

Inspection of Park School

Southcombe, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire OX7 5QH

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 February 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Starting at this school marks a positive turning point in the lives of pupils. Prior to attending Park School, many pupils have not been in full-time education for some time. Staff's empathy, patience and understanding enables pupils to feel valued and safe. Relationships are warm and nurturing. This helps pupils to grow in confidence and develop greater self-esteem. Over time, pupils re-engage with learning and see a more positive future ahead of them.

The school is a welcoming environment, which fosters respect and courtesy. Staff care deeply about pupils' well-being. They have high ambition and aspire for every pupil to thrive. From low starting points, pupils achieve well, academically and socially. They enjoy school and are positive about their learning. Friday enrichment afternoons are a 'big hit' with pupils, particularly 'bake-off' and the various clubs on offer.

Most of the time, pupils behave well. Staff are skilled at pre-empting and de-escalating any rising tensions. They support pupils kindly and help them to move on as quickly as possible from any upsets. Pupils talk candidly about how the school has helped them to overcome difficulties and manage their emotions. One family summed this up, commenting that for their son the school has been 'life-changing'.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious, broad and well sequenced. It is tailored around pupils' needs and preparedness for life beyond the school. Overall, pupils achieve well. They leave the school with qualifications in English and mathematics and unit awards in life skills. Some also gain GCSEs in other subjects, such as science and art. However, while pupils learn a broad curriculum, the qualification pathways currently on offer to older pupils are more limited. This means that pupils do not have the option to gain qualifications that align well enough to some potential career pathways.

Reading is a priority at the school. Pupils who need support with early reading benefit from a well-structured phonics programme. Staff systematically address gaps in pupils' knowledge and successfully rekindle a love of reading. This supports pupils to become more confident, fluent readers. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to read and engage with good quality texts. Some say that reading time is one of their favourite parts of the day.

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.

The school has a strong understanding of pupils' significant needs. Staff work tirelessly to understand the root causes of pupils' difficulties. This includes thorough initial and ongoing assessments. Clinical and teaching staff work closely together to ensure that provision is shaped around pupils' ongoing needs. Typically, this is a carefully adapted curriculum, personalised teaching approaches and therapeutic support.

Consistent routines, including at the start and end of each day, help pupils to feel secure and settled. Every morning, pupils receive a warm welcome when they arrive at school. The strong relationships that staff forge with pupils and their regular communication with parents and carers are key factors in the school's success. Staff work hard to get to the root of underlying issues, including when pupils' attendance is a concern. For some pupils, it is a long 'journey' of improvement from previous non-attendance to securing regular school attendance. Nonetheless, the significant reduction in pupils' individual absence rates reflects the positive impact of the school's work.

Personal development and preparation for adulthood are at the heart of the school's work. Pupils learn indispensable life skills, such as travelling safely on public transport, planning a shopping trip and budgeting. They also benefit from well-considered careers guidance. Importantly, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are also taught how to recognise when a relationship may be coercive and unhealthy. Through personal, social and health education and subjects such as history, pupils learn about values such as democracy, freedom and justice.

The proprietor and members of the governing body are knowledgeable. Oversight of the school is systematic. The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards ('the standards') are consistently met. This includes compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The proprietor and leaders thoughtfully consider and manage staff's workload. This enables teachers to focus on the most important aspects of their roles. Staff are supported well at the school. They value that leaders take account of their views and the strong sense of teamwork.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- The curriculum is not consistently implemented in the way that the proprietor and leaders intend. Sometimes, teaching activities are not focused well enough on what the school wants pupils to learn and remember. This means that pupils are not securing some aspects of their learning as well as they could. The proprietor

needs to ensure that staff are supported to implement the curriculum consistently well.

- The school currently offers a limited range of qualification pathways for pupils in keys stages 4 and 5 and does not offer any vocational qualifications. This limits pupils' options and means that not all pupils are able to work towards qualifications that align well enough with their career aspirations. The proprietor needs to implement its plans to broaden the school's curriculum and qualification pathways on offer for pupils in key stages 4 and 5.

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

Unique reference number	123326
DfE registration number	931/6115
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10342014
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	P Bloom Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Hannah Fletcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,680 to £87,680
Telephone number	01608 644 621
Website	www.parkschooloxfordshire.co.uk
Email address	office@parkschooloxfordshire.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 to 17 March 2022

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' prime needs are social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils also have a diagnosis of autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is registered to admit up to 64 pupils between the ages of seven and 18. However, at the time of the inspection, the youngest pupils on roll were in Year 4 and there were very few post-16 students on roll.
- Pupils are referred to the school and funded by their local authority. Most pupils are placed at the school by one of three local authorities: Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire.
- Prior to joining the school, many pupils have spent considerable periods of time outside formal full-time education.
- The school operates from two sites. The main site is located at Southcombe, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire OX7 5QH. The other site, known as Cotswold Lodge, is approximately 8 miles from the main school site. It is located at Unit 2, Wychwood Business Centre, Milton Road, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire OX7 6XU.
- The school currently uses two registered providers of alternative provision.
- The previous standard inspection took place in March 2022, when the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be good, and all the independent school standards were found to be met. A material change inspection took place in July 2024 following the school's application to the Department for Education (DfE) to increase the number of pupils on roll from 54 to 64.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2025.
- The school's proprietor is P Bloom Ltd. The school is owned by Outcomes First Group, which is a subsidiary of P Bloom Ltd. The Outcomes First Group runs many schools across the country through the company's 'brands' of Acorn Education, Options Autism, Momenta Connect and Blenheim Schools.
- The proprietor has put in place a governing body that is chaired by the regional director. The membership of the governing body comprises the headteachers from a cluster of schools within the Outcomes First Group, including Park School.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders. They also held an online meeting with the proprietor and regional director.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered curriculum information and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors toured the premises at both school sites and reviewed a range of documents to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at other times of the day, including lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered parents' responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They took account of staff's views during meetings with them and considered their responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.
- To accommodate the proposed increase in the number of pupils, the proprietor has acquired a new building located in the grounds of the Southcombe site. This building was formerly in use as a children's home. The building has been extensively remodelled to provide suitable accommodation for educational use.
- The new accommodation is well appointed and finished to a high standard. It includes four classrooms, meeting and therapy rooms, a multi-purpose hall and a

kitchen for preparing meals for pupils. There are suitable toilet facilities for pupils as well as staff. The building is light and attractively finished. The proprietor has installed new fencing and a key fob entry system to ensure that there is safe and secure access to the building. Risk assessments have been completed, and suitable fire precautions are in place.

- A paved outside play area leads directly off the main corridor. There is also a large, partially grassed area which the proprietor intends pupils to use once it has been fully reinstated following recent building work. The proprietor intends to continue to use a local sports centre for physical education.
- If the material change is agreed, the proprietor intends to appoint additional teaching and support staff to cater for the increase in pupil numbers. The proprietor is also creating additional leadership posts.
- There is no change to the range of needs of pupils with SEND that the school intends to admit. This means that the school's existing curriculum and schemes of work will continue to be relevant.

Information about the material change inspection

The school has applied to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll by 24, from 64 to 88. This was the school's fourth material change inspection.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Charlotte Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

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