

Inspection of Cherry Tree

29 All Saints Avenue, Margate, Kent CT9 5QN

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 July 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences at Cherry Tree are life-changing. There is an atmosphere of trust, respect, happiness and possibility. Care and kindness sit at the heart of the school's culture. Pupils express absolute confidence in the staff to support them with concerns and to help them learn well.

The school has a family feel. Mornings start informally around the kitchen table, and any worries are swiftly addressed. Together, staff and pupils watch and discuss the news before heading off to class, ready to learn.

Pupils and staff talk routinely about 'stretch and challenge'. The school is highly ambitious for pupils' academic learning and their personal development. The curriculum is carefully tailored to each pupil's learning and wider needs. Consequently, pupils focus and participate well in lessons. They work hard and achieve highly. All pupils leave school with aspirations for the future. Pupils are rightly proud of their learning and increased confidence. Pupils keenly acknowledge the role of the school in helping them secure these accomplishments.

Pupils are polite, friendly and immensely supportive of one another. Their motivation and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Pupils say that the school's clear boundaries and expectations help them to feel safe and secure.

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

Many pupils at Cherry Tree have missed expanses of education. All have special educational needs and/or disabilities and an education, health and care plan. The school offers a wide, engaging curriculum that meets pupils' individual social, emotional and mental health needs precisely. Staff are experts in their field. The therapeutic curriculum supports pupils to re-engage with learning and build their self-esteem. The school prioritises helping pupils to catch up in reading, English, mathematics and science.

Pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read receive effective help from skilful, trained staff. Pupils regularly hear texts read aloud, and more advanced readers enjoy reading with their peers. Pupils develop a love of reading. They enjoy visiting the local library, taking part in World Book Day and reading a range of challenging and thought-provoking texts. Staff and pupils understand the links between strong communication skills, reading and future success. Throughout the day, pupils seamlessly practise communication and reading skills.

Staff have extensive knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They break learning down into clear steps. Pupils revisit previous learning and rapidly acquire new knowledge. The school makes systematic checks on pupils' learning. They use this knowledge to adjust lesson activities to ensure that pupils progress well through the curriculum. By the time pupils leave school, they possess the literacy, numeracy

skills and social confidence to make successful transitions to college. All pupils leave the school having achieved a set of qualifications appropriate for them.

Pupils are courteous and respectful. High standards of conduct and a focus on learning are consistently maintained. The school is peaceful and quiet. Should a pupil find managing their emotions difficult, staff know how to respond. Pupils say that no one is 'told off', they are helped to manage their feelings and make good decisions. Staff respond to changing behaviour needs by considering and adapting pupils' individual learning and support plans. Consequently, pupils are well supported in managing their behaviour.

Attendance at school is high. Pupils rarely miss a day. They arrive promptly and eagerly to school and move between lessons and to and from breaktimes without delay.

Opportunities for pupils' personal development at Cherry Tree are exceptional. Pupils' well-being and preparation for successful futures sit at the heart of the school's personal development programme. Pupils take part in personal, social and health education, fundamental British values lessons and a wide array of therapeutic activities. Pupils are taught effectively about online and offline risks. They learn about the importance of physical and mental health.

Pupils want to make positive contributions to society, and they do. For example, pupils have raised money to support a school in Uganda and have sent gifts to the pupils. More locally, pupils visit and correspond with residents in care home for older adults. Pupils routinely take part in visits and activities beyond school, such as to the local library or to the science museum in London.

The school's work to prepare pupils for adulthood, including careers information, advice and guidance, is extensive and embedded in school life. Many pupils find transitions hard. Consequently, planning for next steps starts early. Visitors talk about careers and offer guidance. Pupils are supported to visit colleges and to learn to travel independently. Pupils see themselves as having positive futures. They want to become artists, train drivers and writers.

The proprietor is determined to improve the life chances of the pupils that it serves. Its vision is understood and consistently implemented by all staff. The school's management committee holds the school rigorously to account for pupils' achievement. School documentation and records such as those relating to behaviour, evaluations and improvement plans are detailed and considered. They are used to drive further improvement. The school site is inviting and well maintained, and classroom environments support learning well.

Staff well-being and workload are routinely considered. Staff, parents and carers and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Collectively, they work in a successful partnership to ensure that the school's high standards are maintained over time and that pupils flourish.

The school meets schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

Unique reference number	145064
DfE registration number	886/6145
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10375008
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cherry Tree Learning Services Limited
Chair	Susan Finn (also known as Soo Finn)
Headteacher	Susan Finn (also known as Soo Finn)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£43,999
Telephone number	01843 290 131
Website	www.cherrytreeeducation.co.uk
Email address	soo.finn@cherrytreeeducation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 September 2022

Information about this school

- Cherry Tree is an independent special school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. All have an education, health and care plan. Many have missed extensive periods of education prior to joining the school.
- The school's proprietor company has two directors who also serve as the school's headteacher and operations manager.
- The school has a management committee. The chair and wider members of the management committee play an active role in supporting and challenging the school.
- The school is registered to admit 10 pupils.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in September 2022 when its overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding.

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 judgement about the quality of a school's provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the head of operations and the deputy headteacher throughout the inspection. Inspectors also met with the chair and other representatives of the school's management committee.
- Inspectors also met with curriculum leaders and with groups of staff, including teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and English, science, the therapeutic curriculum and the world and current affairs. 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of the school, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and honest culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- A wide range of school policies and documents were examined to provide inspection evidence and to check compliance with the independent school standards. Documents included the schools' self-evaluation and development plan, evidence of staff training, headteacher reports to the management committee, management committee meeting minutes and the school's checks on health and safety and compliance. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- As part of the checks made on the school's compliance with the independent school standards, the lead inspector toured the school premises with the headteacher and head of operations.

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tom Neave	Ofsted Inspector

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