

Oakwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131115
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	360213
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Sandford
Headteacher	Sarah Middleham
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 12 lessons and 10 teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of the school's documentation on safeguarding, the monitoring of teaching, the curriculum and related issues of leadership and management. The inspectors also took into consideration, 34 parents' questionnaires, 48 pupils' questionnaires and 25 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- the achievement and progress of pupils with additional needs from their starting points, in English, mathematics and science
- the quality of assessment procedures, especially in English and mathematics and how effectively this translates into effective planning and target setting
- the quality of teaching throughout the school, whether the senior leadership team effectively identifies strengths and weaknesses and whether there are appropriate measures to improve standards where necessary
- the degree to which pupils become aware of and responsible for their own behaviour and how effectively the school supports them
- how effectively responsibility has been delegated to middle leaders and how effectively their monitoring and evaluation has a positive impact on pupils' achievements.

Information about the school

The school, which is of average size for the type of school, provides for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs and these relate to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A minority also have additional special educational needs, including speech and language disorders, autistic spectrum conditions and medical needs. A high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. There are very few girls and the vast majority of pupils are White British in origin. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

There has been significant improvement in all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection, when the school was judged to be good. The school's overall effectiveness is now outstanding and this represents excellent value for money. The pupils make good progress overall and a growing minority make outstanding progress. All the pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. The improvements have been driven by the expertise and determination of the headteacher to provide ever better education for the pupils. She has been supported very well by her senior team, by the local authority and by the governing body, which was judged satisfactory at the previous inspection, but which now makes an outstanding contribution. Leaders are never content with the standards of provision or the level of the pupils' performance. Every aspect of the school's work is rigorously analysed and evaluated and action swiftly taken to improve things. Recently appointed subject leaders are beginning to be effective in providing a further layer of monitoring. Subject leaders are fully aware, however, that they need more training and time to meet the exceptional standards of the senior team. The school's track record of rapid improvement, the quality of self-evaluation and action planning and the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the school's leadership and management indicate strongly that there is an outstanding capacity to improve even further.

The level of pupils' achievement has risen dramatically since the previous inspection. Many of the pupils enter the school with relatively low attainment, often because of poor attendance at previous schools and negative attitudes to education. The pupils make impressive early gains in their reading and spelling and continue to make good and sometimes outstanding progress across the curriculum. By the time pupils leave, their overall attainment is just below national averages. Virtually every pupil leaves with a range of GCSE and Entry level qualifications.

The pupils' progress is as a result of good teaching and an outstanding curriculum which is continually under review to make sure it meets the needs of every pupil. As a result, the pupils feel challenged by and interested in their activities. They develop positive attitudes and greater confidence in their own abilities. Teachers, however, do not always record the small steps in learning which the pupils make. This can lead to inconsistency in planning and target setting for individual pupils and sometimes slows down the pace of learning.

A strength of the school is in the exemplary standards of safeguarding and care. This enables every pupil to flourish because they feel safe and secure. The promotion of equal opportunities underpins all the school's work. The progress of every individual pupil is very closely monitored and tracked. Pupils are then supported effectively, where appropriate, to get over academic or social or emotional barriers to their learning. This results in the outstanding development in their personal skills. The pupils' attendance, apart from a very few persistent absentees, is above average and shows year-on-year improvement. Their

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behaviour improves substantially through the school, as do their attitudes to learning. For example, in the last two years every pupil has left the school for a college placement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve assessment procedures to ensure teachers use the day-to-day recording of pupils' progress consistently to: Ensure the effectiveness of subject leaders in monitoring and improving standards of teaching and learning in the subjects for which they are responsible.
 - adapt learning activities to build on the small steps in progress which the pupils make
 - create precise learning targets which are regularly reviewed.
- Ensure the effectiveness of subject leaders in monitoring and improving standards of teaching and learning in the subjects for which they are responsible.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils settle quickly when they enter the school. They maintain good progress in basic skills. Their reading, spelling and number work improves rapidly through well- directed and effective individual tuition. The school's exceptionally clear and comprehensive data and records of the scrutiny of pupils' work show that there are no significant differences in the progress of different groups. Where monitoring shows pupils are not achieving to their potential, teachers and other staff provide effective individual tuition and support. The attainment of pupils, although low on entry, improves significantly throughout their time in school. Most pupils achieve a minimum of 5 GCSE A*-G grades in Year 11 and this gives them a solid base from which to start college courses.

Pupils with additional complex needs such as autism and those with speech and language difficulties receive skilled support to enable them to benefit from their learning. This was illustrated clearly in a Year 7 English lesson, when pupils were practising reading aloud through role playing a television newsreader. Each pupil was encouraged to read and was supported very effectively by the teacher and other staff. Pupils with autism were helped to understand the lesson objectives through visual symbols and rewards and all the pupils gained a great deal of understanding of verbal expression and some of the features of descriptive language. The pupils were encouraged to discuss and evaluate their own performance and that of the others. This supported and helped develop their social skills very well, along with reinforcing progress in speaking and listening for those with language difficulties or autistic spectrum conditions.

Pupils feel very safe and well cared for. Parents and carers confirmed this. There are relaxed and friendly relationships throughout the school, which have a positive influence on the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils develop a very strong commitment to staying healthy. The school has gained the national Healthy Schools Award. The pupils enjoy the many opportunities for physical activity, such as in after-school clubs and sport played against other schools. Almost all pupils take advantage of the school breakfasts and lunches and healthy snacks at break. This helps maintain their energy levels and concentration and has a positive impact on their learning. Individual pupils are encouraged where appropriate to take up a specific sport or to attend the healthy cooking club and this is monitored as part of the pupils' personal development. There is a vibrant school

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council which has been instrumental in helping rewrite the anti-bullying policy. Members meet with the council members of other schools. Older pupils gladly take on responsibilities, such as looking out for and mentoring younger pupils. The pupils reach out into the local community through partnerships with other schools and, for instance, through inviting local residents to all school events. They contribute enthusiastically to charity events for developing countries. The pupils' good progress in basic skills, their above-average attendance and their developing experience of work-related learning mean they are well prepared for leaving school. All the leavers, for instance, in recent years have secured college places.

Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is outstanding. Pupils gain a high degree of spiritual awareness through their growing willingness to take part in 'circle time' and restorative justice sessions and to respect and support others. High expectations of behaviour are at the core of the school's work. Pupils are encouraged at every opportunity to examine their conduct. The pupils acknowledge that they know how to behave and also that when they stray from this they are very well supported. Invariably, they apologise and try to make amends. The pupils demonstrate a well-developed ability and willingness to manage their own behaviour and this is an outstanding factor in their successful learning. They gain valuable experience of a range of cultural activities. For instance, there are regular school visits and music events and the pupils involve themselves in local fundraising for children in other countries.

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	3
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

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How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan interesting and lively lessons and in the best examples set clear learning objectives for each pupil. The excellent recording and tracking of pupils' progress over time is not always, however, used to best advantage in creating precise short-term targets for all individuals which build on the small steps in their progress. There are good relationships between staff and pupils. The pupils are punctual to lessons and display positive attitudes to their learning. They enjoy well-organised activities taught at a suitably brisk pace. Well-trained and competent teaching assistants give effective support. Each pupil receives a high degree of individual support and encouragement. Because of this, the pupils feel confident to learn new things. They maintain good levels of concentration and their behaviour makes a very strong contribution to their good learning.

The curriculum is outstanding in providing balanced experiences that reflect the individual needs of pupils and ensures a firm focus on developing personal skills. All the pupils benefit from a highly structured, relevant and coherent curriculum which is constantly monitored to ensure its effectiveness. There is a wide range of interventions which are personalised to meet the identified needs of pupils with additional difficulties. These support pupils' basic skills, communication and independence skills effectively as well as helping them develop their understanding of acceptable behaviour and social interaction. A few pupils, where appropriate, follow their own tailor-made curriculum designed to promote their strengths and meet their additional needs. The school's collaboration with local schools and colleges extends the range of the curriculum, while Oakwood staff are suitably qualified to teach a wide range of subjects. The curriculum is enhanced through visits to sporting and cultural events such as the recent participation in 'Voice in a Million', a major event at the O2 arena, where pupils sang with a huge crowd in an uplifting and spiritual experience. Pupils experience many trips, including residential visits. These add greatly to their social and cultural understanding in a variety of situations.

Care, support and guidance are of a very high quality and a strength of the school. Pupils have full confidence in adults and the quality of safeguarding is outstanding. Pupils, parents and carers perceive that the school is calm and secure. Potentially vulnerable pupils with complex social and emotional needs are particularly well cared for. For example, there are arrangements for pupils, if they wish, to complete homework after school or to enable those who have been absent to catch up. The older pupils, who are keen to achieve good results at GCSE, appreciate this. Attendance is monitored very well. The home-school liaison officer is vigilant in monitoring absence and provides a valued link with parents and carers. When pupils are ready to leave the school, they receive very good guidance and the school ensures that every pupil has an established pathway into further education.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior team, led exceptionally well by the headteacher, has been very diligent in monitoring, evaluating and improving provision. Leaders prepare clear and focused development planning to which staff and the governing body contribute. The work of teachers is regularly monitored and because of this the quality of teaching is good and continually improving. Leaders are taking effective steps, for instance, in the quality of target setting for pupils. They are aware that the role of subject leaders is not developed sufficiently to ensure further consistency in teaching quality. Pupils of all ages and abilities get a 'good deal' and equality of opportunity because of the school's determination continually to improve provision for every pupil. This reflected in the rigorous analysis of every aspect of the pupils' academic progress and their well-being. The governing body contributes exceptionally well to the work and direction of the school. There has been a significant improvement in its rigour and expertise in monitoring standards since the previous inspection and the governing body now provides outstanding challenge and support to the school's leaders. Members monitor all aspects of the school's work through active and well-informed committees. For instance, they ensure that child protection procedures, risk assessment and the necessary checks on staff are of a very high standard. Parents and carers report that they feel fully confident in the school's work. They are very well informed about the school and their children's progress. The school works in very effective partnerships with other schools and institutions. There are excellent relationships with a number of groups such as community-based police and with health and social care professionals. There are curriculum and sporting links with other mainstream schools and good relationships with local colleges. The school has created good provision to help pupils develop their understanding of community cohesion. There are strong local links and the pupils are developing their understanding of the wider cultural, ethnic and religious differences in other countries. There are, however, gaps in the pupils' awareness of the diversity of people and customs in Britain today.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers completed questionnaires. Overwhelmingly, those who responded feel the school is a safe and caring place for their child. They are very happy that their child is making good progress because teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. A very small proportion expressed dissatisfaction with the progress their children were making, but these concerns were not borne out by the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakwood 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 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 56 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	38	20	59	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	73	6	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	82	6	18	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	65	11	32	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	73	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	73	8	23	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	53	15	44	1	3	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)	22	65	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	59	14	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	70	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	47	17	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	67	11	32	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	67	11	32	0	0	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).

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">■ 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 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakwood School, Bexleyheath DA7 6LB

Not long ago, my colleague and I visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you in our meeting and in the classrooms. You go to an outstanding school. Here are some things which are particularly good.

- You make good progress in your work and excellent progress in learning about how to keep safe, about a healthy lifestyle and becoming part of your community. You develop your personal skills very well.
- You behave very well and you always try to make amends when you slip up! You come to school as often as you can. This, for some of you, is a great improvement on when you went to other schools. Well done!
- Your lessons are interesting and you have interesting trips and visits to look forward to, such as the recent trip to the O2 arena to take part in 'Voice in a Million'. These experiences help you to be more confident and take responsibility for your own safety and behaviour.
- You are very safe and well looked after. All the adults take great care to make sure you are secure and able to learn well.
- Your headteacher and her staff run the school very well.

To make the school even better, I have asked the teachers to write down more details about how you are getting on in lessons. This will help them to give you work which is just right to help each of you to improve even faster. I have also asked the teachers who are responsible for each subject to check even more carefully how well you are doing.

You can help your school too by continuing to work hard and behave well.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Blackband Lead inspector

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