidance on how to improve. Pupils' skills are carefully assessed on entry using a range of standardised testing. The information is then used well by staff to track the pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning. The school is now building up a comprehensive database to identify more clearly what steps they need to take to address gaps in pupils' learning. Detailed pupil progress plans are devised which give clear guidance as to the next steps which need to be taken to raise pupils' achievement. In this context, careful attention is given to pupils' individual education plans. Parents and carers and placing authorities are kept very well informed through regular verbal and written feedback.

**Quality of curriculum****Good**

The quality of the curriculum is good and meets the needs of the pupils, as indicated in their statement of special educational needs. The school has devised and implemented a curriculum based on the core subjects of the National Curriculum. In addition, the school has introduced a therapeutic programme to help pupils to better manage their own behaviour so they can respond positively to the learning opportunities provided. Through the effective use of therapies, such as play, art, occupational and speech and language therapy and counselling, the pupils are helped to regulate and control their own emotions and behaviour. This then enables them to access, more easily, the academic curriculum. The therapy and teaching programmes are good but are not yet fully integrated and new staff have been appointed to coordinate the two areas.

The school's ethos is based on a clear series of values, which highlight the attributes the pupils need if they are to become more tolerant and accepting of others in society. These are based on developing and sustaining relationships, dealing appropriately with conflict in their lives and achieving their goals in life. These values are embedded into the curriculum as part of the personal, social and health education programme. The end-of-day assembly centres on these

values and, as a result, the pupils are learning to work and learn alongside others in a purposeful way. A number of after-school clubs are available to the pupils, such as trampolining, ICT and art.

The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of additional activities, the key feature of which is the pupils' active engagement at the local city farm. Visits to places of interest, such as Tate Modern, the seaside as part of topic work, and local services such as the fire and rescue station, help the pupils in extending their understanding and awareness of the world around them. The curriculum is not yet outstanding as it is still under development, with new initiatives planned such as additional therapies, improved coordination of the therapies and academic curriculum and further extensions to the academic curriculum to more effectively meet the specific needs of the pupils.

### **Pupils' welfare, health and safety**

**Good**

Arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are good and all the regulations are met. The school has devised and implemented an appropriate range of policies and procedures including those for child protection, first aid, health and safety and anti-bullying. There are appropriate policies for the management of behaviour and the prevention of bullying. Staff have been suitably trained to deal with poor behaviour and use the behaviour management techniques, which the pupils understand, effectively. There are appropriate sanctions. There are very high pupil-to-staff ratios to ensure pupils' safety.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of the pupils are very good. The school has ensured that all staff are trained at an appropriate level, including the designated officer. Staff have been rigorously checked for their suitability to work with children and the information is held on the required single central register of staff appointments. There are trained staff for first aid. Detailed risk assessments are carried out on all aspects of the school and for off-site activities. The staff are aware of the potential risks posed by the pupils' behaviour and these are taken into account in the planning of activities and in the detailed risk assessments on each pupil. A fire risk assessment has been carried out and is reviewed annually. All fire equipment is checked and fire drills take place and are recorded termly. There are opportunities within the curriculum for the pupils to consider healthy lifestyles, with opportunities for regular exercise. Healthy eating is encouraged and studied in science. Admission and attendance registers meet the regulations.

### **Leadership and management**

**Good**

The quality of leadership and management is good because there is a shared vision and a high level of commitment among the proprietor, headteacher and staff to make sure the school is successful in terms of re-engaging the pupils in learning. This ensures that staff place a high emphasis on treating each pupil as an individual who requires highly specialised support to help them to overcome the problems previously encountered which have prevented them from making progress in their learning. This individual focus has had a good impact in a relatively short time on the pupils' achievement at the school.

Much has been achieved by the new headteacher, who has been in post for a term and a half, and who is helping staff to raise their levels of expectation. Through a detailed self-evaluation and challenging improvement plan, the headteacher has identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school and clear targets and timescales have been set to raise even further the quality of teaching, curriculum and learning. Careful attention to the recruitment of staff has ensured that most staff are knowledgeable and experienced and new appointments for both teaching and therapy staff have been made. Staff all confirm through the questionnaires that they feel well supported and have good opportunities for professional development. A programme of monitoring teaching has been set up and is well supported by external agencies.

The premises and accommodation are suitable. Parents and carers and placing authorities are

provided with all the required information through the informative website and prospectus. The complaints procedures meet requirements. Through a recent school survey, parents confirmed that they were pleased with the school. The proprietors have ensured that all the regulations for independent schools are met.

## What inspection judgements mean

| School  |             |   |
|---------|-------------|---|
| Grade   | Judgement   | Description   |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 2 | Good        | A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.                      |
| Grade 3 | Adequate    | A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.        |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate  | A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.     |

## School details

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 138803   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 420274   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b> | 208/6001 |

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Day special school for pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. |
| <b>School status</b>                       | Independent school  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 5–11 years  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 18  |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Michael Lawler  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | James Waite   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | First inspection  |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £37,500 - 45,000  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0203 651 4396   |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | headteacher@octaviyahouseschool.com   |

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