

Oakmeeds Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126084
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	360004
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	John Seal HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1052
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Fry
Headteacher	Colin Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 November 2007
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 40 part lessons, which involved seeing 38 teachers. Students and senior staff accompanied inspectors on four separate occasions to observe behaviour in lessons and around the school at different times of day. Meetings were held with students, staff and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at data on students' progress, a range of policies and planning documents, minutes of meetings, the school's self-evaluation documents, financial information, and the single central record of safeguarding checks on staff. The team analysed questionnaires returned by 337 parents and carers, 189 students and 82 staff.

Information about the school

This is an above average-sized secondary school with specialist status for business and enterprise. Students are predominantly of White British heritage. There are a small proportion of students from Gypsy/Roma traveller families. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found nationally, although the percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. The school has met government floor targets over the last three years. There is a separately registered nursery on site which was not part of this inspection.

The inspection took place during one of the GCSE examination weeks.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement	3
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	2
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- Oakmeeds is a good and improving school. Good leadership and management have improved teaching and behaviour since the last inspection. Although students' attainment is average overall, it has securely and rapidly improved leading to above average attainment in many subjects including English, mathematics and science.
- The progress of different groups of students is at least satisfactory and is rapidly increasing. There are some groups of pupils whose progress is slower than expected nationally, especially girls and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but the gaps are narrowing rapidly.
- The majority of teaching is good or better, with nothing that is less than satisfactory. Good lessons are manifested by teachers' good subject knowledge and a range of opportunities for students to work independently, knowing precisely what they need to do to learn more. In lessons that are no better than satisfactory, students are not provided with activities which match their abilities closely enough, regular informal information about how to improve further, or opportunities to develop the skills needed to learn independently. Consequently, students in these lessons make slower progress, making it harder for them to reach higher levels of attainment.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. A few lessons are sometimes disrupted because of inconsistent application of effective behaviour management strategies. Most students feel safe and well looked after. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now above average.
- The headteacher provides clear direction and he is ably supported by the deputy and other senior leaders. The governing body knows the school well and supports and challenges the school in equal measure. Consequently, the areas from the last inspection have been addressed. The majority of middle leaders lead subjects well and senior leaders and managers know what aspects are not

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yet having a direct impact raising attainment. They have secure plans in place to continue improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise attainment in all subjects by:
 - ensuring that the quality of all lessons matches the best in the school through effective dissemination of exemplary practice
 - ensuring all teachers provide students with informal assessment information during lessons, for example giving verbal and written feedback on how to improve and achieve higher levels or grades
 - further strengthening the quality of middle leadership and management to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of student progress and the quality of teaching and learning.
- ensure that all staff, especially those recently appointed to the school, are provided with the skills and capabilities to implement effective behaviour management techniques consistently.

Main report

In the past, students' broadly average starting points were not maximised, leading to slow progress and low attainment overall. Since the last inspection, there has been a secure and steady improvement year on year. As a result, higher proportions of students are making better progress leading to a significant improvement in their attainment, bringing it broadly in line with the national average overall. Those students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics were significantly above the national average. In the lessons seen during the inspection and in students' work, attainment, especially in Key Stage 3 is at least in line with, if not above, average. In the majority of lessons, progress is at least satisfactory and often good. Students are well placed to make a good start to their GCSEs and other courses. The school's data and students' work in Key Stage 4 indicates that it is on track for above average results in 2011.

The school is highly inclusive, and pupils of all abilities and needs are encouraged and supported to achieve well. Students' views are taken into account; for example, a group of 'student observers' are involved in reviewing lessons. There is some exemplary practice in working in partnership with the Traveller community. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make at least satisfactory progress. This is improving as the recently appointed special educational needs coordinator and her team are beginning to have an impact. The school's monitoring of progress and attainment for different groups is efficient and detailed, leading to more appropriately tailored support for students.

Students enjoy coming to school and this can be seen from the above average attendance, positive relationships and good behaviour in lessons and around the

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school. Students are confident that bullying is dealt with effectively and they know who they would go to if they needed help or support. Safeguarding procedures and policies are robust and child protection measures are securely in place. A significant minority of parents, carers and students who returned questionnaires expressed concerns that the school does not manage behaviour well and that lessons are disrupted. The inspection team looked into this in detail. They found that the school has a calm, purposeful atmosphere. Students behave well in most lessons, and are courteous and friendly to visitors and keen to talk about their work. Exclusions have declined and are low. Recorded incidents of inappropriate behaviour are infrequent and usually due to a few students. These students' challenging behaviour is not always managed effectively or consistently by a very small number of recently appointed staff both in lessons and around the school. On most occasions, where the staff are skilful and lessons are well-planned and interesting, difficult behaviour is either managed well or channelled into learning.

The majority of lessons are good or better, with nothing less than satisfactory. In the good lessons, teachers:

- have high expectations and plan appropriately challenging activities
- demonstrate their good subject knowledge to plan activities accurately to match students' needs well; this was seen especially in English, science and history
- use questions to extend students' knowledge and understanding, encouraging dialogue and reflection on learning
- consistently use academic guidance and grade criteria to identify next steps on what and how to improve further. Students say they value this and a group of Key Stage 4 students spoke highly of the use made of examination assessment criteria by teachers to enable self-assessment
- consistently refer to key vocabulary. As a result, students' communication, reading and writing skills have improved with higher attainment being achieved.

In the less effective lessons, teachers:

- do not always match activities closely enough to students' different needs. Consequently, more-able students and those who are less able do not always make as much progress as they are capable of
- miss opportunities to provide students with informal verbal feedback regarding what the next steps are for learning linking them to grades or levels
- engage in overlong explanations and highly directed activities, which limit students' opportunities to discuss their work and develop their skills for independent learning.

The headteacher and the senior leadership team have created a shared vision for improvement among most staff and the governing body. Despite some significant and challenging events in the last three years, staff morale remains high. Clear priorities are planned and adhered to. A good example of this is lesson planning

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across the school, which is extremely consistent and generally effective. The school ensures that tolerance to diversity and equality are encouraged. Good examples of this are the narrowing gaps in attainment between different groups of students because of the increased effectiveness of the school's tracking of groups and individual students. Assessment information is used well by the two standards directors who meet with staff regularly to ensure any underachievement is tackled promptly. The quality of teaching has improved because the majority of middle leaders effectively monitor and evaluate teaching and students' achievement. Although this is not a consistent picture, senior leaders and the governing body are aware of where to make further improvements because of the systematic approach to regularly monitoring and evaluating staff performance and providing challenging feedback. This has been instrumental in securing improvements, leading to the school's good capacity to improve further. The curriculum is generally tailored well to meet students' needs and the school's specialist status ensures that students benefit from well-established partnerships with local businesses and other local schools to broaden their experiences, providing interesting, stimulating and relevant activities. The parental engagement support worker works well with students and families who are at risk of being vulnerable. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and can be seen in the good relationships and collaborative nature in much of their work. The school has established partnerships which ensure students are aware of the multicultural dimensions in Britain by making productive links with a school nearby that has a more diverse population. The good promotion of positive relationships and links with a school in Ghana contribute to underpinning the school's effective community cohesion.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakmeeds Community College 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 337 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1052 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	119	35	198	59	18	5	2	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	104	31	216	64	14	4	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	93	28	205	61	28	8	6	2
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	85	25	210	62	30	9	2	1
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	96	28	218	65	18	5	1	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	73	22	235	70	20	6	3	1
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	25	7	223	66	71	21	11	3
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	16	5	126	39	138	43	29	9
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	70	21	185	55	30	9	10	3
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	68	20	217	65	41	12	5	1
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	88	26	195	58	33	10	12	4
Q12 The school is well led and managed	99	29	199	59	28	8	3	1

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



10 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Oakmeeds Community College, Burgess Hill, RH15 9EA

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. We met many of you in groups, in lessons and around the school. Some of you completed questionnaires, which we read with interest. As a result of the inspection, we judged Oakmeeds to be a good school.

The good things we found included:

- More of you are making good progress.
- The proportions of you getting five A*-C grades at GCSE are increasing.
- Your results in English, mathematics and science are above average.
- Most lessons are good.
- Your attendance is above average and most of you behave well most of the time. However, you told us in your questionnaires and in discussions that some lessons were disrupted. When we looked into this, we found that although the school is a calm and safe place, during a few lessons and on some occasions in between them, a small number of students disrupted your learning or behaved inappropriately around the school.
- The headteacher, the senior team and governing body lead the school well and are continuing to improve the school.

There are some things we found that need improving. We talked with the head, staff and governing body and they will be working on:

- helping you achieve better results in all subjects by making sure that all lessons in all subjects across the school are interesting and meet your needs
- helping teachers work together to share good ideas for even better teaching
- providing you with information during lessons which will help you make even more progress
- making sure that all subjects are led as well as the best in the school
- making sure all staff are able to manage the few incidents of difficult behaviour.

It really was an enjoyable visit to your school, and the inspection team and I hope you continue to work hard and achieve the best results possible in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Seal
Her Majesty's Inspector

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