

# Yorston Lodge School

18 St John's Road, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0DP

## Inspection dates

15–17 February 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher and proprietor, together with long-standing specialist teachers, have ensured that outstanding outcomes for pupils have been sustained since the previous inspection.
- While the school aims to develop well-rounded pupils, nurturing their individual skills and talents, it is also highly successful in preparing pupils with the skills they need to pass entrance examinations for various selective schools.
- The school is led and managed by a committed headteacher who has the full support of staff, parents and the proprietor. However, until recently, the school has not kept a tight enough rein on its policies, including those for equality and diversity, to ensure that they are current.
- Pupils benefit from a highly effective curriculum which stimulates their interests. It meets their individual needs in subjects such as reading, writing, mathematics, languages and music.
- Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching, and assessing teachers' performance, are not as well developed as they should be.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke with inspectors and completed the online survey, Parent View, are of the view that their children are happy, safe and making good progress.
- The school's work to communicate to parents its precise responsibilities to prevent all forms of prejudice-based bullying, including cyber-bullying, is underdeveloped.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers know pupils exceptionally well, and have high expectations of them. This helps to ensure that pupils enjoy learning and attain highly.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They rarely miss a day of school. Pupils are very respectful and know exactly how to improve their learning.
- All aspects of the leadership and management of the early years are outstanding, including teaching and learning.
- The proprietor, and senior leaders, ensure that the independent school standards are met and that safeguarding meets requirements.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that robust procedures are in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and assessing teachers' performance
  - ensuring that all policies, including those for internet safety and the school's equality duties, are regularly reviewed and reflect current legislation
  - clearly communicating to parents how the school intends to meet its statutory duty to prevent all forms of prejudice-based bullying.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Together, the headteacher and proprietor have ensured that outstanding teaching and outstanding outcomes for pupils have been maintained since the previous inspection. For example, the headteacher's effective leadership and teaching helped to ensure that all pupils who left school at the end of Year 6 in 2016 were successful in their applications to various selective schools. Typically, pupils excel in a wide range of subjects, across all year groups.
- The headteacher, and other teaching staff, ensure that pupils enjoy learning and thrive in the studious and purposeful environment of the school. With the full support of the proprietor, and colleagues from other Montague Place schools, the headteacher makes sure that the independent school standards are met.
- Staff are highly positive about working at the school. The majority strongly agreed with almost all questions included in the inspection questionnaire. All staff indicate their full support for the school in achieving its objectives. They are of the view that leadership and management are good. Staff enjoy working at the school and being part of a tightly knit learning community.
- Pupils benefit from an engaging curriculum which develops their skills effectively in reading, writing, mathematics and verbal reasoning across the curriculum, including in subjects such as geography, history and science.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effective. For example, pupils raise money for various charities in partnership with the Rotary Club and enjoy taking on responsibilities such as house captains and prefects. Pupils enjoy visiting the theatre and skiing. In Years 5 and 6, pupils look forward to their annual residential learning and team-building opportunities.
- Many opportunities are available for pupils to develop their talents, and excel in areas such as music, sports, performing and visual arts and languages. Pupils can, and do, excel in singing and playing various musical instruments including violin, piano, trumpet, flute, saxophone and clarinet. They regularly engage in musical events and theatrical productions.
- The school's work to promote British values is good. Pupils are encouraged to be tolerant of different faiths and beliefs. Older pupils who spoke with inspectors could identify major world religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam. The work books of key stage 1 pupils show that they are familiar with the main characteristics, and artefacts, of different world religions. Pupils engage in jubilee celebrations and events to mark the birthdays of members of the Royal Family. They understand the principles of British democracy and listen to and value each other's views during debates.
- Parents are highly complimentary about the school. The vast majority of parents who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and those who talked with inspectors, indicated their satisfaction with all aspects of the school. Parents are of the view that their children are safe, happy and making good progress. Parents regularly accompany their children on the school's annual skiing trip to France and participate in activities during sports day.

- Few records are available to show that evaluations of teaching are carried out. This was the case during the previous inspection. The headteacher and proprietor now understand the need to ensure that robust systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and manage teachers' overall performance in order to maintain the outstanding quality of teaching.
- At the start of the inspection, several policies, including those relating to internet safety and equality, were not up to date and did not reflect current legislation. The headteacher ensured that prompt action was taken to rectify this situation and has implemented a system to ensure that all school policies are regularly reviewed.
- From meetings held with parents and emails received during the inspection, it was clear that senior leaders had not made all parents aware of the school's behaviour, anti-bullying and internet safety policies. These policies are now available on the school's website, which complies with statutory requirements. Senior leaders are committed to promoting equality and ensuring that the school meets its statutory responsibilities, as expressed in its amended equality policy, which is also available on the school's website.

## **Governance**

- The chief executive of Montague Place Limited was not in the country at the time of the inspection. However, the headteacher is in regular contact with the proprietor, who is kept informed on school matters, including those relating to finance, staffing and pupils' performance.
- The headteacher of one of the other three schools in the Montague Place Limited group provides advice and support to the headteacher at Yorston Lodge. This headteacher is familiar with the school's self-evaluation and correctly identifies that teaching, outcomes for pupils and the early years provision, are outstanding.
- The leadership structure of the school is 'flat'. It consists of the headteacher and teachers and support staff. Most responsibilities, including for safeguarding, health and safety and the overall management of the school, lie with the headteacher. In addition, the headteacher is the Year 6 teacher and is responsible for reviewing all school policies. This considerable workload contributed to some policies and procedures being out of date at the start of the inspection.
- In discussion with the proprietor, the headteacher is planning to delegate some of her responsibilities to other staff to ensure good practice in policy development and dissemination of information to parents.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training. They are familiar with the school's safeguarding policy and have read the latest government guidelines on keeping children safe in education. In addition, staff have been trained in and are familiar with the government's 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from extremism and radicalisation.
- The school's central record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children is up to date and contains all the necessary information. This ensures that risks to pupils are

minimised.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding and has been sustained since the previous inspection. Learning activities are exceptionally well planned and tailored to pupils' individual skills and needs. Teachers know their pupils well and are highly adept at making learning interesting and maintaining high academic standards.
- Pupils receive a high level of praise for their achievements, as shown in the encouraging comments in their work books. In addition, teachers give pupils regular verbal feedback, in line with the school's assessment procedures. This helps pupils develop an excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve their learning.
- Teachers ensure that no pupil misses out on any aspect of learning. For example, if a pupil takes time out of class for clarinet practice, singing, drama or sporting activities, there are always opportunities to catch up. Pupils are eager to engage in any necessary extra work, during break, after school or at home, in order to do their best and meet their teachers' high expectations.
- Teachers place a high priority on reading. Many pupils are avid readers, familiar with the work of a wide range of authors and writing styles. During the inspection, pupils read with great expression and enthusiasm. They are eager to talk about their books and demonstrate excellent comprehension skills. Younger pupils use their phonic skills well to sound out and read unfamiliar words.
- Teachers routinely set pupils complex tasks in mathematics, challenging them to achieve to the very best of their abilities. This was exemplified in an upper key stage 2 class where pupils were using protractors to measure the number of degrees in different angles. Pupils explained that most of the time work is difficult and cited their recent work on calculating the radian of different segments of circles as an example.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they use to bring learning to life and encourage pupils to think creatively. This was demonstrated in an English class, where pupils were asked to write the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk', with a twist, while at the same time improving a piece of previous writing. Pupils had fun, writing different extended paragraphs about Jack and the jelly-beanstalk and the vegetarian giant. They also understood the main point of the activity, which was to make their writing more effective by including interesting adjectives, verbs and adverbs.
- Verbal reasoning, spelling, handwriting, grammar and punctuation are taught exceptionally well, as demonstrated by the excellent outcomes for pupils in these subject areas. Teachers' consistent focus on improving pupils' skills in these areas makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' effective learning.
- Whether learning about computer programming, comparing leisure activities in Tudor times with contemporary sports and hobbies, or developing their calculation skills in key stage 1, pupils consistently demonstrate their keen interest in learning. On occasions, pupils' considerable abilities could be challenged even further.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are highly confident and self-assured learners. They often volunteer their answers in class and enjoy sharing their ideas with peers. Pupils are resilient and eager to challenge themselves. They understand that they can make mistakes and have the insight to realise that this is an essential part of learning.
- Older pupils say that they feel safe because 'there are always teachers around' to look after them. Pupils indicate that they feel confident in speaking to any member of staff if they have any concerns, which they know will be acted on. Pupils say that the gate and password-protected doors make them feel secure. Younger pupils indicate that they always feel safe. They enjoy class work, say that 'everyone is nice' and are happiest when learning and playing with friends.
- Pupils play together safely and sensibly in the outside areas. Younger pupils are highly appreciative of their new soft-surfaced outdoor adventure play area. Older pupils enjoy playing different ball games, including football. They abide by the rules and demonstrate good teamwork skills. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that some of their friends can be 'too competitive'. However, they indicated that any minor disputes are rare and quickly sorted out.
- Pupils say that bullying rarely, if ever, happens. Older pupils have a good understanding of racism, which they say never happens in school, because, 'we're all treated the same'.
- Pupils learn about healthy eating in science and through the personal, social, health and emotional aspects of the curriculum. They have a good understanding of the dangers associated with smoking and drinking alcohol and know that regular exercise is necessary to keep mind and body in good shape.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is not outstanding, because work to enhance pupils' understanding of different types of prejudice-based bullying and the dangers of cyber-bullying, is not as well developed as it should be. In addition, until recently, school policies relating to behaviour, bullying and equality did not meet statutory requirements.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Throughout the day, during lunch and playtimes, when moving between lessons and during morning clubs and after-school activities, pupils' behaviour is exemplary.
- Pupils' manners are impeccable. Pupils are polite and courteous. They enjoy welcoming visitors into the school and are very eager to talk about their learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, as shown by their excellent attendance and exceptional punctuality.
- The overwhelming majority of parents, and all staff, are of the view that pupils behave extremely well. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' behaviour is typically

outstanding.

- Pupils play their part in ensuring that Yorston Lodge is a studious and purposeful school, in which academic success is valued and celebrated and where pupils, 'work hard and play hard'. Pupils behave exceedingly well in class; this contributes well to their outstanding achievement.
- Pupils thrive on a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities such as gymnastics, netball, tennis and football. They equally enjoy 'fun French', board games and extra mathematics. Such activities provide pupils with the drive and perseverance necessary for future learning and later life.
- Pupils are highly disciplined, as demonstrated in the intense concentration and determination of the junior ju-jitsu team, several members of which are currently training for a black belt. This demonstrates their outstanding ju-jitsu class attendance and high level of success in competitions.
- Pupils always strive to be the best that they can be. They are alert and follow instructions well. This was demonstrated during singing practice. Having taken advice to 'always sing with a smile', the practice session intensified as it progressed. The counterpoint of the descant sharpened, reaching a crescendo by the final song, 'Lord of the Dance'. Quite rightly, pupils were proud with the result of their hard work.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress and attain highly in a wide range of subjects. Evidence of outstanding progress can be found in pupils' work books in subjects including writing, mathematics, geography, history and science. Pupils' excellent attainment is shown in the consistently high scores they obtain from their ongoing assessment activities.
- By the time pupils left school at the end of Year 6 in 2016, their attainment in reading, writing, mathematics, science and verbal reasoning was outstanding. Every pupil from this year group was successful in securing a place at a school of their choice. Several pupils were offered places at more than one school.
- Although not required, Year 6 pupils sat the national key stage 2 tests in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016. The attainment of all was at least good and outstanding for the majority.
- The school's own internal data and assessment information indicates that the success of Year 6 pupils is replicated across the school in a wide range of subjects.
- Help is at hand, in the form of tailored learning programmes, for pupils who find any aspect of learning difficult. Work in books shows that such pupils make accelerated progress and achieve well in a wide range of subjects.
- The teaching of mathematics is highly effective. Teachers are skilled at deepening pupils' mathematical reasoning and instilling in pupils a good appreciation of the links between mathematics and other subjects, such as science, art and geography. Such application enhances pupils' understanding of the complexity of mathematics and improves their ability to solve problems.
- Pupils' progress in reading is outstanding. Starting in the Nursery class, pupils read every day. Most children in the Reception class read words such as 'wouldn't', 'shouldn't' and

'couldn't' with ease. Pupils' reading records indicate that they read regularly at home. Records also note pupils' strengths and weaknesses and what they need to do to further improve their reading and comprehension.

- Pupils excel in music. They have excellent opportunities to play different brass, woodwind, percussion and string instruments. Highly experienced music teachers ensure that pupils develop their skills to a high standard. Teachers ensure that pupils who have the aptitude, and interest, in music are well prepared to continue this in the next phase of their learning after primary school.
- Teachers make sure that pupils are accredited for their achievements in the performing arts. The exceptional confidence that pupils acquire from participation in musical productions such as 'The Blues Brothers', and singing in the community for elderly residents, prepares them exceedingly well for the next stage of their learning at high school.
- The most able pupils make exceptional progress. The majority of teachers always ensure that such pupils are consistently challenged in class, and provide them with supplementary learning activities during lessons, and additional homework.

### Early years provision

### Outstanding

- All aspects of the leadership and management of the early years provision, including the quality of teaching and children's achievement, are outstanding. Staff have exceptionally high expectations of children and form secure, nurturing bonds with them.
- Most children enter the Nursery class with skills and abilities in line with those expected for their age. Information held by the school indicates that their communication, language and literacy skills are particularly well developed.
- Children make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics, in both the Nursery and Reception classes. In 2016, a much higher than average proportion attained a good level of development and were exceptionally well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Across the early years, staff make regular checks on children's progress in the different areas of learning. Information on what children can do is meticulously recorded in their well-presented books. Written notes are accompanied by photographs showing children engaged in different activities, including reading, counting, working together, being creative, playing various musical instruments and using computers. This information is shared with parents, who in turn provide information to staff on their children's learning and development at home.
- Since the previous inspection, outstanding outdoor provision is now available to children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2. This provides them with many opportunities to play safely in an exceptionally well-designed soft-surfaced outdoor adventure area. Here, children can refine their balancing skills, use various climbing frames and a climbing wall.
- Children are highly inquisitive, adventurous and imaginative. This was evident in the Reception class where children used their creative skills to perform a puppet show, featuring various animals. Children enjoyed various role play activities in the Troll's cage and Cinderella's cottage and made play-dough cakes, which they proudly served to each

other and the inspector.

- In both Nursery and Reception classes, children are immensely proud of their achievements. Staff give children's work pride of place. For example, children's art and craft work features in high-quality displays throughout the early years provision.
- Children enjoy counting, exploring shapes and measuring. Children benefit from daily phonics and reading, both of which make a significant contribution to their outstanding achievement in reading and writing.
- Children behave sensibly and safely at all times and are expert at tidying up. Children follow instructions well and put their scissors, pencils, pens and paints away neatly after use.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. Parents are highly complimentary about all aspects of the early years and are of the view that their children are exceptionally happy, safe and making excellent progress.

## School details

Unique reference number	111479
DfE registration number	895/6013
Inspection number	10012948

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Number of pupils part time	17
Proprietor	Montague Place Limited
Chairman of Yorston Lodge	Mark Peters
Headteacher	Janet Dallimore
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,655–£7,740
Telephone number	01565 633177
Website	<a href="http://www.yorstonlodge.com">www.yorstonlodge.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headmistress@yorstonlodge.com">headmistress@yorstonlodge.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	14–16 May 2013

## Information about this school

- At the start of the inspection, the school did not meet all statutory requirements, or independent school standards. Unmet requirements related to the school's safeguarding, behaviour and complaints policies, equality duties and the publication of specified information on the school's website. All requirements were met by the end of the inspection.
- Yorston Lodge School is a co-educational independent school for pupils aged from three to 11 years. It is one of three schools owned by Montague Place Limited.
- The school's main aim is to encourage pupils to make the most of their talents, while

valuing their individuality and recognising their unique gifts. In addition, the school aims to, 'provide every pupil with the opportunity to develop academically, creatively, socially and physically and with a growing sense of responsibility for themselves and others'.

- No pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school provides support for pupils with different abilities through tailored programmes to meet their individual learning needs.
- Most children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis, a small number attend on a full-time basis.
- The school provides a wide range of pre- and after-school services. These are managed by the provider and are subject to a separate inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has installed a soft-surfaced multi-activity area for children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in various lessons, including English, mathematics and history.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised during lessons and separately. Meetings were held with the headteacher of Yorston Lodge School, as well as the headteacher of one of the other three schools owned by Montague Place Limited. A meeting was also held with early years staff.
- Inspectors considered 35 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 19 members of staff.
- Inspectors met informally with parents at the start of the school day. Formal meetings were held with two parents. Inspectors also considered several emails that were sent to the school during the inspection.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included various safety and safeguarding policies and procedures, records of pupils' attendance, the school's reviews of its own performance and information on pupils' achievement.

## Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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