

# Ofsted's accreditation visit to Oxford Online School Ltd

On 12 and 13 February 2025, Ofsted visited Oxford Online School Ltd as part of the [Online Education Accreditation Scheme](#). Through this scheme, providers of full-time online education to school-age children in England can apply to the Department for Education (DfE) for accreditation.

Ofsted visits providers to find out whether they meet the minimum standards for online education set by the DfE. This report sets out what we found during our visit on 12 and 13 February 2025. You can find out whether this provider is accredited by the DfE at [Get Information about Schools](#).

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## Key findings

- **Oxford Online School Ltd does not meet all the minimum standards** for online education. More information on the standards that Oxford Online School Ltd does not meet can be found in the last section of this report.
- The school does not meet several standards related to curriculum provision, including careers guidance, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils' safeguarding and welfare, and the provision of information.
- The proprietor took swift action to begin to rectify aspects of the standards that were not met, and shared with inspectors a range of documents created during the visit. However, this action did not materially affect the decisions on unmet standards. One reason for this was because the proprietor could not demonstrate the effective implementation of previously absent schemes of work.
- Despite the shortcomings in meeting the standards, the proprietor is ambitious for pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes. This can be seen, for instance, in the success of pupils returning to face-to-face learning in a physical school, or post-16 students securing places at university.
- The school has some significant strengths. For example, staff have positive relationships with parents and pupils and, where relevant, they secure improvements to pupils' self-confidence and attitudes to learning. Also, parents who spoke with inspectors were very complimentary about the detail and frequency of communications from leaders about their child's progress.
- Teachers deliver well-planned lessons and use good quality resources to support pupils' learning. Staff regularly check on pupils' understanding and explain the content of lessons clearly. Pupils work towards achieving international GCSEs and A levels during their time at the school.

- Leaders at Oxford Online School Ltd should now take action to remedy the areas of the online education standards that were not met at this visit. They should ensure:
  - that all safeguarding policies and procedures follow the most recent government guidance and are implemented effectively
  - that there are plans and schemes of work for all the areas of learning, as defined in the online education standards, that are not currently provided for, and that these are implemented effectively
  - that they provide pupils receiving secondary education with careers guidance that enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of careers
  - that they provide a comprehensive range of opportunities to secure pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to enable them to play a confident, informed role in society
  - that they make all required information for parents available on their website or by other means, as appropriate
  - that they have the knowledge and skills to enable them to meet the online education standards consistently and actively promote pupils' well-being.

## Who is this online provider?

- Oxford Online School Ltd provides an academic education for pupils and students aged six to 18 years. All pupils and students receive their education at home.
- Oxford Online School Ltd offers a curriculum that is broadly in line with the national curriculum for pupils of primary school age. The curriculum in the secondary and post-16 phases leads to international GCSE and international A-level qualifications. The curriculum includes English, mathematics and science, as well as history, computing and music for some age groups. However, provision is uneven across the whole age range, and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is not provided at all.
- Oxford Online School Ltd is based in office accommodation in Oxford.
- Currently, 23 school-age pupils study with Oxford Online School Ltd full time. None of these pupils has an [education, health and care \(EHC\) plan](#). Six live in England. Another 25 school-age pupils study with Oxford Online School Ltd part time.

## How are pupils taught at Oxford Online School Ltd?

- Lessons are taught live by teachers who are all based at home. The school day for pupils runs from 8am to 5pm each day from Monday to Friday. There are occasional lessons which run from 5pm to 6pm. As well as a range of curriculum subjects, the timetable includes clubs, guided independent learning periods and homework support sessions.

- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They teach well-planned lessons and use good quality resources which support pupils' learning effectively. Teachers regularly check on pupils' understanding and explain learning clearly. Teachers supervise every lesson, using audio, video and online chat facilities to communicate with pupils. There are highly positive relationships between staff and pupils, and teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. In all lessons, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. For example, teachers regularly encourage pupils to explain their thinking when answering questions.
- Staff have a useful range of online resources available and have received training from leaders in the electronic management and reporting systems in use at the school. Teachers choose good quality resources, such as videos and slide presentations, and find tools, such as interactive whiteboards, to help pupils to understand their learning effectively.
- There is a range of suitable learning activities for students who are older than 16 years. These are typically international A-level courses, which successfully match the needs and aspirations of the students who participate in them. However, the range of subjects available for pupils of compulsory school age is not as broad as it should be. Pupils do not study any form of physical education (PE), for example, and pupils of primary-school age do not have the opportunity to learn subjects such as music or art and design.
- The proprietor does not provide pupils with planned learning in PSHE education. Furthermore, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not sufficiently thorough. For example, teachers encourage pupils to be tolerant and respectful of all cultures and to accept people's differences. However, no specific reference is made to protected characteristics, nor is there a planned method of ensuring that all the different characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender reassignment, are covered in a systematic and age-appropriate manner.
- Leaders provide online opportunities for pupils to find out about the range of degree courses available at higher education institutions, such as University College, London. There have also been a few opportunities for work experience. Pupils are typically successful during their time at Oxford Online School Ltd, either gaining the academic qualifications they need for the next stage of their learning or making a successful transition back into a physical school. However, pupils do not receive suitable, planned guidance that enables them to make choices about a broad range of careers.

## **What are Oxford Online School Ltd's arrangements like for keeping children safe?**

- **Ofsted's visits to online providers can give only a limited level of assurance on the effectiveness of safeguarding, compared to our inspections of schools and other providers of face-to-face education**

**and training.** However, we found that the arrangements for keeping children safe at Oxford Online School Ltd are not good enough.

- Leaders' understanding of safeguarding and child protection procedures lack the required level of rigour. At the time of the visit, the setting's policy and procedures did not reflect the most recent guidance from the Secretary of State. Throughout the setting, a lack of appropriate training has resulted in leaders and staff not having the knowledge, skills and understanding they require to carry out their roles effectively and ensure the safety of the pupils attending an online school.
- Leaders did not have a clear understanding of their reporting duties. For example, they did not know to whom they should make external safeguarding referrals. This was the case both for pupils living in England and for those residing elsewhere.
- The setting's recruitment procedures do not meet statutory guidance and, at the time of the visit, there were no members of staff, including the designated lead and the principal, who had undertaken safer recruitment training. Consequently, the proprietor has not carried out all the appropriate pre-employment checks that are required to confirm that staff working with pupils are safe to do so. Furthermore, the checks that are carried out are not recorded as required by statutory guidance.
- Leaders have not established effective systems to minimise the risk of pupils accessing inappropriate materials or sites online. Leaders recognise some of these risks, such as those presented by the limitations of the online platform currently used by the setting, and have put in place an action plan to address them. However, they have not identified or implemented the immediate mitigations required to reduce these risks.

## **What do pupils and parents and carers think about Oxford Online School Ltd?**

- Pupils who spoke with inspectors talked very positively about the school. There were examples of children who had previously experienced bullying at a physical school who no longer experience it at Oxford Online School Ltd. Pupils also spoke about good relationships with staff and the high degree of one-to-one support that is available to them to help them understand their learning, which they said makes the school special for them.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors said that they are very pleased with the progress their child has made and the improvements they have seen in their child's attitudes and self-confidence. They said that they appreciate the detailed information that they receive about their child's academic progress and personal development. There were many positive comments made about how happy parents are with their choice to place their child at Oxford Online School Ltd, including, 'It's the best decision I made.'

## About the visit

- This is Oxford Online School Ltd's first accreditation visit. Mark Quinn, HMI, was the lead inspector, accompanied by Jonathan Dyer, HMI.

## Compliance with the DfE's standards for online education

This section is included primarily for the benefit of the DfE, to help inform their decision on whether to accredit Oxford Online School Ltd.

This section lists the standards for online education set out by the DfE ('the standards') that Oxford Online School Ltd does not meet. Where a standard is not listed, this is because Oxford Online School Ltd meets the standard. If any of the standards do not apply to Oxford Online Ltd, these will be listed at the end.

The full list of standards can be found in [DfE's guidance on meeting the online education standards](#).

### Section 1. Quality of education provided (curriculum)

Oxford Online School Ltd is not meeting some standards related to the curriculum. This is because leaders do not have schemes of work for PSHE education in all years, PE in all years and creative and aesthetic education in the primary phase. In key stage 3, the only schemes of work in place are for mathematics and history.

Pupils do not receive suitable, planned guidance that enables them to make choices about a broad range of careers.

Learning in the history curriculum contains study on periods of British history, and destinations show pupils moving to higher education to equip them for opportunities in Britain. However, the promotion of fundamental British values and the personal and moral aspects of the relevant standard is not strong enough.

**The following standards in section 1 of the standards are therefore failed:**

- **Standards 1.1, 1.2** on the curriculum policy, plans and schemes of work
- **Standards 1.3, 1.6** on content of the curriculum
- **Standard 1.7** on careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education
- **Standard 1.10** on preparing pupils for life in British society

### Section 2. Quality of education provided (teaching)

The provider meets all the standards in section 2 of the standards.

### **Section 3. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

While some pupils acquire an understanding of aspects of fundamental British values, these are not actively promoted for all pupils. Through the wider curriculum, clubs and programmes exploring global citizenship, pupils are encouraged to distinguish right from wrong. However, this is in a general sense and no specific reference is made to either the civil or criminal laws of England.

The setting does not have a PSHE education scheme or a structured, planned strategy for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Therefore, pupils do not acquire a knowledge of English institutions or services. Consequently, they are unable to acquire respect for these.

While pupils are encouraged to respect both themselves and others, regardless of difference, no specific reference is made to the protected characteristics, nor is there a planned method of ensuring that all the different characteristics are covered in a systematic and age-appropriate manner. Some pupils experience elements of this through global citizenship, but not all.

Pupils are aware of democracy as a concept but not in the context of English Law and the British parliamentary process.

#### **The following standards in section 3 of the standards are therefore failed:**

- **Standard 3.1** on actively promoting the fundamental British values
- **Standard 3.3** on encouraging pupils to distinguish right from wrong and respect the law
- **Standard 3.5** on enabling pupils to acquire a broad knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England
- **Standard 3.7** on encouraging pupils to respect others, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010
- **Standard 3.8** on encouraging respect for democracy, including the basis of English law

### **Section 4. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Leaders' understanding of safeguarding and child protection procedures lack the required level of rigour. At the time of the visit, the setting's policy and procedures did not reflect statutory guidance as laid out in Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024. Throughout the setting, a lack of appropriate training has resulted in leaders and staff not having the knowledge, skills and understanding they require to carry out their roles effectively and ensure the safety of the pupils attending an online school.

The setting's health and safety policy, while appropriate given the setting's context, is not implemented effectively. Identified actions to be taken by leaders, such as those regarding staff training and promoting pupils' physical activity, have not been implemented.

The setting's risk assessment policy, while suitable for the setting's context, is not implemented effectively. The setting has not put in place a set of risk assessments which identify risks, or the mitigations required to reduce these to an acceptable level.

Other failings are detailed in the section of the report called 'What are Oxford Online School Ltd's arrangements like for keeping children safe?'

**The following standards in section 4 of the standards are therefore failed:**

- **Standard 4.1** on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils
- **Standard 4.6** on maintaining and implementing a health and safety policy
- **Standard 4.8** on maintaining and implementing a written risk assessment policy and managing risk
- **Standard 4.9** on supporting online safety

## **Section 5. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

At the time of the visit, checks on whether prohibition orders were in place for staff at the setting had not been carried out and the principal was unaware of the requirement to do so, or how they could be made. Furthermore, medical fitness checks had not been carried out for staff.

The pre-employment checks that leaders have carried out are not recorded as required by the statutory guidance that accredited online providers should follow.

**The following standards in section 5 of the standards are therefore failed:**

- **Standards 5.2, 5.4, 5.9, 5.10** on checking the suitability of staff
- **Standard 5.24** on maintaining a single central record of all staff and volunteers

## **Section 6. Provision of information**

The setting has a special educational needs and/or disabilities policy, but this does not contain information regarding pupils with an EHC plan. At the time of the visit, the setting did not have any pupils with an EHC plan, but this information needs to be made available for prospective parents. Additionally, the setting does not have a policy for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

The particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations, are not made available.

**The following standards in section 6 of the standards are therefore failed:**

- **Standards 6.13, 6.16** on information that must be made available to parents

## **Section 7. Manner in which complaints are handled**

The provider meets all the standards in section 7 of the standards.

## **Section 8. Quality of leadership in and management of the service**

Leaders have not ensured that the standards are met consistently or that pupils' well-being is promoted effectively enough.

Oxford Online School Ltd is not meeting some standards related to the curriculum. Furthermore, leaders do not provide careers guidance that enables pupils to make informed choices about a broad range of careers.

The promotion of fundamental British values and provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are not strong enough.

Leaders have not made some required information available for prospective parents and others.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are not sufficiently rigorous, which means that leaders do not ensure the safety of pupils attending Oxford Online School Ltd effectively enough.

### **The following standards in section 8 of the standards are therefore failed:**

- **Standard 8.1** on those with leadership and management responsibilities at the provider demonstrating skills and knowledge appropriate to their role
- **Standard 8.2** on those with leadership and management responsibilities at the provider fulfilling their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met consistently
- **Standard 8.3** on those with leadership and management responsibilities at the provider actively promoting the well-being of pupils

### **Standards that do not apply to this provider**

#### **The following standards do not apply to this provider:**

- **Standards 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.16, 5.17, 5.18** only apply where the provider uses supply staff
- **Standard 5.22** only applies if a proprietor lives or has lived outside of the UK
- **Standard 6.3** only applies where a provider has a governing body
- **Standards 6.5, 6.10** only apply where a report on the provider has been published under the Online Education Accreditation Scheme at the time of the visit
- **Standards 6.8, 6.9** only apply where at least one full-time pupil at the provider is wholly or partly funded by a local authority

## **Contact details for Oxford Online School Ltd**

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