

# Oakfield House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Oakfield House School an independent special day school which is located in a former country house set in several acres of parkland on the outskirts of Preston. The school opened in 1998 and was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2008. The school is registered for up to 36 boys and girls from five to 12 years of age. Currently, there are 19 pupils on roll, all are boys and all have a statement of special educational needs. Five pupils are in the care of the local authority. All pupils are placed at the school and funded by their local authority.

The school provides education for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Since the last inspection, the school has received approval from the Department for Education to extend its provision and cater for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and communication difficulties. An overwhelming majority of pupils admitted to the school have a history of disrupted schooling including multiple exclusions from previous schools. Consequently, most pupils have significant gaps in their learning and arrive with low levels of academic attainment. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2009. Several other staff changes have taken place since the last inspection. The school is owned by Acorn Care and Education group who own and run several other special schools and care homes throughout the United Kingdom.

The school's mission statement reads,

'We seek to make a difference by creating a high quality, nurturing, caring and calm child centred environment where children can grow and develop into confident and successful learners to become responsible global citizens of the future.'

## Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good and improving; it meets its aims. Due to good teaching and a well-matched curriculum, pupils make good and accelerating progress. Pupils make rapid gains in their personal development and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their welfare, health and safety are outstanding. As a result of

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

excellent behaviour management strategies, pupils make exceptional progress in managing their behaviour which is outstanding because of the strong impact on pupils' learning and progress. The school meets all the regulations for registration as an independent school. Since the last inspection, leaders have improved the assessment, tracking and recording of pupils' progress, introduced a staff induction and training programme and have significantly improved the provision for pupils' cultural development. Arrangements for safeguarding fully meet the requirements.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum and other activities are good in meeting the range of needs and interests of pupils. A broad and balanced range of subjects is provided through a good mixture of skills-based learning and topics or themes which help pupils apply their skills and knowledge. Leaders ensure that curriculum provision is matched effectively to meet the pupils' behavioural, emotional and social needs. For example, all pupils have individual education plans for learning literacy and numeracy skills and these sharply inform the support and guidance given to pupils in lessons. Much of the curriculum is based on practical activities and pupils say they enjoy learning in this way. This approach is well suited to pupils' needs, including those with autistic spectrum disorders. A good example of this approach is the work structured around environmental themes which provides pupils with opportunities such as learning about growing vegetables in their class eco-garden. Many school visits are organised which give pupils 'real-life' experiences such as to museums, country parks and places of religious worship. Themed days are a regular feature and through these pupils learn about other countries and cultures. Physical education includes regular use of the local leisure centre and swimming pool. Pupils attend a residential outward bound centre which provides extended opportunities to develop their physical and social skills. Curriculum provision is very well supported by a range of intervention programmes which effectively promote pupils' learning of language and their communication skills. Also, regular key worker sessions are provided which support pupils' emotional needs and help to build their confidence and self esteem.

Pupils say they enjoy using computers and teachers make very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to deliver lessons. However, opportunities for pupils to use ICT for independent learning are not widely developed. The school timetable includes regular blocks of enrichment activities which enable pupils to make free choices about social activities such as playing board or computer games. This is an effective outcome of the school's good rewards system. Although pupils gain much from these social occasions, there are missed opportunities to simultaneously promote pupils' academic learning.

Overall, the effectiveness of teaching and assessment in meeting the full range of pupils' needs is good. The impact of leaders' actions to monitor teaching and to provide staff development and training has successfully improved the quality since the last inspection. Teaching is mostly good, although there is some variation between classes. Staff work extremely well together, sharing high and consistent expectations for pupils' behaviour and concentration. Relationships between pupils

and staff are founded upon trust and openness and are aided by the very good adult role models. Adults treat everyone with consideration and respect. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary and this is a significant aid to their learning. Teachers plan conscientiously to a whole-school format. There is variable use made of attainment data to inform the planning for different group activities and the level of challenge in lessons. At the start of most lessons, pupils' interest is quickly captured by the teachers' enthusiasm and this is sustained through the effective use of resources such as digital projectors. Teaching assistants play a full part in supporting and guiding individual pupil's learning and they are particularly effective in nurturing pupils' improving behaviour although their deployment in the early stages of lessons is underdeveloped. All staff use praise and encouragement very effectively so that pupils feel their contribution is valued and appreciated. Checks and assessments during lessons, to ensure pupils fully understand what they have been taught before moving on, do not always identify individual pupils who need further support. However, teachers have good subject knowledge and all staff know pupils well and this ensures that individual needs are carefully attended to once activities in lessons are underway.

Analysis of school data and scrutiny of pupils' work show that pupils make good progress in their learning. The rate of progress is improving rapidly. In lessons, pupils make mainly good progress due to the very good individual support and guidance provided by all staff and pupils' resulting concentration. Leaders have ensured there is rigorous tracking and recording of pupils' attainment. The analysis of this data is developing but does not systematically provide evaluations of the progress of different groups of pupils. Plans for school improvement do not provide clear targets or milestones for improvements to pupils' attainment and progress. Inspection analysis of the data shows clear evidence of good and strongly improving pupil progress. Overall, pupils are effectively closing the gap with national expectations and reaching higher levels of attainment. The youngest pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 are on track to reach broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 2 if current rates of progress are sustained. The rates of progress for pupils in English and mathematics are similar. Children in the care of the local authority make similar progress to other pupils.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils say they enjoy school and this is reflected in their very good attendance. Parents' and carers' questionnaire responses agree and the responses are summed up in one written comment, 'I cannot praise the staff at Oakfield enough. My child enjoys going to school and would go in the school holidays if they could. The staff always make you feel welcome'. Pupils make outstanding gains in managing their own behaviour. Pupils learn about the impact of bullying through role play and the school has a bullying charter for action which helps pupils understand the consequences of their actions. School assemblies celebrate courteous behaviour and 'good to be kind day' typifies the many opportunities for pupils to reflect on behavioural, emotional and social themes. Pupils admitted to the school respond by

quickly improving their behaviour. They learn to cooperate and socialise in a harmonious atmosphere which contributes greatly to their improving educational progress.

Pupils engage well with the school's daily routines. Breakfast and lunch are good opportunities for pupils to develop good manners and social skills. The breadth of curriculum activities provides pupils with a wide variety of experiences in which they learn to work and play alongside other pupils. Visits to places of educational interest widen pupils' cultural experiences. During the inspection, pupils were observed on a visit to a Sikh temple. Throughout the visit, they conducted themselves impeccably showing respect and consideration for others. Inside the temple, pupils were very respectful towards members of the Sikh community as they listened attentively and learnt about the faith, traditions and culture of Sikhism. Through activities such as this, pupils learn to be tolerant and gain an understanding of contrasting cultures.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils are outstanding. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The management of the school ensures that all the required policies and procedures are in place. They are very well organised and are easily accessible. Moreover, they are implemented extremely rigorously. For example, there is a policy for educational visits which outlines the risk assessments that are needed before a visit takes place. During the inspection, risk assessments were seen for vehicle checks and site hazards. Supervision as pupils crossed town centre roads was vigilant. Pupils wore identity bracelets with contact numbers, and parents and carers had signed medical consent forms in case of an emergency. Checks on the suitability of staff are carried out at the time of appointment and identity checks are made on all visitors to the school. Staff have up-to-date training with regard to child protection and first aid.

Health and safety considerations are robustly made and pupils say they feel safe. In lessons, for example, staff insist that pupils wash their hands when handling food used for science experiments. Pupils are encouraged to be actively mindful of their own health and safety through regular sessions such as 'stranger danger' and cycling courses. Pupils learn about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and receive sex and relationships education. The school has a safe internet policy about which the pupils are knowledgeable. The school allocates a key worker to each child who is responsible for their welfare and emotional well-being. Pupils feel they have an adult to talk to and can share their achievements and confide in someone if they need to do so. External agencies are used very well to support pupils' well-being.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

Arrangements to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors meet all requirements and checks are recorded on the single central register as required.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

Overall, the premises make an effective contribution to pupils' provision for learning. There are three classrooms which are suitably furnished and contain good resources including computers and a range of reading books. There is a separate computer suite, an art room and a small, but suitable, dining room. Outside, there are extensive grounds containing a walled vegetable garden, parkland and a small hard-surfaced play area.

## **Provision of information**

The school has an informative website which contains all the required information for parents and carers and for local authorities regarding the aims, policies and expectations of the school. There is a useful range of additional written information available at the time of admission. The school sends annual reports about the progress and attainment of each pupil as required. Annual accounts of income and expenditure are sent as required to each placing local authority.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's policies and procedures meet all the requirements.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Sustain the improving rate of pupils' progress by:
  - implementing a rigorous and systematic analysis of the rates of progress for different groups of pupils to ensure that no group underperforms
  - ensuring that assessment information about pupils' prior attainment is used more effectively in teachers' plans to sharpen the level of challenge for groups of pupils in lessons
  - improving the quality of school development planning so that measurable and quantifiable milestones target improvement in pupils' attainment and progress
  - improving the deployment of teaching assistants to ensure maximum impact on pupils' progress in lessons
  - improving the use of ICT so that pupils have more opportunities to become independent learners.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1998		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5-12 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 19	Girls: 0	Total: 19
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 19	Girls: 0	Total: 19
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£30,885		
<b>Address of school</b>	Station Road Salwick Preston Lancashire PR4 0YH		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 672630		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk">office@oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Gillian Hughes		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education		

**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.**



9 February 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Oakfield House School, Preston, PR4 0YH**

Thank you for welcoming me into your school when I visited you recently. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and would like to share with you what I found out about your school. I judged that the quality of education at Oakfield House School is good. These are the main reasons.

- The quality of teaching and the curriculum is good so that you make good progress and learn new skills.
- You do outstandingly well in improving your behaviour. Your attendance is very good.
- Some pupils, and parents and carers, told me you enjoy school, feel safe and are learning to live a healthy life. I agree.
- You are quickly improving your personal skills which will help you in the future such as by being well mannered and cooperative with others.

All schools need to develop and improve and I have asked your headteacher to make sure that you continue to make good progress. I have asked that you are given more opportunities to use computers to help with your learning. Also, that all the staff get involved in helping you to learn especially at the start of lessons. Finally, I have asked that the school improves its plans and the use of data showing your attainment and progress.

Thank you once again for all your help. I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely,

John Coleman  
Her Majesty's Inspector