

Oaks International School

Cherry Hinton Hall, Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB1 8DW

Inspection dates

25–27 June 2019

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the opening of Oaks International School, the headteacher has focused on ensuring that the quality of education is good. She is ably supported by senior leaders who share her determination that all pupils will achieve well.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders ensure that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and are understood and used well by all staff.
- Governors provide increasing support and challenge to leaders. However, they do not have a good enough understanding of the school's performance to be able to hold leaders to account rigorously.
- While subject leaders are enthusiastic and committed to improving teaching and learning, some are still developing the skills necessary to be fully effective in their role.
- Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum. They learn about the world around them and their contribution to it. There are good opportunities to develop their sporting and creative skills.
- The school has a strong ethos of welcome, warmth and respect, underpinned by a celebration of diversity and difference.
- Pupils behave well. They are friendly and supportive of each other and do what teachers ask of them. They are proud of their school.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They appreciate the nurturing environment the school provides for their children.
- The quality of teaching overall is good. Teachers plan learning activities that enable most pupils to make good progress.
- Senior leaders and teachers support the many pupils who speak English as an additional language effectively.
- The teaching of phonics is not planned and taught consistently well across the school.
- The early years provides well for children's needs and interests. However, the outdoor learning space is not yet fully developed to allow children to be purposefully engaged when they are not working with an adult.

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?

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the role of subject leaders so that they contribute fully to raising standards of teaching in their subject areas to ensure that pupils achieve well across the curriculum
 - ensuring that governors use their skills and expertise effectively to provide greater support and challenge so that they hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work.
- Improve teaching, learning and pupils' achievement by ensuring that there is greater consistency in the planning, teaching and resourcing of phonics so that more pupils develop their phonics skills quickly.
- Improve the early years provision by developing the outdoor learning space so that it consistently provides higher-quality learning opportunities and, consequently, improves outcomes for children.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since taking up post, the headteacher has successfully established the school's caring ethos, while focusing on securing good-quality teaching and learning. This has been managed against a backdrop of challenges in recruiting staff.
- Although new to the role, the headteacher knows the school very well from her previous role as deputy headteacher at the predecessor school. This has ensured the continuation and consistency of the school's good provision.
- The proprietor, headteacher and senior leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Policies and procedures are personalised to the work of the school. They are effective in promoting the school's aims.
- Senior leaders and governors have an honest and realistic view of the challenges that the school is facing. Leaders' development plans correctly identify those areas in need of improvement.
- Senior leaders spend time in classrooms checking the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make. They use this information well as they strive to make teaching and pupils' achievement even better.
- Staff enjoy working at the school and display a firm commitment to the well-being of the pupils in their care. Staff speak highly of senior leaders, appreciate the training they are given and are keen to improve their practice. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey said that they are proud to work at the school.
- Pupils benefit from a well-organised curriculum that covers a wide range of subjects. Pupils' learning is regularly enlivened by visits to nearby places of interest and special events. There is a measured emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics but this is, appropriately, not at the expense of other subjects. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their scientific and investigative skills and to learn about the world around them, past and present. Teachers make good use of the opportunities to reinforce pupils' writing skills.
- The teaching of art is a particular strength. Pupils throughout the school have many opportunities to experiment with different media and their artwork is of a high standard. During the week of the inspection, the school hall housed an impressive display of pupils' artwork across all year groups, including the early years. Pupils had used recycled materials creatively to produce a rich variety of art pieces around the theme of 'waste not, want not'.
- The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff make good use of pupils' different nationalities and life experiences to celebrate equality and diversity. This successfully promotes the inclusive ethos, positive attitudes and effective relationships that are firmly in place throughout the school. The school's 'mother tongue programme' gives pupils access to twice-weekly language sessions to practise and sustain oracy and written skills in their home languages. These sessions are led effectively by staff who speak the same home languages.
- The experienced and knowledgeable special educational needs coordinator (SENCo)

ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported and able to make good progress from their various starting points. Leaders monitor pupils' progress closely and ensure that they receive the help they need. Teaching assistants provide good day-to-day support. The additional funds available to support pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan are used wisely to give pupils the additional help they need to make strong progress.

- Subject leaders have an increasing responsibility for ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their subject area is good enough. These leaders are committed to raising standards. However, they are still developing their skills and gaining experience. Currently, they do not yet have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching in their subject to lead improvement that ensures that pupils make consistently strong progress across the curriculum.
- All parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, or whom the inspector met during the inspection were unanimously supportive of, and positive about, the school. Parents appreciate the positive learning environment and the many experiences the school provides for their children. One parent summed up the views of many by saying: 'The teachers all care a lot about the pupils and work hard to make sure that their needs are met.' Another parent commented: 'The school is excellent at making all children feel welcome and safe and children are encouraged to learn.' All parents who completed the online survey would recommend the school to others.

Governance

- Following the establishment of Oaks International School in January 2019, the proprietor has put a newly constituted governing body in place to fulfil the role of governance.
- Governors are committed to the success of the school. They are experienced and bring a range of relevant skills and expertise to their designated responsibilities. They provide increasing support and challenge to leaders, for example in some areas of strategic planning and pupils' learning. Even so, they have not fully developed structures and review systems to monitor leaders' actions and ensure that they have a clear and accurate understanding of all aspects of the school's work. Consequently, they do not hold leaders to account rigorously to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Governors fulfil their legal duties effectively, for example by ensuring the appropriate use of additional funding for pupils with SEND and checking that the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are thorough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors place a high priority on all aspects of safeguarding and this is ensuring that arrangements are fit for purpose. Thorough checks are made and maintained meticulously to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children.
- Designated safeguarding leaders promote a strong culture of vigilance. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they have an up-to-date understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by pupils. Leaders, governors and staff understand that the safety of pupils is everybody's responsibility.

- Senior leaders are very knowledgeable about how to maintain standards of health and safety, and do so confidently. They continually assess the condition of the premises to ensure that it provides pupils with a safe and secure environment. Detailed records of checks, including those of fire safety, show that leaders spot and deal with potential hazards promptly so that the welfare of pupils, staff and visitors is maintained.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Parents agree that their children are safe and happy in this school. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest legal guidance and is made available to parents on the school's website so that they are well informed about how the school ensures that their children are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They have a good understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do. This helps teachers to prepare work that successfully builds the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Their clear explanations help pupils to settle quickly to their work and make good progress. In a Year 5 English lesson, for example, the teacher modelled how to use bracketing commas correctly to avoid ambiguity. At the end of the lesson, pupils' work showed that they had understood the prompts and explanations the teacher had used.
- Teachers use skilful questioning, which is adjusted to the varying abilities of the pupils. They use their conversations with pupils to identify and address any misconceptions.
- Staff give pupils frequent opportunities to develop their reading skills and encourage pupils to read for enjoyment. Teachers foster a love of reading through carefully selected texts and traditional tales. Most pupils who speak English as an additional language also make strong progress in reading from, in many cases, low starting points.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are supported well with writing. Pupils are set work that improves their vocabulary and their understanding of grammar. They are encouraged to write extended passages and learn to structure their writing appropriately.
- Teachers teach mathematics in a way that makes pupils use their reasoning to think through their work and solve problems. Pupils are used to discussing their ideas and sharing their thinking. In a mathematics lesson in Year 4, for example, pupils enthusiastically worked together to find factors of 23 and multiples of six. This helped pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, to understand their mathematics, rather than just remember it.
- Pupils with SEND receive well-structured and effective support to help them make progress. Leaders ensure that teachers know what support each pupil needs and that teachers and teaching assistants respond positively.
- Teachers ensure that they provide challenging and interesting learning activities for pupils across the whole curriculum. Teachers integrate science, history and geography well into the curriculum to give pupils additional opportunities to develop their literacy and mathematics skills. Pupils enjoy their physical education lessons in the large park area surrounding the school. Pupils have access to specialist art and music teaching. Pupils told

the inspector that they enjoy their Spanish lessons, which take place across all year groups, including the early years.

- The school's assessment systems are used effectively by teachers to monitor progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessments give teachers a good knowledge and understanding of pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics. Subject leaders are currently reviewing systems to assess pupils' progress across the wider curriculum.
- The teaching of phonics is not as effective as it should be. There is a lack of clarity and coherence in teachers' planning and the delivery of phonics lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants use a range of approaches and resources. This has the effect of creating inconsistency in pupils' learning. Although staff have accessed training in phonics, this has not led to a single, consistent effective teaching approach. Consequently, while most pupils apply their phonics knowledge accurately in their reading and make strong progress, others are not catching up quickly enough from their starting points and therefore do not achieve as well as they are able to.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school is a nurturing community. There is a strong sense of family and belonging in this small school. Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They told the inspector, 'We're a small school so you get to know everyone really well.'
- Staff provide good role models for pupils. Staff encourage pupils to take an active part in the school and local community, for instance by raising money for various charities. Pupils enjoy learning and most have positive, confident attitudes to their work.
- Pupils know and understand the school's values, such as resilience, which they described as 'keeping going even if it's hard', and diversity, explaining, 'Everybody is different, but everyone matters.'
- Pupils know about bullying and what to do if they see or experience it. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and they are confident that teachers sort out any incidents quickly. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe in a variety of ways, including crossing the road or keeping personal information private when online. If they have a worry, they are confident that staff will provide support, with one pupil commenting, 'There's always someone to go to for help.'
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities the school provides for them to take on responsibilities, such as being school council members and house captains. The way that pupils carry out their responsibilities contributes to the smooth running of the school. Year 6 pupils 'buddy up' with children in the Reception class. They look after the younger children well during shared breaktimes and events.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and support them well in achieving good

standards. Pupils can explain the school's behaviour policy and the 'Golden Charter of Rights', which is displayed in every classroom and is based on the school's chosen resource, 'UNICEF's Rights of the Child'.

- Pupils' behaviour during breaks and lunchtimes is good. The atmosphere in the dining hall is positive, and lunchtime is a happy, social occasion. Outside, pupils can take part in a good range of activities. Pupils say that staff provide good supervision and handle any issues fairly and swiftly.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average for primary schools. Relatively few pupils are absent on a regular basis. Attendance is monitored closely, and any absenteeism is followed up quickly as leaders want every pupil to be safe and in school learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Throughout the school, most pupils, including the most able, make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In reading, pupils use their improving knowledge of vocabulary and comprehension skills with increasing confidence and accuracy. For example, older pupils' work shows that they expand their explanations to answer more complex questions.
- Pupils' increasing range of vocabulary and skills are evident in the good-quality written work they produce. Pupils' work clearly demonstrates good progress over time in this subject. The majority of pupils are writing at standards that are typical for their age.
- In mathematics, pupils' work is consistently of good quality. Teachers encourage pupils' resilience, particularly when solving more challenging problems. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge effectively in other subjects where appropriate, for example when designing and interpreting tables and charts in science.
- Most pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress throughout their time in the school. Many join the school with very little English but, because of the support they receive, most learn rapidly to read and write English. They then continue to develop their skills in the later years of key stage 2 and achieve good outcomes by the time they leave for secondary school. Consequently, pupils are being well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Many pupils start and leave the school at different points during the school year. They join Oaks International School with experience of different education systems. Leaders ensure that these pupils receive appropriate support. Assessments of each pupil take place soon after they start at the school, and staff liaise closely with parents and other professionals where necessary. The school's records show that these pupils settle in well and often make strong progress in their learning.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress. Their needs are quickly identified by staff and they are supported effectively in their learning.
- Pupils make good use of the many opportunities to practise literacy and mathematical skills through their topic work. Pupils' work on display and in their books shows that most groups are making good progress in a wide range of subjects, including science, history, geography and art.

- Weaknesses in the teaching of phonics across the school mean that pupils do not always build on their previous learning and some pupils do not use their phonics skills accurately or confidently when they read books.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision across the Nursery and Reception classes is good. Effective leadership and strong teaching mean that children make good progress.
- Most children attend the school's Nursery classes before joining the Reception class. Children enter the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age, though often lower in the areas of communication and language. A large proportion speak English as an additional language. Through good provision in the early years, most children are prepared well for their transition to Year 1.
- Staff demonstrate an accurate understanding of children's needs. Learning opportunities are appropriate and secure children's progress in all areas. Staff recognise the limited speaking and listening skills of some children so provide a language-rich environment, with many opportunities for children to recall events and talk to each other. Staff constantly model language skills for the children, as was observed in a Nursery class where the teacher was skilfully retelling the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' using various props. As the result of such experiences, children, including those who speak English as an additional language, learn to speak in whole sentences quickly and accurately.
- In classrooms, there are a range of opportunities for children to play, discover and learn. Many children display good degrees of independence and are able to cooperate and persevere in their learning. In a Nursery class, staff were helping a group of two-year-olds to safely prepare different fruits for their snack time. Staff encouraged the children to chop the fruit carefully and discuss suitable vocabulary together to describe the appearance and texture of the different fruits. The children sustained their concentration and completed the task successfully.
- Staff support children to follow their ideas and interests. Children in the Reception class, for example, had chosen to set up an ice-cream shop in the role-play area. The teacher supported them to use their writing and mathematics skills to make models of ice-cream cones and complete simple tally charts of their friends' favourite ice-cream flavours.
- Staff are supportive and watchful. They ensure that children are safe at all times. The correct staffing ratios and qualifications are maintained, including for the youngest children, and all welfare requirements are fully met. Safeguarding practices are secure.
- Staff work hard to engage with families. Parents are regularly invited into school to celebrate their children's progress. Parents are encouraged to complete 'wow sheets' to praise their children or record their children's learning achievements at home.
- Teachers ensure that children have opportunities to engage both in activities led by adults and tasks that they can choose for themselves. Indoors, the learning areas are welcoming and stimulating. The well-organised resources are accessible so that children can investigate and explore their own ideas. However, the outdoor learning area is less well developed and does not yet offer children a consistently good range of experiences in all

areas of learning or enough opportunities to select activities in order to follow their own interests.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 146301 |
| DfE registration number | 873/6056 |
| Inspection number | 10100304 |

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.

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| Type of school | Independent |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 76 |
| Proprietor | Nicholas Rugg |
| Headteacher | Amanda Gibbard |
| Annual fees | £12,318–£12,981 |
| Telephone number | 01223 416 938 |
| Website | www.oaksinternationalschool.co.uk |
| Email address | office@oischool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Oaks International School is a small independent school, registered with the Department for Education (DfE) for children from two to 11 years of age.
- Oaks International School opened as a new school in January 2019, having formally been part of Cambridge International School (CIS). It no longer retains any links with CIS. The school is run by the International School Partnership (ISP), which owns more than 40 schools worldwide.
- Most pupils speak English as an additional language and have experienced different education systems prior to attending the school. Some pupils are in the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average. Some pupils are supported by an EHC plan.

- This is the school's first standard inspection. A pre-registration inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the DfE in November 2018. The overall outcome stated that the school was likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opened.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- The inspector carried out an in-depth tour of the school and checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. The inspector also looked at the school's single central record, safeguarding procedures and risk assessments.
- All classrooms were visited jointly with the headteacher to observe teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour. The inspector also looked at a wide range of pupils' workbooks in order to evaluate pupils' progress over time.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, senior leaders (some of whom are designated safeguarding leaders), the SENCo and a group of subject leaders. The inspector had a Skype discussion with the ISP's regional director for learning, who provides support to leaders and is also a member of the governing body.
- The inspector met formally with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and many aspects of school life. The inspector also spoke to pupils informally in lessons and around the school at breaks and lunchtimes to seek their views about the school.
- Some pupils were heard reading their books. The inspector also talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- The school's website was scrutinised and a range of school documents were examined, including: policies; the school's own evaluation; improvement plans; curriculum plans; records of the quality of teaching; minutes from a governing body meeting; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector took account of the 23 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and the 23 responses to the Ofsted free-text system. Additionally, the inspector took account of the 16 responses to the school's recent parent questionnaire. The inspector also considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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