

Inspection of Ormston School

Alma Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 2AH

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 July 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	Not previously inspected
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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?

Ormston School is a place where pupils feel safe and well supported. Pupils are happy to attend the school. They recognise the positive contribution it makes to their education and lives. Staff form strong and supportive relationships with pupils. This ensures pupils feel settled and well cared for.

The proprietor and the school have high expectations for pupils. They have a clear aspiration for all pupils to develop personally and academically. The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. It enables pupils to build confidence and achieve well across a range of subjects.

Pupils experience a wide variety of learning and personal development opportunities outside of the classroom. For example, pupils visit the local cricket ground to develop their sporting skills. They grow their own food to sell at the nearby urban market. Pupils enjoy making use of the school's wooded grounds to be active and strengthen their social skills during outdoor learning activities.

The school's educational approaches support pupils' learning and emotional well-being effectively. Staff provide swift and well-thought-out support if pupils become overwhelmed. As a result, the school environment is typically calm. Most pupils behave in a sensible manner throughout the school day.

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

In a short space of time, the school has effectively implemented a broad and thoughtfully designed curriculum. The curriculum is ambitious and based upon the national curriculum. Staff adjust their teaching to ensure individual pupils can access the curriculum well. This includes adaptations to meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, in some subjects, the implementation of the curriculum does not consistently meet the needs of the most able pupils. They experience variability, and occasionally a lack of ambition in the way the curriculum is delivered. As a result, some pupils do not deepen their knowledge sufficiently well.

Developing pupils' reading skills is an important part of the school's work. Leaders recognise the importance of equipping pupils with essential reading knowledge to improve their communication skills. They ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to read daily in dedicated lessons. In addition, staff expertly deliver personalised phonics support that builds pupils' ability to read well. This strengthens pupils' reading fluency and accuracy. However, the school does not give sufficient attention to the technical aspects of writing, for example spelling, punctuation and grammar, and some pupils are not able to write with accuracy.

Pupils join the school at different points during the school year. Each pupil attending the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school builds a comprehensive picture of pupils' individual needs to plan support. This includes

plans to promote and sustain positive attendance routines. Most pupils attend well, and many pupils make demonstrable attendance improvements from their varying starting points. Equally, pupils typically behave well. They are mostly considerate of others and demonstrate a well-developed understanding of other pupils' needs. The school's expectations for pupils' behaviour are high and staff model the behaviour they expect. Relationships between staff and pupils are notably strong.

Pupils benefit from an age-appropriate personal development programme that prepares them for life in modern Britain. This is well supported by an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum and cross-curricular links between subjects. Pupils learn to understand the world they live in. For example, pupils learn about the risks that they may face in the community and while using technology. They learn about relationships and the importance of good physical and mental health. Pupils develop their understanding of business and finance as 'young marketeers' by selling products in the community. The school provides pupils with independent careers education and guidance. This helps pupils to start making informed decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training.

Staff speak highly of the school. Their morale is high, and they appreciate the sense of community within the staff team. Staff, including those at an early stage of their teaching career, feel well supported by school leaders and the proprietor. They welcome ongoing professional development to strengthen their practice. This includes training to support pupils' SEND needs, and further development to overcome any barriers to learning that pupils may experience.

The proprietor and governing body have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They check the quality of provision that pupils receive. These checks accurately inform further actions to strengthen the work of the school. As a result, the school and the proprietor demonstrate the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure that the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently. This includes compliance with paragraphs 3 and 4 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 subjects, the implementation of the curriculum does not consistently meet the needs of the most able pupils. Most-able pupils experience variability, and an occasional lack of ambition in the way the curriculum is taught across the school. This means some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to adapt learning activities in a way that consistently meets the needs of the most able pupils and enables them to deepen their knowledge.

- The school does not give sufficient attention to the technical aspects of writing. This includes spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting. As a result, some pupils are not able to write with accuracy consistently. The school should ensure that pupils develop fluency in the basic skills of writing so that they are able to write independently and accurately across all areas of the curriculum.

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 (DfE) has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	150968
DfE registration number	383/6020
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10374872
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Polaris Children's Services Limited
Chair	Joanne August
Headteacher	James Brown
Annual fees (day pupils)	£63,660 to £93,474
Telephone number	01134 655210
Website	www.ormstonschool.co.uk
Email address	schooloffice@ormstonschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ormston School is an independent special school for pupils aged between five and 18 years. At the time of this inspection, the school did not have key stage 4 and sixth-form students on roll.
- The school was registered by the DfE on 22 August 2024. This was the first standard inspection of the school.
- Most pupils have a primary SEND need of autism. Some pupils have further SEND, such as social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan.
- The school receives referrals for pupils through consultations with several local authorities. Some pupils have not attended school for some time prior to being admitted to the school.
- The school is registered to admit 40 pupils. There were 27 pupils on roll at the time of this inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a standard fee of £63,660 and an enhanced fee of £93,474. The enhanced fee includes additional teaching assistant support.

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 judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including those relating to the standards and the curriculum.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: Early reading, science, and PSHE. 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. The provision for teaching English was also closely scrutinised.

- An inspector listened to pupils from different year groups reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 had a tour of the school site and scrutinised a wide range of documentary evidence to check the statutory requirements of the standards.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to the Ofsted survey for staff.
- There were no responses from the Ofsted survey for pupils. However, inspectors spoke to a range of pupils during the inspection.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kathryn McDonald

His Majesty's Inspector

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