

Oaklands Park School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113642
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	378733
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Ian McAllister

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annie Raine
Headteacher	Bob Pugh
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ian McAllister

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed seven teachers teaching eight lessons and some part lessons. Two were joint observations with the headteacher. The inspector observed some interventions with specific pupils and heard some pupils read. He met formally with one group of pupils and spoke to a number of pupils during the inspection. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and with school staff, including senior and middle managers. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including progress and behaviour data, the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding and equalities policies. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspector took account of 21 questionnaires from parents and carers returned during the inspection, as well as questionnaires completed by staff.

Information about the school

Oaklands Park is a smaller than average size special school which provides education for pupils with complex special educational needs. Pupils' needs mainly relate to severe learning difficulties (SLD), autistic spectrum condition (ASC) and challenging behaviours. A small minority of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Three quarters of pupils come from a White British background. Just over 6% of pupils speak English as an additional language. There are 14% of the pupils who are in the care of the local authority.

The school's residences are registered as a children's home because they are open for some children for 52 weeks of the year, but they were not included in this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Oaklands Park is a good school. Relative to their starting points, pupils make better progress than similar groups of pupils nationally. The good induction arrangements enable the pupils to settle in quickly. They develop their literacy, numeracy and communication skills well.
- The curriculum is well organised to provide a range of imaginative and exciting opportunities for learning, with recent improvements in planning to ensure that pupils progressively acquire a wide range of skills relevant to their needs when they leave school. These improvements are not yet fully established in planning across all curriculum areas.
- The good sixth form provision ensures that older students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, the pupils achieve well over time. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and use their detailed knowledge of the pupils to plan effectively and set challenging tasks. All pupils do not yet benefit fully from the innovative, personalised resources available from emerging technologies.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils at the school are good. Pupils' behaviour improves significantly over time as they respond to the effective behaviour management approaches used in the school.
- Leaders and managers effectively monitor the work of the teachers, encouraging and supporting the staff to good effect. As a result, teaching has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are making equally good progress in English, mathematics and science.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate recent improvements in planning by ensuring that in all curriculum areas there is an emphasis on planned progression so that pupils are able to acquire relevant skills.
- Improve the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning by:

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- developing the use of new and emerging technologies so that all pupils have ready access to innovative, personalised resources
- thoroughly embedding opportunities for using ICT in all lesson planning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment is low, including in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2. Children make good progress relative to their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils and students make similarly good progress in all four key stages and in the sixth form, irrespective of their individual special educational needs or disabilities. All groups achieve equally well. Parents and carers express the view that their children make good progress in the school, and work in individual progress files shows this is an accurate view. Pupils who start at the school in Key Stage 1 make significant progress in their behaviour as they move through the school. Approximately half of the pupils start at the school at a later stage. The very effective induction arrangements ensure that each pupil settles quickly and starts to learn as soon as possible.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, the children are taught the skills and attitudes that they will need in order to learn effectively later on. They learn to focus on their work for increasingly extended periods, to follow instructions, to behave appropriately towards others in the classroom, and to communicate more effectively. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils make good progress in communication, with the support of signing if necessary. By the end of Key Stage 2 many pupils are able to write their names and the date accurately. Some are reading fluently and are able to make verbal contributions to lessons. In Key Stages 3 and 4 the pupils are keen to participate in lessons, and concentrate for extended periods. They work well in groups, are tolerant of others and are able to make appropriate choices. They communicate more effectively, and are increasingly confident learners. As a result, by the end of Key Stage 4 all pupils are able to achieve appropriate externally accredited qualifications. Similarly, sixth form students achieve external qualifications through completing Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and Equals 'moving on' courses. As well as making good progress in reducing challenging behaviours and improving their literacy levels, they develop a range of life skills and social skills well, and this helps to equip them for a more independent life after leaving school. All pupils and students achieve successful placements in further education, training or care settings when they leave school.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good and this is endorsed by most parents and carers who say that their children are well taught. In all lessons the quality of relationships is very good and members of staff know the pupils very well. Information about pupils' needs is shared within the school and is used consistently by all teachers. Teachers

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use detailed assessments of pupils' progress to help plan appropriate tasks that enthuse and motivate. In the best lessons the teachers listen carefully to pupils and skilfully question individuals and groups. Behaviour is well managed so that it does not become a barrier to learning, and triggers for challenging behaviour are usually avoided. The positive climate created helps ensure that individual pupils, and groups, have good experiences of school and want to learn.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage the safety of children is paramount. The children are at the very earliest stages of development and individual supervision ensures risks are managed well. The teaching focuses on effective communication and behaviour management which form a good preparation for Key Stage 1. The insistence of staff on pupils achieving high standards, and the persistence with which they pursue that goal, lead to rapid progress for the pupils in improved communication and behaviour.

Throughout the school, good resources, including age-appropriate reading books, are available to support learning. Most lessons are based on practical activities that engage the pupils, excite their curiosity and create an enthusiasm for learning. In the best lessons time given for reflection helps deepen learning, and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a number of lessons ICT is used effectively by the teachers as a stimulus to learning. Also, ICT in the form of computers or talking books allows pupils to access and enjoy literature at their own level. There are often good cross-curricular links, as in one ICT lesson which linked geography and the humanities as well as developing independence skills. However, the pupils do not yet have opportunities to fully exploit all the emerging technologies, including hand-held devices, to support learning. Although the school has an active website, there is no virtual learning platform and this limits the degree to which pupils, and particularly older students, can record their work and share their achievements with parents, carers or others outside school.

Changes to the curriculum, including in literacy, have enhanced pupils' academic progress and enabled them to make more progress in developing their social skills and independence skills. These changes have had a significant positive impact on learning in some curriculum areas but are not yet fully established across the curriculum.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers, pupils and staff are generally positive about behaviour and safety, although a few concerns were expressed about the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils. During the inspection the behaviour of the pupils was good. Most pupils are typically considerate towards each other. For example, they listen quietly and attentively to each others' contributions in lessons. They are respectful of others and polite to staff and visitors. There is a calm, orderly environment that enables staff to deal quickly and effectively with any individual behavioural issues without disrupting the learning of the class. Pupil records show that behaviour in the school

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is typically good over time. Pupils are able to communicate their feelings to staff when they are anxious or concerned.

Bullying of any type is unknown and any other inappropriate behaviour between pupils is managed well. All parents and carers who returned questionnaires think that the school is a safe place for the pupils, and pupils themselves feel safe.

There are no racist incidents and there are no fixed-term or permanent exclusions. Over time pupils develop a growing understanding of right and wrong, and of how their behaviour affects themselves and others, and what they can do to support each other. A Key Stage 3 pupil said, 'We help out with the little ones. We help show them round.'

The school manages challenging behaviour well. One parent expressing the views of many said, 'The school has managed to control and change many of my child's negative and difficult behaviours by behavioural plans.....and consistency of actions.'

Attendance is above average and punctuality at the start of lessons is good. Everyone quickly gets down to work which maximises the time available for learning.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and of the improvements that still need to be made. They have ensured improvement over time. Previous weaknesses in teaching have been successfully addressed through rigorous monitoring and professional development for all staff. Progress in English now matches that in mathematics, enabling older pupils and students to gain a wide range of accredited qualifications. These improvements demonstrate the school's strong capacity to improve further. Leaders at all levels, including the governing body, strongly promote equality of opportunity. Progress is monitored carefully to ensure that all individuals and groups make equally good progress.

The curriculum is broadly based, and is enhanced by a wide range of out-of-school visits, including residential trips. These, together with topics such as 'Life in Kenya' and work within personal, social and health education, broaden the experience of the pupils, help them gain an understanding of a diverse society and contribute well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There have been significant improvements in curriculum planning, with greater emphasis on ensuring that pupils progressively acquire a range of relevant skills as they move through the school. These improvements are not yet fully embedded across all curriculum areas.

The school communicates well with parents and carers. There is a very strong sense of partnership between parents and carers and the school, for example when the school hired a local cinema for a Sunday morning for parents and pupils to get together for a support group, and this supports effective learning well. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are robust and meet statutory requirements. Leaders

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and managers, including the governing body, give the highest priority to all aspects of safety throughout the school. The pupils and students develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe through the many day and residential visits that the school organises for them.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 January 2012

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Oaklands Park School, Dawlish EX7 9SF

Thank you for making me so very welcome when I visited your school. Many thanks to all of you who met with me and told me about feeling safe and the way you help others. Also, thank you to those who read to me. It was good to see how your reading is improving.

Oaklands Park is a good school, and here are some of the good things I found.

- Nearly all of you make good progress during your time at Oaklands Park. You make good progress in both English and mathematics as well as in other subjects. The school has introduced new accreditation courses for the older students so you can gain qualifications before you leave.
- You all attend school very well, and are keen to learn. You told me that you enjoy your lessons and you know what you have to do to improve.
- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding. This helps you make good progress, but you learn best when you are encouraged to be active in lessons, and do some work on your own.
- You feel safe in school and you behave well in lessons, and you continue with your work even if another pupil is not behaving as well as they should.
- Your headteacher, staff and the governing body have worked successfully to improve your school, and I have asked them to continue that improvement by giving you more planned opportunities to gain skills that will help you to be as successful as you can be when you leave school. I have also asked that staff give you more opportunities to use all the different types of technology to support your learning.

I enjoyed meeting you and I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian McAllister
Lead inspector

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