

# Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104850
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	355642
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 February 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alastair Younger

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	37
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Colin Oxley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pamela Wright
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Gores Lane Formby, Liverpool Merseyside L37 3NY
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Eight lessons were observed involving seven different teachers. Meetings were held with senior staff and representatives of the local authority and management committee. Opportunities were taken to talk informally with many pupils. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including that relating to school improvement and the safeguarding of pupils. Fourteen questionnaires returned by parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether pupils are making sufficiently rapid progress to compensate for low attainment on entry and to facilitate a successful return to mainstream schools.
- How successful the school is in improving pupils' attendance.
- How well the curriculum serves the needs of all pupils, including those who spend time in more than one educational setting.
- How well current policy on the admission from and the return of pupils to mainstream schools contributes to the success of the unit.

## Information about the school

This is a small pupil referral unit serving the whole of the borough of Sefton. It provides for pupils who have either been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of being so on account of their behaviour. Boys slightly outnumber girls. Most pupils are White British. There are currently five looked after children. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Pupils can be admitted at any time in the school year. Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs and several of the younger pupils are in the process of being assessed. Pupils in Key Stage 2 attend part time, with the balance of time being spent in their mainstream schools.

The school operates on two sites, one for Key Stage 2 pupils and the other for those in Key Stage 3. The Key Stage 2 provision was under the remit of the borough's behaviour support service until September 2009, when it became a part of Oakfield.

The school is currently being led by an acting headteacher following the resignation of the substantive post holder at the end of the last school year.

Schools such as this do not have a governing body. The local authority assumes responsibility as the appropriate authority and delegates certain responsibilities to a management committee.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It does some important things well. Parents and carers are very happy with the way it is helping their children and most pupils say they feel safe and enjoy attending. Staff are proud to work in the school and feel that it is well led. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the extent to which they adopt healthy lifestyles are good.

Achievement and behaviour are both satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in improving their behaviour from a low baseline and their level of academic achievement improves. Achievement and behaviour are both better in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 3. Key Stage 2 pupils frequently stay at the school only for a short period of time before being returned successfully to other mainstream or special schools. The frequency of reintegration back into mainstream schools is lower in Key Stage 3. Arrangements to reintegrate pupils are underdeveloped, which results in an insufficient turnover of pupils in what is intended to be a short-stay school.

Pupils learn well and make good progress because they are well taught. The establishment of strong relationships between pupils and staff contributes significantly to good behaviour management in the greater part of most lessons. However, pupils are often slow to settle at the start of lessons. This results in some loss of learning time and rushed assessments at the end of lessons when time is running out that prevent teachers from checking thoroughly what pupils have learned.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is well enriched and achieves an appropriate balance between promoting pupils' academic learning and their personal development. Care is taken to ensure that the Key Stage 2 curriculum complements the curriculum provided in pupils' mainstream schools and that work is not unnecessarily repeated. Lessons are, however, too short, resulting in too much time being spent moving between classrooms and this reduces the time for learning. The lack of a written authority policy means that parents and carers do not know what curriculum their children are entitled to in advance of them being admitted to a setting which moves away from National Curriculum requirements. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) are outdated.

The school has made improvements to the areas of weakness identified by the previous inspection. Teaching and learning continue to improve. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate but tends to be over optimistic in some areas. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and hence raise attainment by:
  - ensuring better use of time is made at the start of lessons to check what pupils have remembered from previous lessons
  - ensuring that better use is made of time at the end of lessons to check what new learning has taken place during the lesson.
- Improve the curriculum by:
  - ensuring that the local authority produces a curriculum policy that clearly states the curricular entitlement of pupils being referred to the school
  - lengthening the duration of lessons to make more effective use of time
  - providing a greater range of practical activities for pupils
  - ensuring that resources, especially for ICT, are enhanced.
- Speed up the reintegration of pupils by:
  - working more closely with mainstream schools to facilitate an early return ensuring that no pupil is admitted to Oakfield without a clearly planned strategy for a return to a mainstream or special school.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

For the main part of lessons, pupils behave well and work hard. They enjoy their lessons and relate well to adults and other pupils. They listen attentively and ask sensible questions when they are unsure about what they are being taught. As a result, learning and progress in lessons are usually good. There are, however, instances when precious time is lost at the start of lessons when pupils are slow to settle.

Attainment on entry is usually low. This is not because of any significant degree of identified learning difficulty but because many pupils have had a highly disrupted education on account of their behavioural difficulties. Many pupils make particularly rapid progress at the start of their placement but for some this tails off slightly later in their stay and, although attainment nearly always improves, it usually remains well below average. All groups of pupils, including girls, boys, looked after children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress.

In most ways, pupils behave in a manner that allows their own learning and that of others to proceed smoothly. The school usually remains calm on a day-to-day basis. Pupils are polite to visitors and usually also to staff. Instances of serious misbehaviour result in occasional short periods of exclusion. Pupils are frequently totally reliant on adult support when they arrive but this dependency diminishes over time.

Attendance overall is low but for most pupils it improves, often rapidly. Overall attendance has been rising quickly for each of the past three years and a significant group of pupils, including all those in Key Stage 2, have recorded 100% attendance so far this term. In such a small school the frequent absence of a small number of pupils impacts disproportionately on overall rates of attendance.

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Pupils participate wholeheartedly in physical activity during physical education lessons and at break and lunchtimes. A good programme of health education is included in the personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils are strongly encouraged to be sociable and develop a good appreciation of the art and music of different cultures. Good assemblies, often incorporating a spiritual element, are a positive feature of the school.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?**

Good teaching is built upon the foundations of trusting relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils respect the fact that adults are helping them to make good progress. Nearly all of the teaching observed during the inspection was good and none was inadequate. Teachers motivate pupils well by ensuring that lessons are made interesting and enjoyable, as was seen where pupils were creating illuminated manuscripts in art or cooking spaghetti bolognese in food technology. Classroom assistants are skilfully deployed and frequently take the initiative to support pupils who they see to be struggling. A strength of their work is that they support learning and behaviour equally. Pupils are given good, detailed oral feedback during lessons. At the start of some lessons, not enough care is taken to check what pupils already know in order to adjust expectations for the lesson. With very short lessons, teachers frequently do not allow sufficient time at the end of the lesson to check what pupils have learned before dismissing them.

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The curriculum is adequately matched to pupils' needs and interests. Lessons have been kept very short, intended to match pupils' attention spans. The school has recognised that it has made lessons too short and that they should be lengthened to allow fuller coverage of the topics being taught and a reduction in the number of changeovers between lessons. There is a good focus on promoting basic skills and a good balance is kept between promoting learning and pupils' personal development. There are many good opportunities for pupils to participate in physical activities. There is a good programme of much enjoyed enrichment activities involving visits and visitors. Computers are rarely used more widely in lessons other than in specific ICT lessons. This is mainly because a lot of the equipment is sub-standard. Good provision is made for pupils to participate in art and music but not enough for them to develop their practical skills.

The care, guidance and support of pupils are well organised. Individuals with specific individual needs are quickly identified and provided with good additional support. The most vulnerable pupils particularly appreciate the 'listening ear' of staff, which they find hugely reassuring and helpful at times of impending personal crisis. The support given to pupils to help them improve their attendance has been particularly effective. Many pupils who rarely attended their mainstream schools show a rapidly increasing willingness to re-engage with school. A few remain harder to reach.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has been very successful in maintaining morale. Staff remain motivated and keen to maintain improvement but are slightly unsettled by the time that is being taken to resolve the issue of headship. Steps have been taken to secure good quality teaching and expectations are sufficiently high to bring about outcomes that are satisfactory overall and good in some areas.

The local authority and management committee provide satisfactory governance. Many members of the management committee also hold posts in the local authority, which aids communication between the two strands of governance. Members of the management committee are now more involved in contributing to self-evaluation and school improvement processes. Most statutory duties have been discharged but there is not yet a curriculum policy which is specific to the school.

Good engagement with parents and carers contributes well to improving their children's attendance. Parents and carers also appreciate the regularity of communication and its positive nature. As a result of these good relationships, the attendance of parents and

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carers at reviews of progress and school events has greatly improved and most feel more involved in supporting their children's education.

The school has many good partnership arrangements with professionals and agencies involved in the care and protection of young people. However, where the effectiveness of partnerships is weaker is in the reluctance of some mainstream schools to readmit pupils. This is partly because procedures and expectations related to a future return to mainstream education are not made clear enough to the school before a pupil is admitted to the unit.

The relative performance of different groups of pupils is closely monitored. It shows that the outcomes achieved by different groups of pupils are broadly similar. There is no evidence of discrimination and particularly vulnerable pupils, such as those who are particularly anxious, or who are emotionally frail, get good support to help them achieve on a par with other pupils. As a result, the promotion of equal opportunities is good. The school operates as a cohesive community and demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the community it serves. Its work has a generally positive impact within the community of schools in the borough.

All safeguarding regulations are diligently met. Risk assessment systems are thorough, often extending to individual pupils as well as the activities they take part in. Policy is frequently reviewed in the light of changing circumstances and there is good quality training for all staff. The good safeguarding procedures contribute well to pupils feeling safe and to the good care, guidance and support they receive.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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



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## **Views of parents and carers**

There was a relatively good response to the questionnaire distributed to parents and carers before the inspection. Nearly all parents and carers are pleased with the way the school is helping their children. Those few parents who report that their children do not like school are at pains to point out that this is not a criticism of the pupil referral unit; it is just that their children have become generally disaffected.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit 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 inspector received 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 27 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	29	8	57	2	14	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	36	9	64	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	36	9	64	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	36	7	50	2	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	29	9	64	0	0	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)	6	43	8	57	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	43	6	43	2	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	57	5	36	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	50	5	36	1	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	36	8	57	1	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	43	7	50	1	7	0	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



28 February 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit, Liverpool, L37 3NY**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I recently inspected your school. Thank you also to the many of you who spent time talking so sensibly to me about your experience of school.

I have judged Oakfield to be a satisfactory school. That means that while it has some important strengths, it also has some weaknesses that prevent it from being even better.

It was good to see you being well taught with the result that you are learning well and making good progress. It was also good to see you are being kept safe and given good support and guidance to help you in your learning and personal development. So many of you show a good understanding of what you can do to live healthier lifestyles.

I have made several suggestions as to how the school could improve further and faster.

- The curriculum needs to include more opportunities for you to participate in practical activities and by making sure that ICT is better resourced.
- Teachers need to make better use of time at the start and end of lessons to check your learning.
- The school needs to make a more concerted effort with better planning to help you to return you to mainstream schools more quickly.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector

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