

The Treehouse School

37 Wallingford Road, Cholsey, Oxfordshire OX10 9LG

Inspection dates

16 January 2020

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The standard was not met at the previous inspection because leaders and trustees had not ensured that the safeguarding policy was understood and implemented by all staff. The designated safeguarding lead, who is also the headteacher, did not understand locally agreed thresholds of concern knowledgeably and did not act decisively enough to safeguard pupils who may be at risk. The systems for reporting and recording concerns about pupils' welfare and safety were disorganised and poorly maintained. Trustees did not hold leaders to account for safeguarding well enough. In addition, pupils had a limited understanding of how to stay safe online.
- As required, trustees submitted an action plan to the Department for Education (DfE), indicating how the school intended to address all the identified weaknesses. The DfE rejected this plan because it set unrealistic timescales to achieve the necessary actions, and it was not clear enough about how improvements would be implemented and monitored. Leaders have wisely amended the plan and are using it well to quickly improve safeguarding at the school. There has been substantial progress in strengthening procedures and practice in the school.
- At the time of the last inspection, the safeguarding policy was up to date and published on the school website. However, staff were not familiar with the policy and consequently did not implement it well enough. Since then, leaders have rewritten the policy, using expert advice from the local authority and in line with the latest guidance from the Secretary of State. Leaders have made sure that all staff have read the policy. They use regular quizzes and discussions of theoretical scenarios to check that staff understanding of the policy is up to date.
- Leaders, staff, trustees and all regular volunteers have all received a range of helpful safeguarding training from trained professionals. Trustees have made sure that the designated safeguarding lead and three deputies, who are the senior staff team, all hold a current certificate at the required level. Leaders now attend regular safeguarding network meetings run by the local authority. The headteacher reports that she has found this training useful. She demonstrated to the inspector that she now has a more secure understanding of her role, including in how to apply local thresholds when she has a

concern about a child. She is clear on the importance of supporting parents who may need extra support, so that children stay safe, including through offering early help.

- Record-keeping systems relating to safeguarding are now much more organised and fit for purpose. Leaders keep information securely. Records show that staff and volunteers report concerns appropriately and that leaders use clear chronologies to help them spot any patterns. This includes considering information about pupils' behaviour. During the inspection, leaders reflected that there may be further information about pupils' well-being that they hold which could contribute to their understanding of pupils' safety, such as medical information or accident records.
- Information on the school's website shows that leaders have taken advice from the last inspection to ensure that parents, many of whom are also regular volunteers, are better informed about safeguarding procedures. Trustees have made sure that this is the case. The website is now much clearer about what a parent or visitor should do if they have a concern about a child or a member of staff.
- At the last inspection, accident records were not kept well enough. Consequently, leaders have made sure all staff understand the importance of recording accidents. Records are now routinely kept and show that staff follow the appropriate procedures should an accident happen.
- At the last inspection, trustee's monitoring of safeguarding was not effective. Trustees have made sure that they have a far greater understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They ensure that safeguarding is discussed at staff meetings, leadership meetings and trustee meetings. They monitor that records are kept securely, and they ask detailed questions of leaders to check that they are following processes and procedures securely, including when considering making referrals to outside agencies.
- Leaders have made a start at improving the content of the safeguarding curriculum. Pupils have received some teaching about how to stay safe online, producing a rap to show that they understand the importance of not sharing information about themselves. Parents have all been offered advice on how to support their children in staying safe when using the internet. However, leaders recognise that there is much more to do to ensure that pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of safety in all its forms, whether in the community, or when using social media, playing computer games and using the internet. Wisely, leaders have recently taken advice from local authority safeguarding officers and are now considering how best to use some new resources to support the safeguarding curriculum.
- Despite substantial improvements to safeguarding procedure and practice, this aspect of the independent school standards is not met, because the curriculum does not support pupils well enough to know how to keep themselves safe.

Paragraph 15

- At the previous inspection, this standard was not met because statutory requirements for recording pupils' absence were not followed with sufficient rigour.
- The headteacher has undertaken refresher training in attendance requirements. The attendance policy has been updated to include clear information on which codes to use to record absence accurately. The headteacher understands the importance of following up all absences, including checking for patterns of concern.

- The standard in this paragraph is now met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- This standard was not met because risk assessment procedures were not secure enough.
- Leaders have taken on board expert advice in how to consider risk. They have amended their risk assessment policy and procedures to reflect this advice. Leaders now understand how risk assessments should be used to reduce risks when visiting other sites. For example, when going on trips, they make sure that they consider the risk assessment of the other provider to assure themselves of any adaptations that need to be made to keep pupils safe. They discuss the possible risks associated with a trip with all adults and pupils in advance of attending the trip. This keeps everyone alert and contributes to their safety.
- Leaders and trustees consider the risks associated with the site as part of their regular monitoring of the school. They act to reduce such risks, for example ensuring play equipment is fit for purpose and used safely.
- Although the risk assessment policy does consider risks associated with the school site and with trips and visits, it does not include consideration of the need to reduce a wider range of potential risks to pupils' safety. For example, leaders do not consider securely enough the possible risks that pupils' medical conditions or their behaviour needs could pose to their safety.
- Despite the improvements made, this standard is not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- This standard was not met because there were a number of unmet standards at the previous inspection. Safeguarding procedures and practice were not understood or followed well enough. Trustees did not monitor leaders' work to keep pupils safe securely enough.
- Trustees have worked hard to address the areas Ofsted identified. They have wisely sought expert advice to assure themselves that new policies and procedures are appropriate. They monitor the effectiveness of the schools' safeguarding procedures and practice and check that they are followed well. Trustees have made sure that staff, parents and volunteers are better trained in safeguarding and, consequently, have an improved understanding of safeguarding. However, they have not yet ensured that the safeguarding curriculum meets pupils' needs well enough.
- Trustees have improved their monitoring of leaders' work. They now monitor all aspects of the school more thoroughly, including through checking the accuracy of attendance information and that risk assessments are written for each trip and visit. Consequently, much progress has been made towards meeting the remaining unmet independent school standards. During the monitoring visit, they showed that they were determined to make the further refinements to safeguarding and risk assessment policy and practice to ensure that the all standards are met, securely and consistently, as soon as possible.
- Despite improvements, leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.

- This part of the standards remains unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

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|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 138873 |
| DfE registration number | 931/6011 |
| Inspection number | 10125058 |

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 | Other independent school |
| School status | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 15 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | The Treehouse Trust c/o Slade Legal |
| Chair | Tim Hurst |
| Headteacher | Ms Lee Ryman |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £0 |
| Telephone number | 01491 652 000 |
| Website | www.thetreehouseschool.org.uk |
| Email address | office@thetreehouseschool.org.uk |
| Date of previous standard inspection | 14–16 May 2019 |

Information about this school

- The Treehouse Schools is a non-fee-paying primary school. It was established by the headteacher and the teacher and is managed by a group of trustees from The Treehouse Trust. There is no governing body. The school's motto is 'nature, nurture, nourishment'.
- The school is registered as an independent co-educational day school for boys and girls. It is registered to accept 15 pupils aged five to 11 years.
- There are no pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- There are no disadvantaged pupils.

- The school does not provide or use any alternative provision.
- The school opened in 2012. At its inspection in May 2017, it was judged to require improvement. The inspection in May 2019 judged its overall effectiveness to be inadequate.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection. It was carried out without notice.
- The DfE required the school to prepare a statutory action plan detailing the steps that would be taken to meet the unmet standards. On the DfE's behalf, Ofsted evaluated the action plan on 23 August 2019. Taking account of that assessment, the DfE took the decision on behalf of the Secretary of State to reject the action plan.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, other staff, volunteers and two trustees. She spoke with pupils over lunch. The inspector examined the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and reviewed other documents and records relating to the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

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