



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

DfE No: 881-6030

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

The quality of education	Outstanding	1
Pupils' personal development	Outstanding	1
Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding	1
Effectiveness of the Early Years' provision	Outstanding	1

Compliance with the Independent School Standards:

The school meets the regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Compliance with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

Compliance with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

The school meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Date of inspection: 14 - 16 June 2016

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The strong and determined leadership of the headteacher combined with outstanding teaching ensure that pupils are effective learners and make exceptional progress across the full range of national curriculum subjects. Standards are high in all aspects of the school's work. Leaders, managers and the proprietor have set demanding expectations of pupils' attainment and made the necessary adjustments to the curriculum to ensure that they all have the opportunity to reach the goals set for them. Pupils' achievements academically and personally are extremely well understood by staff and the teaching is tailored to meet these needs. The well balanced curriculum provides a rich range of experiences for pupils. An understanding of British values is taught effectively in lessons that celebrate the cultural diversity of pupils. Personal development, safeguarding and welfare policies and practice are outstanding. Staff receive very clear guidance on how to implement policies, and practice is regularly checked to ensure it is working. Throughout the school, pupils' personal enthusiasm for learning is a positive factor in how they approach with eagerness the school day. Their behaviour is exemplary. The warm and friendly relationships between staff and between pupils themselves ensure that Oxford House School is a happy and safe place in which to learn. Outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures children have learnt to listen and handle new experiences with confidence and are thus well-prepared for the years ahead, although there is scope to improve further the way in which their development and achievements are recorded.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- strengthen the partnership with parents and in particular consider ways that would improve the parents' perception about how questions, suggestions or problems are managed; and
- further develop the recording of children's learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that it contains details of the progress the children have made.

SECTION B: INFORMATION

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. It follows the inspection framework agreed by SIS and the Department for Education (DfE).

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors visited twelve lessons and observed the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Inspectors attended assembly and observed playtimes and mealtimes. They scrutinised a sample of pupils' work books from each form and had meetings with the headteacher, leaders, managers and the assistant director of education at Cognita. All documents relating to safeguarding were reviewed along with school policies and other information from the school's website. Inspectors considered the views of 104 parents who returned the parents' questionnaire. They held meetings with a selection of pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 to hear them read and discuss their views about behaviour, safety and school life. The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mr Jonathan Palk
Team inspectors:	Mr Mike Thirkell Mr Ted Cohn

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:

Oxford House School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged from rising-three to eleven years of age. The school is located in a large and extended detached Victorian house in Colchester. It is non-selective. The school was established in 1959 and became part of the Cognita group in 2006. There are 143 full-time pupils at the school. There are 14 part time children who were three during the academic year and 18 aged three to five, all of whom receive nursery education funding. The lower Nursery for the youngest children operates in the mornings only, five days a week. The school aims to 'understand and to develop the potential which all children possess and to send them on to senior schools as literate, numerate, well-mannered and happy individuals'. About one in three children speak English as an additional language, being mostly of Indian or Chinese or Middle Eastern heritage. There is a low number of pupils with additional needs and none with a statement of special educational needs. The school prepares pupils for entry into independent and maintained secondary schools. The school was last inspected in February 2012.

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is outstanding.

Pupils' learning and achievement

Standards are well above average in all year groups. Pupils start Year 1 above expectations of their age. Without exception annual test results and assessed tasks in reading, writing and mathematics illustrate that pupils continue to achieve well year on year. All pupils in Year 6 have secured their first choice of secondary school.

Pupils are effective learners and are enthused by their teachers to do their best. The pupils know their targets and work diligently towards these. Teachers make it clear to pupils what is expected of them and set work to help pupils meet these targets. In lessons some outstanding progress is made by pupils as a result of very effective discussions between pupils and teachers, combined with high expectations of what will be achieved by the end of the lesson. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson pupils discussed the calculations they had used to solve problems involving money. Their commentaries showed a deep understanding of calculation and how inverse operations can be used to predict accurately.

The excellent gains made in speaking and listening, reading and basic numeracy in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide a secure basis upon to which build achievement as they move through the school. Pupils learn to write quickly, accurately and imaginatively. Creative writing including poetry is of a very high standard. The pupils read widely, and report they continue to enjoy reading as they move through the school. They use their reading skills to build a good general knowledge that helps them learn well in humanities and science topics.

Pupils learn to calculate rapidly and correctly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1. Mathematics lessons throughout the school provide a good balance of mental recall, repetition of skills and investigative work. This builds a high level of independence and excellent reasoning when solving mathematical problems.

The work observed on displays around the school and in books, alongside national awards in sport and music reflects the capacity of all pupils to achieve at the highest level for their age.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. More than half of the lessons and sessions observed had significant or outstanding features. No lessons were judged to be less than good with regard to the quality of teaching, learning and the progress made by pupils. This judgement was reflected in the high quality of teaching and learning observed in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school has taken effective steps to address areas for improvement highlighted by the last inspection. The quality of marking, in particular written feedback received by pupils in their exercise books is consistent across the

school. The marking helps pupils understand how to improve their work and serves as a reminder to teachers of where pupil's misunderstanding may still lie.

Feedback to pupils during lessons is purposeful and tailored to each individual pupil. This is assisted by the small numbers in the form but also because pupils get on with their work with great independence, ensuring teachers have time to spend with individuals. Lessons are typified by positive relationships between teachers and their pupils. Pupils' response in lessons is excellent.

The high quality of learning in lessons is secured through teachers appropriately detailed planning and the organisation of classrooms. Teaching assistants were deployed effectively to provide support and additional guidance. Assistants often work with more able pupils to encourage them to challenge themselves.

The organisation of classes ensures that pupils work well together, for example when working in small groups to discuss aspects of the work as directed by the teacher. Time is used well; reminding pupils of what they have already learnt and what is to be completed. Teachers get pupils quickly involved. This strategy was used well in a Year 5 English writing lesson. In the lesson the pupils were given a short time to explore descriptive language, time to evaluate an example of written prose with a friend before writing an engaging short piece on their own involving adjectival clauses.

Teachers show good knowledge of the subjects and topics they teach and have effective communication skills. Questioning is used well to engage and challenge pupils relative to their abilities. Specialist teachers in art, dance, sport, drama, French and music maintain the consistently high expectations the school has set for pupils.

There is a clear framework for assessment in place which ensures the regular monitoring of pupils' achievements. The school has established policies for assessment and for marking pupils' work. These are consistently implemented. The use of assessment information derived from regular testing is made available appropriately to teachers in order to plan their teaching, through electronically stored data. The quality of assessment is enhanced by the good knowledge teachers have of their pupils and regular opportunities to share information between staff.

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. The curriculum is extremely well organised and inspires and motivates the pupils to do their best. It provides a broad range of experiences and in sufficient depth to ensure pupils have mastered understanding of ideas and concepts. An impressive range of writing opportunities are offered, and displays bear testament to this.

There is clear progression in the way skills, knowledge and understanding are developed as the pupils move through the school. Daily and weekly planning is consistent across the classes. Thought goes into how teachers can best support the range of subject material covered each year. Astute checking on what has been taught and to what depth by school leaders ensures that pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is coherent and consistently developed.

Teachers seek enjoyable ways to present new work such as in drama or with the aid of visits and visitors. Lessons place particular emphasis on pupils acquiring and developing effective oracy and literacy skills. This ensures that all are confident explaining their ideas and joining in discussions. Reading and writing skills are taught discretely but also developed in topic work.

Although the school identifies no pupils as having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), teachers are aware of pupils who have shown any difficulty with learning. Monitoring of pupils' additional needs is well considered, informed by observation of pupils, teachers' comments and by use of the school's data base which records progress. Classes are visited each week by the special educational needs coordinator to maintain a view of the current learning needs of pupils. The co-ordinator uses the information to help teachers adjust their lesson planning for these pupils and to ensure that classroom assistants are given the best guidance to help support the pupils' learning. The role of staff responsible for supporting those with additional needs has been well supported by training.

2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The quality of pupils' personal development is outstanding. Tolerance and respect permeate the relationships between pupils. The school reinforces the importance of the roles of different cultures and faiths within modern British society and the school community. This extends the strong moral code that pupils bring with them and cultivates their spiritual development. Through an excellent range of lessons in personal, social and health education lessons pupils' acquire confidence and effective interpersonal skills.

British democratic values are integral to the school's approach in developing positive attitudes and behaviour and preparation for moving into the secondary phase. Topics are chosen to reflect current issues that pupils may experience, such the plight of refugees. Pupils show good awareness of democracy and have taken a keen interest in the upcoming referendum. A scrutiny of evidence and discussions with pupils exemplifies a very positive view about British society. This is backed up through knowledge of British law commensurate to their age. The school ensures when appropriate, that pupils receive a balanced presentation of opposing views and that the promotion of partisan political views is precluded from any aspect of teaching or in the life of the school.

Behaviour during inspection was exemplary. In the relatively tight confines of the school hall and outdoor area pupils play safely and happily. Very few incidents are recorded of poor behaviour and indeed in the top forms there are none.

Personal, social and health and economic education is very strong and underpins pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is delivered through a comprehensive curriculum that covers topics that are relevant to pupils growing up in a multi-cultural community. School leaders are reviewing the content of the curriculum to ensure it provides comprehensive teaching on matters relating to staying safe. Written guidance for teaching personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) is available and teachers support one another through discussion.

Pupils are delightful and highly motivated. Teachers look to develop pupils' personal confidence through responsibilities such as taking roles in plays and class productions. Older pupils are fully involved in supporting teachers through jobs in their form and duties such as prefects and school councillors. All pupils are encouraged and indeed contribute to fund raising projects that help others in the local and wider community.

3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

Arrangements to safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. Procedures and policies are fully integrated into school life. From the checks on entry for all visitors through to careful record keeping, safeguarding is at the heart of the school.

Staff have a good knowledge of current safeguarding advice. The school has a clear safeguarding policy which meets requirements, is well understood by staff and is implemented effectively. It is fully up to date and reflects the new duties expressed in the July revision to *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015*, which covers radicalisation and extremism, female genital mutilation (FGM), and children missing from education. There is a well-trained safeguarding team who understand their responsibilities and carry them out effectively. The managers ensure that all policies connected with safeguarding, child protection and *Prevent*, including staff training, are thorough, reviewed regularly and kept fully up to date.

Staff are interested in doing what they can to ensure pupils' safety. They are vigilant to signs of abuse but are also understanding of what may constitute risks associated with online abuse and extremism. Procedures are fully understood and leaders check conscientiously that procedures are working effectively. The designated safeguarding lead has made a good start on monitoring how safeguarding is taught and the impact this is having on pupils' behaviour, particularly in keeping safe on the internet.

Appropriate checks are made on all staff before they are employed at the school. For example, references are sought and disclosure and barring checks obtained. A good level of training is provided by the proprietor for those staff involved in recruitment and the maintenance of the single central record.

The pupils learn in an environment that is safe from bullying or harassment of any kind. Pupils say they feel safe. Bullying incidents are extremely rare with pupils only being able to share the occasional falling out between friends as anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Appropriate attention is paid to ensuring that the school building and premises support pupils' welfare, health and safety. Fire and safety checks and drills are regular with careful records kept. There are weekly safety checks of equipment, including playground equipment. The quality of maintenance and decoration in the buildings is high, supported by the diligent site manager, who receives additional support when needed from a business manager and specialists provided by the proprietors, Cognita. The sick room is suitable for short term care

and examination. Risk assessments for every room in the building are detailed and of excellent quality. The school makes good use of its limited outdoor space to provide a safe space for physical education and games, and adequate offsite sports facilities are used to ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of games activities. The building and grounds provide a safe and secure environment, and there is ample and secure storage space for equipment and resources. The school does not have a library but there is a rich resource of books in every form-room. This is a significant support to the rapid progress pupils make in their reading from the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The attendance and admissions registers are correctly maintained. Attendance is well above average.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is determined that only the best is good enough. She teaches for a significant proportion of the week; demonstrating her commitment to lead by example. She is diligent in meeting all regulations and ensures that other managers are fulfilling their duties well. Communication is clear and transparent and involves staff at all levels. The headteacher is skilful in building a climate of trust that encourages staff to improve their practise.

The headteacher and more latterly the deputy headteacher have a good oversight of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher regularly visit all classes formally and informally to observe lessons. Pupils are also asked about their experiences in lessons. Regular staff meetings address matters relating to pupils' performance and the action to be taken to improve provision. As a consequence, assessment, record keeping and curriculum have all improved since the last inspection.

The performance management of staff is secure. Staff have clear and unambiguous objectives for the academic year. In conjunction with the proprietors, staff development and training is appropriately linked to these objectives.

The school provides a wide range of information to parents. All the information specified in the standards is available, including descriptions of the curriculum. All the relevant policies and the complaints procedure are available on the accessible school website. A fortnightly newsletter keeps parents informed about the life of the school and what is being taught. Staff are diligent in keeping parents informed about the progress their child is making. Along with two written reports during the year there are invitations to visit during the school day. Despite this, a minority of parents considered they were not well informed about their child's progress at school. The school is aware of the need to further develop the detail provided in the end of year reports.

The headteacher maintains a record of parental concerns and questions about how the school is managed. The headteacher fully complies with the school policy to respond promptly. However a minority of parents who completed the pre inspection questionnaire commented that they found it difficult to approach the

school with questions, suggestions or a problem. This was brought to the attention of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Governance

The proprietorial group, Cognita, provides excellent oversight of all aspects of the school's performance. Since the last inspection Cognita has provided expertise to help school leaders improve many aspects of teaching and assessment, safeguarding and welfare. The assistant director of education is a regular visitor to the school. She provides useful advice and guidance to help develop the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Her guidance in developing staff's management skills has proved highly effective. Regular visits by the independent safeguarding governor ensure that there is diligent oversight of all safeguarding and welfare requirements.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS' PROVISION

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is outstanding. Children make excellent progress in their learning, achieve high standards of work and are very well prepared for Key Stage 1. Children are enthusiastic about their work and learn to work very well individually and collaboratively. Staff provide an interesting and well-structured environment, where children feel safe and happy, greatly enjoy their learning and like coming to school. There are high levels of attendance. Safeguarding and welfare arrangements are comprehensive and effective. Leadership and management are highly effective in supporting all aspects of the provision.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding overall. Teaching staff have a very clear understanding of the purposes and objectives of the Early Years Foundation Stage and have high expectations of what the children can achieve. They know the children and their educational capabilities very well, and this informs their planning and the tracking of children's learning and contributes to the excellent progress they make. The close collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants creates highly effective teaching teams. Together they provide a judicious combination of teacher-led and child-initiated activities that engages children's interest and supports their enthusiasm for learning very effectively. The teams create a purposeful and positive learning environment that is conducive to high achievement, where children learn how to work well both independently and collaboratively in groups. Linked to this is a strong emphasis on developing children's oral skills and capacity to think creatively and critically. This is exemplified by the highly effective use of questioning and encouragement of discussion, debate and investigation.

Teaching staff establish good relationships with parents and carers. Staff develop a strong informal dialogue about the progress and personal development of their children. This is in addition to the various more formal opportunities through reports and parents' meetings to report on and discuss children's progress. Parents are also sent the curriculum for the year at the beginning of the year. The school recognises that half-termly reminders may further develop parents' understanding of the curriculum. The effective links with Year 1 ensure a smooth transition in between the two stages.

Teaching staff assess the children's progress regularly. Comments in classrooms and teachers' planning clearly indicate they have an excellent understanding of what children know, understand and can do and how they can make further progress in their learning. Assessment records are very detailed about children's experiences but do not regularly record the progress they have made which would help them to plan future tasks in a more informed way.

The outcomes for children are outstanding. Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage children achieve outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy, which are excellent in relation to their ability and well above national expectations. Children make good, with some excellent examples of progress in their learning and their personal development. They are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The leadership and management of the school have been highly effective in ensuring that the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is of a high quality. The school's checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children have been carried out meticulously and staff of a high quality have been recruited. The ethos of high expectation of teaching staff and children, combined with their quality and pedagogical expertise, are important factors in the high levels of achievement of the children. The effective model of collaborative management adopted by the Leading Early Years team helps to ensure a strong consistency in the quality of planning, teaching, assessment and the empathetic care of children, including their safeguarding and welfare.

The school has a well-organised and effective system of performance management and quality assurance, linked to good opportunities for staff development. This has been helpful in consolidating and improving expertise in teaching, supporting children's personal development, safeguarding and the welfare of children.

The headteacher along with Nursery team have ensured that the Early Years curriculum is interesting, enthuses children and prepares them well for the next stage in their education. Promoting British values of courtesy, equality, celebration of diversity, fairness and justice are embedded in the aims and ethos of the school and are very much reflected in the practice of Early Years staff and their expectations of children. These values provide very strong protection against radicalisation and extremism.

The assistant director of education, who represents the proprietor in the governance role, has specialist expertise in this stage and has provided excellent critical support and guidance to the managers of the school. Together with colleagues who have a specialist interest in safeguarding she has played a valuable role in helping the school to further improve and sustain the excellence that it has achieved in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Oxford House School			
Address of school:	2-4 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NE			
Telephone number:	01206 576686			
Email address:	info@oxfordhouseschool.net			
Web address	www.oxfordhouseschool.net			
Proprietor:	Cognita Schools Ltd.			
Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4:	Chris Jansen			
Head Teacher:	Kate Golding			
DfE Number	881- 6030			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	£4473 – £8910			
Age range of pupils	2.5-11			
Gender of pupils	Mixed			
Total number on roll	full-time	143	part-time	14
Number of children under-5	Boys:	17	Girls:	15
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	60	Girls:	65
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	19	Girls:	18
Type of inspection	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008			

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship or Cognita group. The report is available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk.