

# Inspection of The Shires at Oakham

3 Uppingham Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6JB

---

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 July 2025

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
------------------------------	-------------

---

The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
--------------------------	-------------

Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
-------------------------	-------------

Personal development	<b>Good</b>
----------------------	-------------

Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
---------------------------	-------------

Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
----------------------	-------------

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
--	------

Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>
--	------------

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a school where pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive. The school has high expectations of pupils' personal and academic achievement. It develops a forensic understanding of pupils' needs and plans meticulously to address these. As a result, from their relative starting points, pupils achieve well.

Relationships between adults and pupils are consistently positive. The school has developed a culture where the principles of 'ask, accept and develop' are central. Pupils' views are asked for, accepted, and used to develop the support to be put in place. As a result, pupils feel listened to, happy and well-looked after. They have confidence in staff. One pupil summed this up when they said, 'I like coming to school. Staff are really kind and lovely. It's fun.'

Pupils are supported to recognise and manage their feelings and emotions. Anyone who struggles is quickly helped to get back on track. Pupils value the rewards on offer, including messages and postcards home, and trips out. Trips to a local bakery are especially popular.

The school's careers information and guidance offer, along with its work to prepare pupils for adulthood, are strong. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life after school.

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

The school's curriculum is designed to meet the needs of each individual pupil. The long-term targets contained in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are meticulously broken down into medium and shorter-term intentions that build incrementally over time. Pupils are constantly reminded of these priorities. They receive individual, bespoke lessons that focus on the targets set out in pupils' plans. As a result, pupils make good progress towards their long-term goals.

The school has designed a curriculum that is, overall, well organised. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects. Content builds cumulatively on what has gone before. However, in a small number of places, the curriculum is not fully planned. Additionally, in some subjects, the curriculum does not make clear the precise things that pupils are expected to know and remember. This means the teaching does not focus on the most important knowledge and pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Reading is prioritised. Pupils appreciate the new school library and the wide range of books that it contains. They make good use of these. Regular reading sessions enable pupils to explore and understand a wide range of texts, authors and genres. Teachers skilfully encourage pupils to read in a range of everyday contexts, including recipes, road signs, shop windows and advertisements. Pupils who are at the earliest

stages of learning to read benefit from a well-designed phonics programme. They quickly become more confident, fluent readers.

Pupils' progress is reviewed regularly. Checks on pupils' understanding are detailed and provide an accurate picture of how well pupils achieve. However, in some subjects, the school does not use the information from these checks to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the curriculum. As such, it does not have a fully rounded view of the impact of these subjects on pupils' progress.

Pupils' personal development sits at the very heart of the school's offer. Pupils benefit from well-tailored curriculums for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education. Pupils develop an appropriate understanding of fundamental British values and of the protected characteristics that make people different and may lead to discrimination, such as age, gender or race. The independent living curriculum helps pupils to develop the essential skills and knowledge that they will need beyond school. Again, the school ensures that this work is closely matched to the needs of each individual pupil.

The school keeps a close check on patterns and trends in behaviour. The school provides effective challenge and support where attendance is not as high as it should be.

Pupils can gain a variety of qualifications that build self-confidence and open doors to meaningful next steps. The school has a robust careers information and guidance programme. Pupils learn about the range of options available to them. They visit and meet a wide range of people and employers from different sectors. This offer is ramped up in the sixth form, where pupils are supported with work experience and college visits that are closely aligned to their wishes and aspirations.

School leaders, ably supported by proprietors and those responsible for governance, have created a cohesive community that puts pupils first. Through a period of growth, they have built a talented team of staff who are proud of the work that they do. One member of staff summed up the sentiment of many when they said, 'The reward is the difference that you make.'

The proprietor ensures that all the relevant independent school standards continue to be met. The premises are well maintained. Pupils' safety and well-being are central to the decisions leaders make. Risk assessments are accurate and reflect the school's policy. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In some places, the school's curriculum does not make clear the precise knowledge that pupils are expected to learn and remember. As such, the school cannot be sure that teachers prioritise the most important content. The school should ensure that, across all subjects, the curriculum makes consistently clear the precise content that pupils are expected to know and remember.
- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not fully planned and sequenced. This means that the school cannot be sure that content is being taught in the best or most logical order. The school should ensure that the curriculum, across all subjects, is fully planned and sequenced.
- In some subjects, the school does not use the information that it holds to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the curriculum. As such, it does not have a fully rounded view of the impact of these subjects on pupils' progress. The school should ensure that it uses the information available to them to check on the impact that their subject is having, and to identify where strengths and weaknesses exist.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142635
<b>DfE registration number</b>	857/6006
<b>Local authority</b>	Rutland Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342107
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	39
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	10
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	1
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Power
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michelle Jordan
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£76,500 to £80,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01572 720357
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.oakhamshires.co.uk">www.oakhamshires.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:infoOakham@theshires.org.uk">infoOakham@theshires.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	8 to 10 March 2022

## Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils with autism and severe or moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is registered to provide education for up to 40 pupils. There are currently 39 pupils on roll. The number on roll has increased significantly since the school's last inspection.
- The school is located at 3 Uppingham Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6JB.
- Pupils who are above compulsory school age pursue a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs, including preparing them for adulthood.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.

## 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the second routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and groups of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and interaction (including reading), PSHE and the sensory and physical curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work to meet pupils' additional needs.
- The lead inspector held a telephone discussion with the chair of the proprietor body. He also met with the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. An inspector spoke informally to a small number of parents and carers outside the school.
- 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 around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors reviewed school documents, including those relating to behaviour and attendance, and leaders' plans for improvement.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in the school and in the school grounds.
- An inspector visited a school council meeting.

### **Inspection team**

Vic Wilkinson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Emma Tayler

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2025