

Octavia House Schools

214b Kennington Road, London SE11 6AU

Inspection dates

24–26 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Many aspects of the school's work 'stand out', particularly the interconnection between the provisions for pupils' well-being and academic performance.
- To say that staff know the pupils well, have high aspirations for them and are highly committed, is to understate the quality of the school's work.
- The curriculum is well thought through and central to the success of teaching and learning over time.
- Pupils thrive in response to what is on offer, often achieving skills and qualifications that had not been thought possible.
- Pupils' behaviour is by no means perfect but strategies to stay safe, achieve well and collaborate with others are learned quickly and are long-lasting.
- Pupils and their families are confident that, as a result of things learned at school, the future is bright.
- Governance is strong, bringing rigour and intense challenge to the school's work.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the independent school standards and associated requirements.
- The use of information about how well pupils achieve over time is a relative weakness of the school's work.

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?

- To make best use of the wealth of information available about pupils' personal and academic achievements, so that pupils' progress over time contributes fully to strategic planning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The executive headteacher leads a strong team. Clear strategic direction, focused unerringly on pupils' knowledge and skills, provides staff at all levels of responsibility with a very clear understanding of exactly what is expected of them.
- The highly effective work of the head of therapy and the associate executive head ensure that staff have the training, professional discussions and challenge needed to do what it takes to support pupils' academic and personal development well.
- The three heads of school are highly proficient in leading their teams of teaching and non-teaching staff. Their influence makes sure that teaching engages pupils' interests, and takes place in safe and stimulating environments.
- Leaders at all levels enjoy the confidence of staff. Staff are particularly positive about how well everyone works as a team, how well supported they are by one another and senior leaders, the extent to which their views are sought and considered, and the equality between staff with differing responsibilities.
- Continuous professional development is an important feature of the school's work and is highly valued by staff. The training successfully binds staff together in the common purpose of helping pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning, and also so that staff know what to do for the best when the going gets tough.
- The systematic and wide-ranging checks and evaluations of the provision mean that leaders quickly identify the things that need to improve, but it does not stop there, because changes are made quickly too. Staff at all levels are adept at solving problems and confidently do what is needed to make things better.
- A relative weakness of the leaders' work relates to the assessment of pupils' academic and personal achievements over time. All the information needed is there and starting points are secure. However, the information is analysed mostly from each year to the next, without connecting the achievements over longer periods in relation to long-term targets.
- The rationale for the curriculum is well thought through and constantly under review. The academic and vocational curriculum, therapies and the 'values curriculum' integrate well to promote pupils' overall achievements and emotional well-being.
- The curriculum successfully broadens and deepens pupils' experiences so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, for life after school or transition from one setting to another.
- Making sure that pupils understand right from wrong, particularly in relation to discrimination in all its forms and to children's rights, has high priority in the curriculum and teaching.
- Staff work tirelessly to make sure that parents and carers are well supported and active partners in developing pupils' behaviour and learning. Parents take good advantage of the weekly opportunities to come to school for training and support.

Governance

- The chair of the governing body (also one of the proprietors) and the three other governors bring a wealth of knowledge and breadth of experience to their roles.
- Governors are always looking to find out more about the school's work, particularly how well pupils' well-being and academic achievements improve in relation to the support they receive. They challenge what they find, methodically and systematically.
- Governors support the executive headteacher well in the strategic oversight of the school's vision, the resources available to staff and pupils, and the performance of staff.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a suitable safeguarding policy on the school's website that outlines clearly the arrangements to protect children.
- The arrangements are constantly under review, often following training from external professionals, and changes made so that risks are reduced. Changes made include additional checks on the whereabouts of pupils who are absent, and greater probing during job interviews of candidates' knowledge and experiences.
- The weekly training for staff, alternately for safeguarding pupils and therapeutic approaches, is well planned to cover a range of topics relevant to pupils' protection and safety, for example domestic abuse, anxiety and physical restraint. Staff value the regularity and content of the training, which helps to make sure that they are vigilant, well informed and reflective about the effectiveness of their practice on pupils' well-being.
- Risks are well understood and managed well, which means that pupils have good opportunities to work together and understand the impact of their behaviour on one another.
- The supervision of pupils allows for safe practice without compromising pupils' ability to make their own choices and to accept the consequences when things go wrong.
- The off-site alternative provision, used by some pupils for part of the week, is monitored frequently and robustly. Risk assessments are reviewed every three weeks and staff carry out unannounced visits to reassure themselves that the provision is safe and fit for purpose.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- What is taught and how it is taught are discussed and planned collaboratively by the teaching staff and therapists. Learning is planned carefully for each pupil so that they can take full advantage of the knowledge and skills taught. This joint planning and teaching works extremely well to maximise pupils' focus on learning and on the behaviours that help them to learn.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed well. When disruption occurs, it is typically limited to individual pupils who are finding it difficult to manage their behaviour for short periods.

- Staff are knowledgeable and passionate about their specialist subjects. In addition, staff know how to teach pupils about sensitive, pertinent topics such as knife crime, gang culture, involvement with the police, personal relationships and discriminatory practice relating to each of the protected characteristics.
- There is a good balance between imparting knowledge and encouraging pupils to think about, and test out, what they are taught. There is a lot of discussion about what is being learned. This approach challenges pupils' thinking, and gives teachers extensive opportunities to check and develop what pupils know and can do.
- Misconceptions and mistakes are challenged, and addressed quickly and sensitively.
- The teaching is often memorable and, in addition, pupils' books provide a good record of what has been learned.
- Phonics and reading are taught well. There are good opportunities for pupils to practise reading, writing and spelling.
- Pupils typically enjoy mathematics, particularly the practical work. Pupils of all ages present their calculations well and talk enthusiastically about how to solve mathematical problems.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Consistency between staff on each site and from one site to the next enables pupils to practise, develop and understand the importance of appropriate behaviours.
- Staff at all levels of responsibility model the behaviours that they expect from pupils.
- Pupils trust and respect staff, and talk openly about their worries and successes, as well as enjoying a laugh and a joke.
- Pupils can explain what is right and what is wrong, and why. They know a lot about discrimination and inequality, and how prejudice can lead to bullying.
- A comprehensive amount and range of events throughout the year support pupils' social and cultural development well. Diversity is celebrated and stereotypes challenged. Alternative lifestyles and viewpoints are discussed, and world and local news events are explored.
- Most pupils work with therapists at some point each week and can request to see a therapist at other times. They take good advantage of the opportunities on offer.
- Teaching staff and therapists keep a constant eye on how to help pupils prepare for life after school. They provide experiences beyond those that the pupils might naturally experience outside of school, such as trips to the theatre, the cinema and art centres.
- Preparation for work or college starts early. Work experience placements are planned carefully and tailored to pupils' interests and needs.
- The current Year 11 will be the school's first group to move on to post-16 provision. They feel confident that they will do well in their examinations. They know that they will not have the same support at work or college that they have currently, but are confident that they have the strategies to make sure that things go well, even during challenging times.

- Pupils' attendance is typically close to the national average for secondary schools.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils of all ages respond well to the support from teaching staff and therapists. A calm and purposeful environment is evident on each site, especially for older pupils, or those who have been at the school for the longest time.
- By the time pupils reach Years 9, 10 and 11 they are well on their way to managing their behaviour, even when challenged by circumstances beyond their immediate control.
- Younger pupils learn quickly how to make sensible choices and to cooperate with others.
- Older pupils enjoy mentoring younger ones and this develops self-esteem for each of them.
- The governing body has challenged leaders to reduce the number of physical restraints to make sure that pupils take good advantage of strategies to self-regulate their behaviour. Most recently, there are fewer restraints for fewer pupils.
- Sometimes pupils are excluded from school, usually for one day. Most pupils learn from this experience and are not excluded more than once. The trend is downward over the past few years.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils achieve well from their individual starting points across a range of subjects.
- Typically, pupils make at least good progress from one year to the next.
- Rates of progress accelerate over time. Almost always, pupils' emotional well-being and 'skills for life' improve first and reach a tipping point when academic achievement then starts to take off.
- Pupils' reading skills often lag behind those typical for their chronological age. However, pupils read sufficiently well to understand written information for the different subjects studied. Pupils read confidently at their own level.
- Pupils' writing skills were highlighted as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Well-targeted work has improved pupils' skills but this remains a focus for a few pupils.
- Most pupils at key stage 4 study for level 2 qualifications, which represents good progress since starting at the school. Most pupils are entered for GCSEs in English and mathematics and all are on track to gain the qualifications needed for their preferred route for post-16 education, work or training.
- A recent dip in pupils' performance at key stage 3 has been addressed and an upward trend is bringing their achievements back on track to be at least good by the end of this academic year.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision for part of each week enjoy the opportunities to develop personal and practical skills. They achieve well and develop skills and positive attitudes to learning that transfer well to their studies back at school.

School details

Unique reference number	138803
DfE registration number	208/6001
Inspection number	10020708

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 special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Number of part-time pupils	none
Proprietor	Octavia House Schools Ltd
Chair	David King
Executive headteacher	James Waite
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000 to £60,000
Telephone number	020 36514396
Website	www.octaviahouseschools.com
Email address	executivehead@octaviahouseschools.com
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2013

Information about this school

- Octavia House Schools was registered in 2012 and is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to admit a maximum of 100 boys and girls between the ages of five and 16 years.
- Most pupils are boys.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have been excluded from previous schools and, once admitted to the school, usually stay until the end of key stage 4.

- The school operates on three sites:
 - the second floor of the primary school at Vauxhall Street, London SE11 5LG
 - 9 Larcom House, Larcom Street, London SE17 1RT
 - 214b Kennington Road, London SE11 6AU.
- The school uses the alternative provision at:
 - Docklands Riders
 - East Dulwich Riding School
 - Get Hooked on Fishing
 - Ilderton Motor Vehicle Project
 - Lambeth College.
- The school does not use supply staff.
- At the time of the first standard inspection, in 2013, the school was registered to admit a maximum of 32 pupils between the ages of five and 11 years of age on the Vauxhall site. There were 18 pupils on roll. The proprietor was a single individual.
- At the 2013 inspection, all aspects of the school's work were judged good and all of the independent school standards were met.
- Following two material change inspections, in July and August 2014, the DfE agreed to a change in registration for a maximum of 77 pupils between the ages of five and 14 years, with an additional site at Walworth.
- Following a third material change inspection, in June 2016, the DfE agreed to a change in registration for a maximum of 100 pupils between the ages of five and 16 years, with an additional site in Kennington.
- The DfE has recently agreed to a change in the proprietorial arrangements. The school now has a proprietorial body, a limited company with three proprietors. Governance is delegated to a governing body. One of the proprietors is the chair of the governing body. There are three other governors.

Information about this inspection

- The school had a day's notice of this inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of:
 - 14 parents who registered their views on Parent View, including the written comments by five parents
 - two parents via telephone and five on-site
 - 28 staff, including 27 written comments
 - pupils who spoke with inspectors formally and informally
 - two groups of staff
 - representatives from Southwark and Merton local authorities
 - the chair of the governing body and the three other governors.
- Inspectors observed teaching across a range of subjects on each of the three sites, often accompanied by senior members of staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with all members of the senior leadership team, teachers, therapists and support staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including policies; records of pupils' attendance and behaviour; the school's website; assessment information; the school's monitoring of teaching; the single central record of employment checks; and the arrangements to safeguard pupils.

Inspection team

Heather Yaxley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Copping

Ofsted Inspector

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