

LVS Oxford

Spring Hill Road, Begbroke, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX5 1RX

Inspection dates

14–17 May 2018

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
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Through her high expectations, the headteacher has transformed this rapidly improving school into an ambitious place of learning, for pupils and for staff.
- All staff members work as a cohesive team to create a welcoming, purposeful and calm environment. They are genuinely committed to ensuring that pupils leave the school well prepared for a successful future.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers know pupils well and plan effectively to meet their needs.
- In this school, pupils gain confidence and discover what it means to be successful learners. They make good progress in their studies and personal development.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance improves while they are at the school. Pupils conduct themselves well and make the most of what the school offers.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Pupils feel secure in the school. They have sufficient freedom, combined with appropriate supervision, to enable them to manage their anxieties, stay safe and regulate their behaviour.
- The sixth form is a growing strength of the school. Good teaching, thorough careers guidance and a wide range of vocational experiences enable students to develop into confident citizens.
- Occasionally, teachers are too cautious about challenging pupils to aim higher and work harder. In these cases, pupils are not sufficiently committed to achieving what they are capable of.
- A small number of parents and carers are not satisfied with the school. Leaders have correctly identified that they need to work on more effective ways of sharing information and their approaches with parents.
- The curriculum for pupils in key stage 3 is underdeveloped. Leaders know that they need to broaden the content and range of subjects on offer to younger pupils.

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?

- Ensure that teaching in all phases challenges pupils to be more ambitious, use their time productively and take responsibility for working hard, in order to achieve their full potential.
- Develop the curriculum, particularly in key stage 3, in order to help pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that will equip them well for the next stage in their education.
- Improve communication with parents, so that all fully understand the vision for the school and the approaches that are being used with pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has refined the purpose and character of the school. As an expert in autism education, she is rightly determined that the school will develop into a centre of excellence. Her ambition is inspiring staff, who are eager to learn more and develop their own skills and knowledge. The school is deservedly earning a good reputation, locally and nationally, for strong practice in teaching and supporting pupils who are on the autism spectrum.
- Rightly, the headteacher, governors and directors ensure that well-qualified and accomplished staff are appointed to teach and support pupils in the school. Training and professional development are a high priority in the school and provide staff with a growing understanding of what it is like to be pupils who learn through the lens of their autism spectrum conditions.
- Leaders and staff are committed to the headteacher's vision that pupils who have autism spectrum conditions are not 'invisible' or forgotten, but are able to achieve well and make a valuable contribution to society.
- Senior leaders' plans to improve the school are thorough and realistic. They know that they have to consolidate and build upon what has already been achieved in order to become outstanding. Recent good appointments to the leadership team have strengthened the capacity of the school to improve.
- The staff work effectively as a team. Therapists, teachers, learning support assistants, the school nurse, and site and office staff all work together to create a happy and forward-looking atmosphere. Staff feel valued because they have contributed to the school's improvement plan and feel that it is democratic. In addition, the headteacher takes careful account of staff's well-being and workload.
- School leaders are fully committed to equality of opportunity and celebration of diversity. In this school, it is safe for pupils and staff to look, feel or be different, whether related to gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- The school's grounds and facilities are immaculately maintained to inspire pupils and nurture their mental health. Nevertheless, leaders are mindful that pupils must not be educated 'in a bubble' but be challenged and develop resilience. As the assistant headteacher said, 'We want to know what our pupils' crisis points might be and what this feels like, so that they can be better prepared for life beyond school.' In this way, leaders are developing pupils' insight and understanding of themselves and their capabilities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to learn about and experience other cultures and religious faiths, including visits to different places of worship. There are abundant opportunities throughout the calendared school year for pupils to contribute to school life and take advantage of what is available in Oxford and the local area.
- The current curriculum rightly focuses closely on the skills and attributes that pupils will need for their future studies and employment, including the opportunity to take accredited qualifications. For older pupils, there is a strong emphasis on work-related learning, combined with academic subjects for those pupils who are capable. Leaders

wisely make sure that pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills and that a focus on confident communication is threaded through all activities.

- The school's assessment systems are informative and accurate. Leaders have a detailed and regularly updated overview of how pupils are attaining and progressing in English, mathematics, their academic and vocational subjects, and their personal development
- At key stage 3, the curriculum is still being constructed. Leaders have not fully established what they want pupils to learn and what topics will be offered to maximise pupils' interest and commitment. Staff are rightly focusing on improving pupils' progress in English and mathematics, but leaders know that they need to further develop the depth and variety of other subjects and topics on offer.
- While many parents have many positive comments to make about the school, a minority of parents are not satisfied with the level of communication from school leaders and the quality of teaching and learning. Her Majesty's Inspector did not find evidence of weak provision or teaching. However, leaders and those responsible for governance are aware that they need to find better ways of communicating their approaches and vision to parents.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Governance

- Since the last inspection, governance has improved. Directors of the charitable trust and members of the governing body have made their duties and lines of accountability much clearer. As a result, governors and directors maintain a closer oversight of the school, including its long-term plans and the day-to-day impact of leaders' work.
- Members of the governing body are highly reflective and keen to offer more involvement in school life. Governors with an education background act partly as experienced mentors for senior leaders in the school, which is helpful at this stage in the development of the school. Nevertheless, governors make sure that they challenge leaders objectively. For example, governors insist upon school leaders 'proving it' when they make assertions about successes and the impact of their work.
- Directors of the charitable trust are vigilant and monitor the school increasingly closely. They have made sure that there is sufficient expertise in special educational needs and/or disabilities, in addition to ensuring effective management of the school's finances. In this way, the school is able to flourish with a healthy budget and access to helpful resources and support.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Checks made on staff appointed to work in the school are meticulous. Leaders make sure that they only recruit staff who are suitable to work with children and young people.
- All staff know precisely what they must do if they have a concern about a pupil. There is no hesitation about reporting unexpected changes in pupils' behaviour or mental health, or if they make a worrying disclosure. Information about safeguarding concerns is recorded and stored carefully to enable useful work with other agencies that protect children.

- Leaders maintain a close working relationship with other professionals, including those in the local authority. Oxfordshire carries out regular checks on safeguarding practice and policy in the school, not only for the benefit of Oxfordshire children, but also on behalf of other local authorities who place pupils in the school.
- Leaders have ensured that the safeguarding policy is up to date, appropriate for the pupils admitted to the school, and available on the school's website.
- All staff in the school pay close attention to site security. Great care is taken to balance pupils' independent use of the facilities and space on the site, with high levels of vigilance. For example, leaders and site staff ensure that all visitors are checked carefully, including taxi and transport companies.
- School leaders and staff, including those who work with older students, wisely focus on pupils' use of the internet and social media. Some of the pupils in the school are particularly vulnerable to online exploitation, extreme views and access to inappropriate sites when out of school. The school has worked productively with other agencies, including the police, to help pupils learn about online safety and the law.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' planning is thorough and grounded in a good understanding of pupils' needs and abilities. A highly effective transition programme helps new pupils to get ready to learn at the right level, even when they have missed long periods of education. Information about pupils' abilities and particular needs is shared with all staff. In this way, pupils make a smooth and productive start to their time at the school.
- Teachers' questioning is thoughtful; it draws out pupils' previous knowledge and helps them to think about new concepts. Teachers take time to really listen to pupils' responses and adjust their teaching or explanations accordingly.
- Staff are sensibly focusing on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy. Many pupils have missed out on important knowledge of vocabulary and basic mathematical concepts. Through regular reviews of pupils' progress, gaps in pupils' understanding are quickly identified. Specialist literacy and numeracy sessions help pupils to catch up.
- Teaching assistants and the therapy team provide strong support for pupils in and out of lessons. They intervene discreetly, with perceptive observations and sensitivity to pupils' responses and anxieties. As a result, pupils' communication skills and confidence improve.
- Sometimes, staff are reluctant to challenge pupils to achieve more. Some teachers do not always get the balance right between reducing pupils' anxieties and insisting upon their commitment and hard work. In these cases, pupils do not use their time productively enough and become distracted or pursue their own agendas, to the detriment of their progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils gain confidence and increase their ability to form relationships with staff and each other. Any bullying is extremely rare and when there are deliberately unkind words or deeds, these are dealt with effectively.
- Pupils are helped to understand themselves and become increasingly resilient, through the care and nurture of staff and specialist support from the on-site therapists.
- Pupils appreciate the cycle of the school year and the opportunity to contribute to regular events on and off the school site. In this way, pupils have many opportunities to look outside of themselves and to learn about the wider world. Staff listen to and take notice of pupils' views about the future of the school. Pupils therefore have a meaningful stake in the school's development and are helping to shape its improvement.
- Pupils' health and fitness is promoted strongly in the school, with many pupils taking part in, and enjoying, competitive sports for the very first time. Pupils also benefit from the school kitchen's excellent menus, helping them to try a more varied and healthy diet.
- Leaders and staff make sure that pupils are well prepared for college placements, training and academic courses after they leave the school.
- While most pupils develop positive attitudes to learning over their time in the school, some pupils find it more difficult to settle to work, concentrate and respond to the challenges set by their teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils learn to manage their feelings and anxieties, and, over time, their behaviour improves.
- Pupils take pride in the appearance and upkeep of the beautiful school site. They also show respect for those in authority and the rules of the school.
- Incidents of serious misconduct are rare. Since her appointment, the headteacher has taken a firm line with how pupils' behaviour is managed. Staff maintain a calm and controlled manner with pupils. Staff are skilled in the effective use of de-escalation techniques when pupils' emotions become heightened. Incidents of restrictive physical intervention are very rare, as are exclusions. Staff and pupils make the most of the facilities and safe spaces in the school grounds to alleviate anxieties and outbursts that might disturb other pupils.
- Once admitted to the school, nearly all pupils improve their attendance. Overall attendance is approaching the national average for mainstream schools.
- Most pupils and students in the sixth form get to school and to lessons on time, quite an achievement considering that, for some, their daily journey is long and can be disrupted by traffic.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and, increasingly, in science. In particular, pupils make strong progress in writing. They build up their confidence in new vocabulary, sentence structure and extended pieces of factual and creative writing.
- Pupils' mathematics work shows their increasing adeptness with solving word problems and mathematical reasoning. Staff clearly explain and demonstrate methods of solving

problems and completing accurate calculations. Pupils are then encouraged to practise and work things out on their own, leading to good progress and attainment.

- The school's timetabled programmes are flexible enough in order for all pupils, including those who are the most able and those who are disadvantaged, to achieve well. Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium make the same good progress as others, particularly in mathematics and English.
- Leaders can correctly identify pupils whose overall ability with literacy and numeracy has improved because of the extra help and additional tailored programmes in place.
- The school ensures that pupils have the opportunities to study for accredited qualifications in GCSEs and vocational courses. They go on to attain good results that compare well with those of pupils in mainstream schools. Pupils' good results in English, mathematics, and other academic and vocational subjects put them in a secure position for further study in the sixth form or in local colleges.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The head of sixth form has deservedly gained the respect of students and staff. He conveys a clear and realistic vision of what can be accomplished through the courses on offer. As a result, those students who join the sixth form follow the right programmes of study for them and are well-prepared for employment or the next stage in their education.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form are consistently effective and enable students to make good progress, whether they are following academic or vocational programmes.
- Students on vocational programmes, such as health and social care, sport and leisure or business administration, all make good progress, with many going on to study for higher-level courses. Students following academic courses attain good grades in English, mathematics, science and humanities subjects.
- In addition, the school's commitment to improving students' communication and skills for life ensures that all students go on to employment, further education or training.
- Students on work experience and those who attend Abingdon and Witney College attend well and make impressive gains in their personal development and learning.
- Sixth-form students are nurtured and valued. They attend well, are proud to be at the top of the school and take their duties as ambassadors and role models seriously. Students develop into confident and self-aware individuals. Over time, students develop empathy and insight into the experience and views of other people.
- Leaders and staff are keenly aware of particular risks that sixth-form students may take with their online safety. As with elsewhere in the school, students' use of the internet is protected and overseen to ensure that students do not unwittingly access inappropriate material. A thorough programme of education, for students and parents, ensures that students are fully informed of the risks that they may face when young adults and away from the protection of the school's online security.
- Enterprise and innovation form strong parts of the sixth-form study programme. During the inspection, students told Her Majesty's Inspector about how they had requested a

grant from the charitable trust to open a café on the school site. As a result of the students' thorough preparation and confident presentation of their proposal, the trust awarded them much more funding than had been requested. This outcome demonstrates not only the high regard in which students are held, but also their good personal progress.

School details

Unique reference number	141208
DfE registration number	931/6015
Inspection number	10047018

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	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	23
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Licensed Trade Charity
Chair	Anita Adams
Headteacher	Louisa Allison-Bergin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,280
Telephone number	01865 595170
Website	www.lvs-oxford.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@lvs-oxford.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 May 2015

Information about this school

- LVS Oxford is an 11 to 19 co-educational independent school, catering for pupils who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum conditions. The school was registered in June 2014 and opened in September 2014. The school is located in a former priory north of Oxford.

- Most pupils admitted to the school have a diagnosis of a high functioning autistic condition or of Asperger's syndrome. Some pupils have associated additional special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Nearly all pupils have education, health and care plans (EHC plans). A number of local authorities place pupils at the school. A very small number of pupils are privately funded.
- The school was inspected for the first time in May 2015. In March 2017, the Department for Education approved a material change for the school, enabling it to cater for up to 98 pupils.
- A very small number of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, although some local authorities retain the funding.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. Some sixth-form students attend Abingdon and Witney College as part of their programmes of study.
- The current headteacher joined the school in 2015, shortly after the last full inspection.
- The school aims to enable all pupils to become: 'successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve; confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives; responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to modern British society.'
- The school does not have any religious affiliation.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place with one day's notice.
- Her Majesty's Inspector reviewed a range of documentation and undertook activities in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector toured the school site with the headteacher, head girl and head boy. She visited lessons to observe pupils' learning in all phases of the school, accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, the estates manager, a representative of the governing body and a director of the proprietorial body, the Licensed Trade Charity. Her Majesty's Inspector also spoke to one of the directors of the charity on the telephone.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils and a group of teaching and non-teaching staff. She selected a sample of pupils' work for review and considered the school's information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance.
- The responses of 22 staff to the staff questionnaire were taken into account. Her Majesty's Inspector also reviewed the 17 responses to Parent View and the 13 free-text comments made by parents, alongside the school's own evidence of parents' views and comments.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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