

# Inspection of Oakfield House School

Station Road, Salwick, Preston, Lancashire PR4 0YH

---

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 April 2025

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

---

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **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 are happy at this school. They arrive at school with enthusiasm for the day ahead. Each pupil is known well as an individual and staff strive to meet and support pupils' specific needs. Pupils benefit from consistent routines and therapeutic input. They enjoy caring relationships with staff. This helps pupils to feel safe.

The school has high expectations for pupils, who all have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils make good progress towards their personal targets. Typically, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.

In the main, the atmosphere around school and in lessons is calm and purposeful. Staff help pupils well to develop strategies to regulate their own behaviour. As a result, most pupils behave well.

The school's offer for pupils' personal development is exceptional. It provides a highly personalised offer that reflects pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from a broad range of experiences outside the classroom. They enjoy the many trips and experiences that they do not necessarily access elsewhere in life. For instance, visits to the fire station, local residential home and organised group activities. All of this develops their abilities to cope with unfamiliar situations and life beyond the school.

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

The school has undergone numerous challenges since the last inspection. Following a period of turbulence, the school is now in a position of greater stability. There have been many changes in the school, for instance in staffing and the curriculum. Some staff feel that this has impacted on their workload and well-being. The school and proprietor are aware of this and are taking appropriate steps to address the concerns. Most parents and carers speak positively about their experiences of the school. They especially value the care and strong partnership working.

The school and proprietor work together to ensure that the school is developing its educational offer and making improvements. This includes developing the curriculum and assessment strategies. The school ensures that pupils are placed on the most appropriate curriculum pathway to support their development. The curriculum sets out how staff should help pupils to develop their communication skills. Older pupils and children in the Reception classes are increasingly able to let adults know their preferences and what they understand.

Across the broad curriculum, staff design topics that are interesting and meaningful. They do all they can to 'hook' pupils into learning, for example by using contexts that pupils can relate to. However, sometimes activities are not focused well enough on what pupils need to learn. This means that, at times, pupils do not secure new knowledge as well as they could.

Reading is a high priority across the school. Staff check pupils' knowledge carefully to ensure that they begin the phonics programme at the most appropriate point. Most pupils read from books that match their current phonics knowledge. This helps them to develop into confident readers. However, on occasion, the phonics programme is not delivered consistently well. As a result, some pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read, or find reading difficult, do not learn to read with fluency and accuracy as quickly as they should.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils' individual education, health and care (EHC) plans are frequently reviewed and updated. The therapy and education teams work closely together to draw up detailed plans on how to best support pupils and to identify any other needs that they may have. The school implements these plans successfully to develop pupils' skills for communication, regulation and resilience. Over time, pupils increase in confidence and become more motivated to engage in activities.

Staff understand what can unsettle pupils and notice the early signs that pupils may be struggling with their emotions. Staff respond sensitively to pupils' emotional needs. They are successful in helping pupils to manage their behaviour and feelings. This helps pupils to behave well.

The school supplements academic learning with an impressive range of interesting activities, making full use of its extensive grounds and woodland area to support pupils' personal development. Pupils learn how to manage money when they visit the shop to buy fruit, which builds confidence and independence. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the responsibilities that they enjoy, for example as eco councillors and litter picking. Thoughtful community links with a local residential home boost pupils' aspirations to be active citizens who help society. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and keeping physically and mentally healthy. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The proprietor has effective systems in place to ensure that the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently. It maintains the school's premises to a high standard. The school's accessibility plan complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school's safeguarding policy, which is published on its website, complies with the latest statutory guidance.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Sometimes, pupils are given activities to complete which do not help them to learn the intended curriculum content as well as they could. This affects how well some pupils build up their knowledge in these subjects. Where this is the case,

the school should ensure that learning tasks are well matched to the intended learning set out in the school's curriculum.

- At times, the phonics programme is not implemented as well as it should. This hinders a small number of pupils who struggle with reading from becoming fluent and accurate readers as quickly as they could. The school should support staff in implementing effective early reading strategies consistently well.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131666
<b>DfE registration number</b>	888/6037
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10375130
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	47
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Power
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Rigby
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£48,000 to £80,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 672630
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk">www.oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk">office@oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 to 17 March 2022

## Information about this school

- The school is a small independent special school situated on one site.
- The school is owned by owned by Outcomes First Group (Operations) 1 Limited and is a fully owned subsidiary of Acorn Care and Education Ltd, which is part of Outcomes First Group. It opened in September 1998.
- The school is located at Station Road, Salwick, Preston PR4 0YH
- All pupils who attend this school have SEND. All have an EHC plan. Pupils' needs include autism and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is registered to admit 46 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 47 pupils on roll at the school. The school has not notified the Department for Education that it is operating beyond its registration agreement.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## 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 evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 representatives of the proprietor body, the executive headteacher, other school leaders and a range of school staff.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of local authorities which have pupils placed at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and personal, social, health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They spoke with pupils about their learning in some of these subjects and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, assessment, pupils' behaviour and provision for pupils' wider development.

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to the standards, leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' attendance.
- As part of their checks on the standards, inspectors made a tour of the school premises, accompanied by leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of the school, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and honest culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. Inspectors spoke with some pupils about their experiences of school life. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with parents during the inspection. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

### **Inspection team**

Victoria Burnside, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Zarina Connolly

Ofsted Inspector

Ian Hardman

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2025