

Oxclose Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108864
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	356440
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	983
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Linda Williams
Headteacher	Mr Tony Cunningham
Date of previous school inspection	2 April 2008
School address	Dilston Close Oxclose Village, Washington Tyne and Wear NE38 0LN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 42 lessons and 41 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body, a local authority representative and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its self-evaluation process, development plan, lesson observation records, policies, safeguarding procedures and minutes of various meetings. Inspectors also analysed 307 questionnaires received from parents or carers, 278 from students and 62 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The progress students make in English, mathematics and science.
- The quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- The impact of care, guidance and support on all groups of students.

Information about the school

Oxclose is a specialist Performing and Visual Arts community school attended by students who live mainly in the Washington area. The roll has grown since the previous inspection and is now around the national average. The school hosts a resourced provision for pupils with physical and medical difficulties which has 12 places. A relatively high number of students attending the school are in the care of the local authority. The vast majority of students come from a White British background. There are higher than average proportions of students known to be eligible for free school meals, and of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has gained many national awards including Healthy School status, International Schools Award, Arts Mark Gold Award and Investors in People Award. The school leads on the development of the Creative and Media Diploma for the local authority.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Oxclose has improved since the last inspection and is now a good school. Students start with average levels of attainment in a broad range of subjects including English, mathematics and science. On leaving, an above average proportion gain good grades in GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics. Students behave in a mature and sensible way around the school and are keen to learn, with almost all groups making good progress in lessons. They enjoy coming to school; for example, the inspection took place in poor weather conditions but despite this, large numbers of students and staff were determined to attend. Overall, levels of attendance have improved and are now around average.

The care, guidance and support students receive are outstanding. This means they feel safe and very few are excluded from school. Students are very well equipped for the next stage of their education. Most take action to improve their health by participating regularly in physical activities. The active school council makes a positive contribution to the community. This is an inclusive school that welcomes students with a wide range of abilities and needs. Students celebrate this and it enhances their good social and moral development. They respect each other's needs, interests and values.

Teaching is good and in the great majority of lessons students develop good understanding and skills across a wide range of subjects. In the best lessons, teachers carefully match learning objectives and tasks to their assessment of students' progress, so that students consolidate and extend their understanding. However, in a small minority of lessons, students spend too long working at one pace on the same topic. In particular, a few more-able students lose interest as a result of this approach and do not always reach the very highest grades at GCSE.

The school's good curriculum is broad and has been strengthened significantly by its specialism in Visual and Performing Arts. Students are successful in a large number of subjects in Key Stage 4, particularly in the wide range of vocational options. In Key Stage 3, the curriculum has improved but it is not as imaginatively adjusted across all subject areas to meet students' needs and interests.

Senior managers are committed to bringing about improvement to all outcomes and have a good track record. They provide effective leadership, self-evaluation is accurate and as a result, the school has a good capacity to improve. Communication with parents and carers is excellent, including those who are reluctant or unsure about approaching the school. The headteacher is held in high esteem by all and has been very effective in creating a climate to ensure the school's continuing improvement. The governing body provides effective support and ensures that the school complies with statutory requirements, including those to safeguard students. However, its interrogation of middle leaders' progress reports is sometimes not thorough enough and as a result, they are not fully and

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systematically involved in evaluating the school. Good partnerships underpin the school's work, particularly in its specialism. The school uses very effective strategies to ensure groups of students who may be subject to discrimination are treated fairly. Differences in the rates of progress made by particular groups of learners are reducing, although there are subjects where the trend is not as consistent. The observation of lessons usually leads to accurate evaluation of the quality of learning. However, there are some inconsistencies in the abilities of middle leaders to come to consistently accurate judgements on the quality of teaching and use this as part of the self-evaluation process. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion based on a clear analysis of the value it can add to its community. This is achieved through the school's extended provision. The school provides good value for money because outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are good and the management of finances and resources are strong.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve how some teachers use assessment to support learning by:
 - ensuring lesson plans are used more effectively to identify personalised objectives for different groups of learners
 - ensuring data on progress is used to set the appropriate level of work, especially for more-able students.
- Ensure leadership and management is consistently effective by:
 - enhancing the skills used by middle leaders when observing lessons
 - enabling the governing body to be more challenging in its evaluation of the work of middle leaders
 - ensuring departmental self-evaluation includes a comparison of attainment and progress, across all groups of students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Results in GCSE examinations and vocational qualifications are consistently above average and have improved over the last three years. Although no groups of students have under-attained in comparison to national averages, there are few subjects with an above average proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE. Pass rates in English and mathematics are similar, with improvements in mathematics being more marked. Students make good progress in lessons overall, although a few more-able students do comparatively less well than their peers. The school tracks students' progress accurately and has identified that they tend to make more progress in lessons in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are set challenging academic targets and make good progress, including those in the resourced provision and students in the care of the local authority. Students develop good study skills and show interest, enthusiasm and engagement across a range of subjects. A very high proportion of students progress on to further education, employment or training.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers build strong positive relationships with students. They use interesting and relevant activities to capture students' interest and to motivate them. Information and communication technology and other resources are used well to promote enjoyment. In the better lessons, teachers devise activities to match students' capabilities and needs and adjust their planning to ensure work is available to challenge the more able. Good questioning tests understanding and clear feedback helps improve students' knowledge and understanding. In a small minority of less effective lessons, learning objectives and targets are the same for all students. In these classes, teachers dominate the lesson and talk for too long with the result that students sometimes become restless or bored. Marking is done frequently and is most useful when advice is given on how to improve rather than simply what levels have been achieved.

The school's specialism provides a wide range of opportunities for students to use their imagination and creativity. All groups of students respond well by actively engaging in music, drama and dance. In Year 7, the school has introduced a creative enquiry-based curriculum, the 'Discover@Oxclose' programme which follows on from the '5Rs' programme in most feeder primary schools. It is highly praised by students. In Key Stage 4, students have an extensive offering of academic and vocational options, which meet the needs and interests of all groups of students. The school works in close partnership with the City of Sunderland College and two specialist vocational centres to provide a wide

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range of options. There are high participation rates by all groups in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Every effort is made to ensure that each student has the maximum opportunity to participate in activities. For example, those students with a physical disability often enthusiastically take part in school team sports.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The targeted and well matched support for individuals is a great strength of the school. The school cares exceptionally well for vulnerable groups, including students who are in the care of the local authority. It has a well deserved reputation for being inclusive and welcoming all students whatever their need, as a result it is widening the number of primary schools from which it draws students. All aspects of students' development are carefully monitored to ensure that any required interventions are swift and effective, making excellent use of specialist agencies when required. This is currently more effective in addressing barriers to learning such as poor behaviour, erratic attendance and low self-esteem than in addressing variations in academic progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The vision shared by all is to provide the highest possible quality of education to students no matter what their starting points. To this end, improving the quality of teaching and learning is placed at the heart of everything leaders do. A more rigorous and robust system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning has been introduced. As a result, some weaker teaching has improved.

Middle leaders are held to account for ensuring improvements in teaching and learning take place in their subjects or aspects; although there is still some variation in their capability to evaluate the quality of lessons. Data is used well to evaluate the progress of individual students, however, the school data systems are cumbersome and not always used to analyse the progress of groups.

Communication with parents and carers is excellent and their views are given a high priority and as a result, improvements are made to the quality of provision. The governing body ensure that all required policies and procedures are in place and evaluated in line with statutory requirements, including safeguarding measures. The school makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion and equality of opportunity based on a clear analysis of the needs of its local community.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority showed high levels of satisfaction with the school. The school's extensive questionnaire also supports this evidence. A very small number of parents and carers expressed individual concerns about their children. The inspection team noted their concern but judged this to be a good school that provides outstanding, care guidance and support for students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oxclose Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 307 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 983 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	125	41	162	53	15	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	139	45	158	51	3	1	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	146	48	149	49	6	2	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	140	46	150	49	11	4	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	149	49	153	50	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	113	37	173	56	13	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	96	31	193	63	16	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	127	41	173	56	4	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	126	41	173	56	3	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	107	35	169	55	17	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	102	33	186	61	6	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	140	46	165	54	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	157	51	136	44	8	3	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



4 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Oxclose Community School, Washington, NE38 0LN

We enjoyed talking to you when we visited your school on 2 and 3 December and thought you were very welcoming and polite. We were pleased to see so many of you in school despite the snow!

We think that Oxclose is a good school. The senior leaders work well with all the other staff to help you make good progress and achieve examination results that are above average. Your school cares for and supports you exceptionally well and this helps you develop really well as young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their life.

Links with parents and carers are excellent and the school has developed many useful partnerships. The choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11 is good and you told us how much you enjoy the specialist subjects in Visual and Performing Arts. Teachers do a good job and as a result you behave well in class and are keen to learn.

Despite all these good things the school is always looking for ways to improve and we have tried to help by suggesting that the school:

- improves the way some teachers use assessment information to make sure you are always given work that is tailor-made to meet your needs and skills
- improves the work of some managers to make sure that they keep a careful eye on the success rates of all groups of students
- makes sure that the governing body blend the right balance of support and challenge to move the school forward.

You can help by continuing to respond well to your teachers and work as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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