

School inspection report

7 to 9 July 2026

Odyssey House School

Buckhurst Court

London Road

Wokingham

RG40 1PA

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors know the school well and provide effective oversight of its work. They use regular reports, visits, discussions with leaders, staff and pupils, and external audits to check that policies are implemented securely and that the Standards are consistently met. Governors work constructively with leaders and maintain appropriate challenge, particularly in relation to safeguarding, risk management and the quality of provision for pupils.
2. Leaders have a strategic vision which places pupils' wellbeing at the centre of the school's ethos and decision-making. They draw up development plans that are well thought out and communicate these effectively to staff, pupils and parents. Leaders actively focus on providing the best possible outcomes for pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
3. Pupils benefit from the close collaboration of the therapy and education teams. Staff understand pupils' individual needs well and use this knowledge to plan lessons and support sessions that are carefully matched to pupils' communication, sensory, social and emotional needs. Therapeutic approaches are embedded in lessons, routines and wider school activities, helping pupils to regulate their emotions, build confidence and engage more successfully with learning. Teachers adapt tasks and resources so that pupils experience success, develop independence and make good progress in their academic and personal development.
4. Leaders implement suitable assessment processes. This helps staff to understand pupils' starting points, monitor progress and identify the support pupils need to engage with learning. Leaders and staff make effective use of personal skills assessments to review pupils' social, emotional and therapeutic development and to adapt provision when needs change. Teachers often use academic assessment information to plan suitable next steps for pupils. However, this is not yet consistent across all subjects, so pupils do not always know clearly enough what they need to do to improve their work and make further progress.
5. Leaders promote pupils' emotional wellbeing through a nurturing and carefully structured approach that helps pupils feel safe, understood and ready to learn. Staff build trusting relationships with pupils and use calm routines, positive language and personalised support to help pupils recognise and manage their emotions. Leaders help pupils prepare for change and build resilience, so that they start to understand how to take appropriate risks, engage more successfully with school life and develop their self-esteem.
6. Leaders support pupils to understand their responsibilities as members of the school, local community and wider society. Pupils learn about democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, respect and the impact of prejudice and discrimination. Staff help pupils to develop cultural understanding by learning about different countries, religions and traditions. Pupils contribute meaningfully to school life through the school council. Visits to local facilities, charitable activities and enterprise opportunities help pupils to develop social skills, financial awareness and a growing understanding of how they can contribute positively to the lives of others.
7. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to explore future pathways through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, visiting speakers and links with local colleges and businesses. These experiences help pupils to start thinking about life beyond school and the choices

available to them. However, careers provision is not consistently developed. This means that pupils do not always have a full enough understanding of the range of qualifications, further education routes and employment opportunities available to them, or how the school can support them to work towards their aspirations.

8. Leaders have established a thorough safeguarding culture in which pupils' welfare is a central feature of their work. Members of the safeguarding team have appropriate training and maintain up-to-date knowledge through regular local authority safeguarding networks and external training opportunities. Staff receive regular safeguarding training, including at induction, and through annual updates and additional briefings in response to emerging needs. This enables them to understand how to identify, record and report concerns relating to pupils or adults working with pupils. Pupils are supported to share worries through accessible systems and trusted relationships with staff. As a result of these effective arrangements, safeguarding is understood as a shared responsibility across the school and is implemented with care and consistency.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that academic assessment data is used consistently across the curriculum to inform pupils about the next steps in their learning so that they make further progress
- improve careers provision so that pupils have a full understanding of the range of options and pathways available to them and how the school can support them to achieve their aspirations.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders place pupils' wellbeing at the centre of the school's ethos and daily practice. They understand that many pupils have experienced barriers to education before joining the school, and successfully shape provision to help pupils feel safe and ready to learn. Staff build trusting relationships through calm and warm communication and personalised support, helping pupils to re-engage with school after previous trauma. Leaders monitor pupils' emotional and social needs and adapt teaching, therapeutic input and pastoral support so that pupils can attend school and engage with learning. This nurturing approach enables pupils to develop confidence, build positive relationships and make good progress in their personal and academic development.
10. Governors provide effective oversight of the school through well-established reporting structures and regular engagement with leaders, staff and pupils. This enables governors to review practice and check that policies comply with relevant legislation and guidance. Leaders ensure that policies are implemented effectively and understood by staff and pupils. Governors ensure that leaders have the knowledge, skills and understanding to fulfil their roles effectively. They work collaboratively with leaders and commission external audits to ensure that the Standards are consistently met.
11. Leaders evaluate the school systematically through an open and reflective approach that supports an ongoing cycle of review and adaptation. They review key aspects of provision weekly, including attendance, safeguarding, behaviour and the quality of teaching, to identify what is working well and where further change is needed. This self-evaluation is enhanced by leaders' swift and effective responses to the needs and views of pupils, parents and staff, and to the findings from external audits, such as those conducted by the local authority. For example, leaders have used their in-depth knowledge of pupils to inform planned changes to the curriculum to include greater choice and personalised pathways. These are specifically designed to increase engagement and enable pupils to specialise their learning as they prepare to leave school.
12. Governors and leaders manage risk effectively because they understand the potential vulnerabilities of pupils who have SEND and use this knowledge to shape daily practice. Leaders have a systematic approach to risk assessment and ensure that staff are suitably involved in identifying and mitigating risks, such as when planning trips out of school. Leaders undertake effective training in how to carry out risk assessments. They utilise their knowledge to draw up and implement risk assessments that minimise risks associated with premises and accommodation.
13. Leaders ensure that required information is made available and provided to parents and other interested parties. The school's website provides access to key information, including contact details, relevant policies and information about the school's specialist provision for pupils who have SEND. Leaders provide detailed information to parents about their child's progress and next steps in both academic and personal development, and any relevant therapeutic support.
14. Leaders fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 through actions which ensure that the school does not discriminate against pupils who have disabilities, such as by implementing a suitable accessibility plan. This details the means by which leaders implement reasonable adjustments and plan strategically to improve accessibility over time. Recent actions include ensuring that the building is accessible to those who have restricted mobility, and providing training for staff in how to meet the needs of those who have a disability.

15. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies such as the police, health professionals and children's services. They work closely with local authorities, parents and relevant professionals so that pupils' EHC plans are understood and implemented in day-to-day provision. Leaders provide relevant information to local authorities about the financing of EHC plans. They inform the local authority of pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard times of transition.
16. Leaders implement a comprehensive complaints procedure that is available to parents on the school's website. They handle concerns and complaints within suitable stages and timescales. Leaders keep an appropriate log of complaints so that they can reflect on whether they can improve any aspect of the school's provision.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of leadership and management, and governance

- 17. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders provide a curriculum that is suitably broad and carefully planned according to pupils' needs, interests and prior experiences. The curriculum includes core subjects alongside creative, practical, therapeutic and outdoor learning opportunities. These combine to enable pupils to re-engage with education and develop academic knowledge, communication skills, confidence and independence. Pupils benefit from enrichment activities, lessons in life skills such as how to use public transport, and therapeutic provision. These enhance the curriculum and help pupils to apply their learning in different contexts, such as when buying items in local shops. Leaders are reflective about the curriculum and have increased the range of subjects and qualifications available, such as through the introduction of GCSE in sociology. The introduction of AQA unit awards enables pupils to have some choice in personalising their learning, particularly as they get older. Leaders ensure that pupils in Year 11 have a suitable programme that provides personalised preparation for qualifications, such as GCSEs, and BTECs at levels 1 and 2.
19. Teaching is effective because staff know pupils well and use this knowledge to plan learning that is closely matched to individual needs. Teachers take close account of pupils' personal learning plans when planning lessons. They plan individual activities for each pupil and adapt tasks, resources and levels of support during lessons. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use a varied range of methods, including role play, to make learning meaningful and deepen pupils' understanding. Typically, pupils are engaged, behave well in lessons and respond positively to the clear routines and supportive relationships established by staff. Communication skills are promoted well through questioning, discussion and purposeful interaction, helping pupils to express their ideas and participate more confidently. Pupils' communication and literacy skills are successfully transferred to other subjects, such as when following and adapting recipes in food technology lessons. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well in functional skills qualifications.
20. Leaders apply assessment processes that are increasingly effective in identifying pupils' starting points and tracking their engagement and progress. Staff throughout the school share their knowledge of pupils' therapeutic, social and emotional development through a framework of personal skills assessments. They review pupils' targets regularly and effectively so that support can be adapted in response to emerging needs. Teachers use assessments of pupils' academic progress to inform planning, teaching and appropriate next steps. However, this approach is not yet applied consistently across subjects. As a result, pupils do not always have a sufficiently clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
21. The school supports pupils who have SEND effectively through an integrated approach in which education and therapy teams operate cohesively. Staff use pupils' EHC plans, observations and emerging needs to plan individual and small-group support, ensuring that provision meets pupils' communication, sensory, social and emotional needs. Regular whole-school training, including work on social thinking and sensory regulation, helps staff to use consistent language and approaches within teaching and therapy sessions. Frequent meetings between teaching, therapy and pastoral staff enhance communication and enable pupils' progress and needs to be reviewed promptly. Leaders provide a wide range of support sessions relating to emotional wellbeing and other needs. These improve pupils' access to learning and support their regulation, engagement and confidence. Pupils benefit from the purposeful and effective use of sensory resources, communication groups, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and emotional 'discovery' sessions. Leaders and

staff track strategies, review their impact and plan next steps towards EHC plan outcomes. As a result, pupils receive well-co-ordinated support that helps them to make good progress, develop greater independence and participate more successfully in school life.

22. Leaders make suitable provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) by ensuring that their language needs are identified and supported as required. Staff adapt teaching and communication so that pupils learn key vocabulary and develop their understanding. As a result, pupils who speak EAL are included effectively in the curriculum and are supported to make good progress.
23. Leaders provide a varied programme of clubs and enrichment activities to extend pupils' experiences beyond the taught curriculum. Lunchtime and after-school opportunities, including woodworking, football, coding and climbing, are purposefully planned so that pupils can develop life skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving. The school council contributes to decisions about which clubs are offered, helping pupils to feel listened to and involved in shaping school life. Pupils' learning is enhanced by subject enrichment days, outdoor learning, and therapeutic opportunities such as equine therapy. Leaders review participation and engagement termly so that provision can be adapted in response to pupils' interests and needs.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 24. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

25. Pupils are supported effectively to develop self-knowledge, confidence and self-esteem. Regular reflection times help pupils to develop their spiritual understanding through recognising what they have achieved, identifying how they are feeling and considering what they need in order to manage their emotions successfully. Teachers help pupils to reflect further on spirituality when debating questions such as 'Do you believe in God?' Staff use positive language and model calm, respectful interactions, helping pupils to understand their aptitudes and develop confidence in their ability to learn. Learning is typically broken down into small, achievable steps so that pupils experience success, build resilience and learn that mistakes are a natural part of improvement. Tutor time activities, such as discussing an 'emotion of the day', enable pupils to develop a more precise understanding of their emotions and the strategies they can use to regulate them. As a result, pupils become increasingly able to recognise their own qualities, engage with learning and approach new challenges with confidence.
26. Leaders help pupils learn to recognise and respect diversity through discussions about inclusion and discrimination. Within PSHE lessons and tutor times, pupils consider how people differ, including through race, sex and religion. Activities such as 'Pride week' at school and discussing the use of British Sign Language help pupils to consider how people communicate, live and experience the world in different ways. Staff support pupils in developing their understanding of morals, respect and diversity through regular debates during tutor time. These include consideration of ethical questions such as whether access to healthcare should be a fundamental human right and how pupils would respond to witnessing homophobic language. These discussions encourage pupils to think beyond their own views, consider the impact of prejudice and discrimination, and understand why respectful behaviour matters. As a result, pupils are supported to develop a secure sense of right and wrong, show increasing respect for others and understand their responsibility to contribute to a fair and inclusive community.
27. The school provides an effective programme for the combined teaching of PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE), which is carefully adapted to pupils' ages and individual needs. Staff help pupils learn about topics such as emotional wellbeing, personal safety, inclusion and respectful relationships. Younger pupils develop an understanding of why consent is important, which older pupils apply when learning about intimate relationships. Through lessons in PSHE and RSE, pupils develop the knowledge, language and confidence they need to build respectful relationships and understand how to keep themselves healthy.
28. Leaders promote positive mental health so that pupils are helped to understand why this is an important issue. Tutor times and PSHE lessons provide pupils with regular opportunities to explore and reflect on different emotions, with an emphasis on developing resilience. Pupils are encouraged to raise concerns through accessible systems such as worry boxes or speaking to a trusted adult. Leaders further promote resilience by helping pupils to prepare for and cope with change by listing variations to school routines on 'change triangles' that are displayed around the school.
29. Pupils are supported to develop their physical health through a broad range of well-planned opportunities across the curriculum and wider school day. Teachers plan effective lessons in PSHE, food technology and science to help pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and make informed choices about diet. The physical education (PE) curriculum is carefully sequenced so that

pupils build fitness and physical skills through activities such as football and tag rugby. Pupils benefit from regular access to outdoor spaces, where they can play, climb, walk and take part in outdoor learning that promotes movement, co-ordination and stamina. Off-site experiences, such as horse riding and climbing, extend pupils' physical development and encourage them to try new challenges.

30. Staff implement the behaviour and anti-bullying policies consistently. Pupils typically behave well because staff establish calm, predictable routines and respond sensitively to pupils' needs. The school environment is orderly and purposeful, with a range of spaces available for pupils to use when they need to regulate their emotions or withdraw briefly from a situation. Leaders and staff manage behaviour effectively by focusing on understanding the cause of incidents, repairing relationships and helping pupils to consider the impact of their actions on others. Records of behaviour are detailed and enable leaders to identify patterns and respond promptly. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about different types of bullying and why bullying is not acceptable. Bullying does not occur very often, and leaders take effective action if concerns arise.
31. Leaders ensure that health and safety arrangements are thorough. They conduct regular checks of the premises and equipment, taking prompt action when issues are identified. Leaders commission a fire risk assessment and ensure that recommended actions are completed in a timely manner. They routinely check fire equipment and conduct termly fire drills. This ensures that pupils know how to evacuate the building safely.
32. Leaders provide suitable arrangements for supervision. Staff are deployed appropriately at key points of the day, including arrival, breaktimes and lunchtimes, so that pupils are well supervised and can easily access a member of staff when required.
33. Leaders maintain admission and attendance registers appropriately. They monitor attendance so that they can identify patterns of absence and follow up concerns. Leaders engage in effective communication with families and external agencies about any issues relating to attendance.
34. Leaders ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for pupils who require first aid or medical support during the school day. Appropriately trained staff are available to respond to accidents, illness and individual medical needs. Medicines are stored securely and administered in line with the school's procedures.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 35. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

36. Leaders enable pupils to develop their awareness of the values that underpin life in British society. In PSHE and tutor times, pupils learn about discrimination and prejudice, including how racism and sexism affect individuals and communities. Teaching about extremism helps pupils to recognise why extremist views are incompatible with democracy and respect for others. Pupils develop a practical understanding of democracy through experiences such as a visit to the Houses of Parliament and through elections to the school council. Learning about the State Opening of Parliament further supports pupils' understanding of the relationship between the monarch and the government, and how the King's Speech sets out the government's plans for new laws. The rule of law is reinforced through history topics on crime and punishment, in which pupils consider how the Magna Carta is the basis for laws, individual rights and constitutional governance. These experiences enable pupils to develop an understanding of right and wrong, and of how to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils are also supported to understand individual liberty, including their rights and the importance of looking after themselves and others.
37. The school develops pupils' cultural understanding through learning about different countries and religions across the curriculum. Teachers introduce pupils to a range of beliefs, traditions and ways of life in humanities lessons, helping them to recognise that people's experiences and perspectives may differ from their own. Pupils' knowledge of different cultures is extended in art lessons through topics such as Aboriginal art. Staff use tutor times to enable pupils to learn about religious festivals, such as Ascension Day and Ramadan. Pupils shape this work through the school council, which selects countries for focused study. Recent work on Greece, for example, enabled pupils to explore Greek numbers in mathematics and develop their geographical understanding of the country, making cultural learning meaningful across different subjects.
38. Leaders enable pupils to make a positive contribution to the local area and to charitable causes. Regular visits to local shops, parks and community spaces help pupils to develop confidence in using local facilities respectfully. Pupils learn that they can support others through activities such as foodbank collections and fundraising events for charities such as Red Nose Day, Children in Need and Save the Children. The recent establishment of an environment committee provides a further opportunity for pupils to develop their understanding of responsibility beyond the school community, as they consider recycling and ways to improve the local environment.
39. Staff help pupils to develop their social skills and learn how to interact effectively with others. Staff use everyday interactions to model respectful communication. The recently introduced 'social thinking' programme enables pupils to develop social competencies, such as conflict resolution, through stories, lessons and play-based activities. Collaborative tasks, including board games and shared activities, are used successfully to help pupils practise turn-taking, sharing, listening and sustaining conversation.
40. Leaders ensure that the PSHE programme enables pupils to start to explore different career pathways and options beyond school. This is supported by collaboration with external partners, including local colleges, businesses and speakers, who provide pupils with career insights and impartial guidance regarding post-school transitions. However, the careers programme is currently under-developed. It does not consistently enable pupils to develop a broad understanding of the range of qualifications, further education and employment opportunities available to them. As a

result, pupils are not fully aware of how the school can support them to achieve their aspirations for future pathways.

41. Leaders promote pupils' economic wellbeing through PSHE teaching, supported by practical, real-life experiences. Pupils learn about financial decision-making, including saving, borrowing and budgeting and the influence of advertising, so that they begin to understand the consequences of different choices. This learning is reinforced through everyday opportunities to use money purposefully, such as visiting local shops to buy ingredients for cookery. Termly school fetes provide opportunities for pupils to consider enterprise and the value of money as they plan and develop ideas for running stalls. Profit from these stalls is accumulated so that pupils can plan how to use the money for an end-of-year treat. As a result, pupils are supported to make informed choices and to develop the financial awareness needed for adult life.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 42. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

43. Governors and leaders promote a robust safeguarding culture. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding through regular reports, visits, policy review and external audits. This enables them to check that the safeguarding policy and procedures meet statutory guidance and are implemented consistently. Leaders have an open approach which ensures that staff feel confident to seek advice and raise concerns without hesitation. Leaders understand the potential vulnerabilities of pupils who have SEND and ensure that contextual safeguarding risks are considered carefully in decision-making. Leaders successfully promote shared responsibility so that safeguarding is embedded in daily routines, including behaviour analysis, attendance monitoring and pastoral support.
44. Staff safeguarding training has a positive impact. Through comprehensive induction processes, annual face-to-face training, online learning and regular updates, staff develop a secure understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding and the procedures they must follow. This enables them to recognise potential issues, including low-level concerns and contextual risks, and to respond promptly and appropriately. Staff are confident in recognising signs of harm, recording and escalating concerns, and responding to disclosures.
45. Safeguarding leaders have appropriate training to fulfil their roles effectively. They act in a timely and suitable way when concerns arise and work effectively with external agencies to provide support for pupils. Leaders maintain detailed records, showing actions taken and information about the rationale for decisions. Leaders liaise with local authorities, social care, parents and other professionals when pupils' needs or risks require wider involvement. They understand the importance of persistence where concerns remain and continue to seek advice or escalate matters when this is necessary to safeguard pupils.
46. Leaders have a secure understanding of safer recruitment procedures, which they use effectively when undertaking the relevant pre-employment checks for adults working at school. These checks are accurately recorded on the single central record of appointments (SCR). Leaders monitor safer recruitment processes, including the SCR and associated staff files, to ensure that practice remains compliant with regulatory requirements.
47. Leaders promote online safety effectively. In PSHE lessons, pupils learn how to conduct themselves responsibly online, including how to avoid online bullying, protect personal information and recognise when they should seek adult help. Staff help pupils to understand that online behaviour should reflect the same expectations of respect and kindness as face-to-face interactions. Leaders implement internet filtering and monitoring systems, which are regularly tested. Pupils understand that these systems help to keep them safe when using technology in school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 48. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Odyssey House School
Department for Education number	872/6015
Address	Odyssey House School Buckhurst Court London Road Wokingham Berkshire RG40 1PA
Phone number	01182 293000
Email address	info@odysseyeducation.org.uk
Website	www.odysseyeducationgroup.co.uk
Proprietor	Odyssey Education Services Limited
Chair	Ms Charulata Kashyap
Headteacher	Mr Tristan Powell
Age range	7 to 18
Number of pupils	36
Date of previous inspection	5 to 6 July 2023

Information about the school

49. Odyssey House is an independent co-educational day special school, located in Wokingham, Berkshire. The school caters for pupils who have autism and associated difficulties. The school comprises a primary school, for pupils aged 7 to 11, and a secondary school, for pupils aged 11 to 18. The school is owned and governed by Odyssey Education Services Limited. The current headteacher took up his post in October 2025.
50. The school has identified all pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
51. The school has identified English as an additional language for a very small number of pupils.
52. The school states its aims are to change a child's experience of education through connection, nurture and belief, to help them learn, grow and achieve transformative life outcomes.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

7 to 9 July 2026

53. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

54. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

55. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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