

Oakfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123866
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359532
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	566
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Cutting
Headteacher	Philip Hill
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 31 lessons and saw parts of other lessons and activities involving 34 teachers. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and representative groups of pupils. The inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents, minutes of the governing body meetings, the work of pupils in exercise books and assessment data of selected year groups. They also scrutinised 125 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of pupils from each year group.

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

- The quality of teaching to determine whether it was improving the learning for lower attaining pupils, particularly boys in their English work.
- How well teachers use assessment information to match work to pupils' needs.
- Whether the curriculum provides enough opportunities for pupils to develop their reading and writing skills.
- How well leaders and managers work across the school and with the wider partnership to sustain improvements.

Information about the school

Oakfield School is a larger than average middle school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, having doubled since the last inspection. The proportion that has special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. A few students have a statement of special educational needs. Most of these students have moderate learning and/or behavioural and emotional difficulties. Very nearly all students are of White British backgrounds. Since the last inspection, Oakfield was accredited with the Healthy Schools award in 2009, the Healthy Schools Plus award in 2011 and the Eco-schools award in 2010 and has gained performing and expressive arts school status.

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

Oakfield School provides a good education for its pupils, which reflects its values of high aspirations, good levels of commitment to inclusion and success for all. It has made good progress since its last inspection across all aspects of its performance, through the concerted action of leaders, managers and governors. The attainment of pupils in Key Stage 3 is now meeting the expectations for pupils by the end of Year 8, with a majority reaching higher levels in mathematics and science. From below average starting points, this represents good achievement for the majority of pupils. The school has good systems in place for assessing and checking on the progress of less able pupils, as well as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys who are behind those of a similar age in their reading and writing. The strategies to help these pupils narrow the gaps on other learners and achieve well are a core part of the good procedures for ensuring the care, guidance and safeguarding of all pupils. Staff know the pupils well and this ensures the pupils are able to access a wide range of opportunities to enhance their learning and personal development. Their needs are met through carefully targeted intervention and encouragement to make the most of the good range of enrichment opportunities the school provides. Consequently, pupils' outcomes in terms of their achievement and the wider aspects of their personal development are good. The capacity for further improvement is good given the ambitious leadership of the headteacher combined with the strategic thinking of senior leaders and key members of the governing body. The wider community, including the local school partnership, shares this sense of purpose, and works well together to enrich the school's curriculum and promote the welfare of the pupils.

Teaching and learning are typically good and a few lessons are outstanding. The most skilful teachers inspire and challenge the class and use incisive questioning that drives the learning forwards of individuals and groups of pupils. The pace of lessons is seamless and participation in the lesson rapidly affects everybody. In these lessons, teachers use their knowledge of pupils' academic needs skilfully to tailor learning so that it fully meets the needs of all, ensuring that their progress is good or better. Such good features of practice are not yet embedded consistently across the school, and there are lessons where there is insufficient focus through questioning and marking of work on the needs of different groups. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is managed well and there is no disruption to other pupils' learning. There is a very small minority of pupils who misbehave at other times, which is a concern to pupils, parents and carers. Strategies are in place for managing the behaviour of these pupils but their effectiveness has not been reviewed for some time and they are not always effective.

Self-evaluation is accurate. Comprehensive systems are in place to improve teaching further across the school through regular monitoring and focused professional development. The staff report that they are supported well by senior leaders in their work,

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which contributes to securing high levels of staff stability and the excellent commitment within the school to develop middle leadership further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment so that all learning is at least good and all pupils are challenged effectively by:
 - ensuring the questioning and other forms of checking by teachers challenge pupils' thinking and engage them all in learning at their level
 - ensuring that questions asked of pupils encourage them to think more deeply about their targets and provide them with good feedback on how well they are doing
 - ensuring that the marking of pupils' English work in Key Stage 3 provides clear advice on how their writing could be improved and helps pupils better understand how they can achieve their targets.
- Review the school's behaviour policy and arrangements for supervision of pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and clarify parents' and carers' understanding of how behaviour is managed.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The large majority of pupils make good progress from their below average starting points in Year 5 to attain expected standards at the end of Year 8. Pupils' attainment at the higher levels in mathematics and science are a particular strength and has improved since the last inspection. A much higher proportion of pupils reach these levels than would be expected from their starting points as more-able pupils are being challenged better in their learning. This is increasingly the case in writing, through providing greater opportunity to write for a range of purposes across the subjects and using challenging texts to motivate them. Identifying differing ability groups facilitates provision both for more-able pupils and those who find learning more difficult or who start further behind their peers. Subject leaders, in conjunction with the heads of Years 5 and 6, ensure that support in lessons or teaching time for small groups are carefully tailored to blend both the academic needs and social needs of these pupils. As a consequence, patterns of achievement across the groups of pupils are very consistent. This was certainly the case in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, where the skilful use of everyday items was used to draw out the practical applications of money. The opportunities for group work and to learn from each other were skilfully woven into this fast-paced lesson that extended pupils' recognition of coins and their reading skills but also extended their spoken language. Equally impressive is the good level of take-up for outdoor education and extra-curricular activity amongst those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The personal confidence and aspirations amongst these pupils is noticeable, as is their commitment to learning that is equally as strong as other pupils, and as a result, they also make good progress.

Pupils are positive about school and learning, and their responses to the inspection questionnaire were largely positive. A minority lack confidence in their basic skills when they start school but the support they receive in lessons enables them to gain new subject knowledge and understanding well. Pupils make good gains in developing speaking and listening skills through their commitments to the expressive arts programme and their

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involvement with members of the local community in projects. They collaborate well together in pairs and groups in lessons and considerable numbers get involved in organising fundraising, as school ambassadors, council members or as eco-champions who secured the school's eco status. Through their work with these groups, pupils demonstrate a clear understanding about issues facing them and their community.

Good behaviour is clearly evident in lessons and as pupils move around the school, interact with their friends at lunchtime and playtimes, and with members of staff and visitors. Rewards and sanctions are clearly understood. However, pupils comment that a few pupils misbehave at playtimes or when unsupervised and this carries over when going home after school.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance levels are above average and the rates of persistent absence and exclusion have fallen steadily. In part, this is because there are so many exciting activities for pupils to participate in but also because they know they will get the support they require. Pupils clearly feel safe and pupils report that the very few incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are dealt with promptly. The vast majority of pupils are confident that incidents are dealt with sensitively and promptly, through mechanisms such as restorative justice. Pupils' attitudes towards leading healthy lifestyles are very positive, justifying the school's Healthy School plus status. The take-up for the school dinners is good and the large majority join in after-school activities.

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	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	2
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

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is good overall. The features of the best lessons included a precise match of activity to ability without diminishing the challenge. There were plenty of opportunities for pupils to share their understanding with each other, while lively inputs from the teacher helped capture pupils' imaginations. This was very evident in a Year 8 religious education lesson when groups of pupils fielded probing questions on the beliefs and traditions of different faiths. The skilful emphasis on evidence to support views helped the teacher push along the learning and evaluate each pupil's progress. Classroom routines are well established across the school and learning is often supported by informative classroom displays and frequent reference to lesson targets to check pupils' progress. Teachers plan lessons which include a good mix of practical and written activities and they use praise and encouragement effectively to encourage pupils to try their best. Those with specific needs receive some very well targeted intervention. Teaching assistants provide the required support in lessons for those pupils who have short attention spans, are easily distracted or require regular assistance with instructions. Despite good awareness of relevant pupil-specific targets, in a small minority of lessons in both key stages, work is not always well matched to the particular strengths and areas for development of different ability groups. Questioning in these particular lessons is uninspiring and does not do enough to extend and tailor the discussions to suit pupils with different levels of ability, neither is it always sharp enough to deepen pupils' understanding. There are good examples of instructive marking in English books in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 3, despite the use of marking ladders and other devices in writing activities to strengthen pupils' awareness of their learning, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of the marking over the year and between the classes to guide further improvement.

There are a good range of curriculum enrichment activities that the majority of pupils enjoy. The curriculum has been strengthened to provide both more interest to aid boys' learning and more opportunity to develop appreciation of the environment and local culture. Links between the topics and the class literacy planning have improved, particularly for those who find learning hard when it is compartmentalised into subjects. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievements in writing and reading. There are several innovative curriculum initiatives, including a weekly whole-school problem-solving challenge that encourages pupils to utilise their skills and knowledge from across the full range of subjects. The arts specialism draws expertise from across the schools and community arts partnership. The recent three-dimensional work has been of great value to the self-esteem of a small group of boys who have enjoyed this work.

Care, guidance and support are contributing well to an improving picture of attainment and attendance across the school. There are good levels of care and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities from multi-agency working and a knowledgeable school team. Support staff are particularly effective in helping pupils who experience emotional or behavioural difficulties to succeed and to improve their self-esteem. Good links with the first schools allow for a smooth transfer for Year 5 pupils. Good procedures ensure that most pupils feel safe, although the systems to manage behaviour when supervision is reduced are not always effective.

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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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and his senior staff provide determined and effective leadership. Governors provide valuable challenge and support through a 'hands on' approach to checking on the school's performance. The governing body has a well developed and thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their involvement through the task group ensures they are at the centre of school strategic development. Members of the governing body ensure there is a regular programme of focused visits to lessons that include routine meetings with middle leaders. This contributes well to the development of the middle leaders' role in school self- evaluation and their contribution to the school's development since the last inspection.

Tolerance and respect are promoted extremely well, through restorative justice, praise and an achievements assembly. Antisocial incidents are rare. Improvements to the school's systems for target-setting and achievement tracking are helping senior leaders to analyse and evaluate the performance of different groups more closely. This is used to set challenging targets that ensure the gaps in attainment are closed and the vast majority of pupils achieve at least age-related expectations. The data systems are linked well to the work of the special educational needs team, allowing them to quickly evaluate the impact of intervention programmes.

The school safeguards its students well, meeting all the current statutory requirements and providing good quality assurance systems and risk assessment checks. The strong commitment to working in partnership with others is evident, not only through the promotion of the improved transition arrangements with nearby first schools, but in the extended links with the local college to share resources and provide for the gifted and talented pupils. The school recognises more could be done to spread the expertise of high quality practitioners within the learning community to support the drive to improve learning. The school's involvement with local businesses and environmental groups has brought in many exciting and sustainable projects with which pupils engage fully. By helping improve the lives of children in their linked township in Ghana, and by their links with a school in France, the pupils gain valuable experience of different customs.

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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

There was a higher than average response from parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire. Parents and carers were generally positive, although not overwhelmingly so. Some positive endorsement by way of additional comments was received and the comment 'All the staff are always happy to help and you don't feel like you are wasting their time' was typical of the sentiments expressed. A number of parents and carers wrote to the inspectors to explain their concerns about pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and after school. These concerns and the school's behaviour policy and management strategies were investigated. There are very few incidents of persistent disruptive behaviour. The inspectors came to the view that the policy is not formally reviewed with sufficient regularity and its impact evaluated. Parents and carers are informed of the policy and procedures through the prospectus and in anti-bullying leaflets, but the inspectors did not consider the format to be particularly helpful. The school is aware of incidents brought to their attention by parents and carers. Parents and carers say they would like more information about how behaviour is managed on these occasions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakfield 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 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 588 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	26	79	63	7	6	5	4
The school keeps my child safe	37	30	79	63	4	3	3	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	27	81	65	6	5	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	24	81	65	13	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	24	83	66	4	3	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	18	80	64	18	14	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	21	83	66	14	11	2	2
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)	30	24	75	60	7	6	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	21	86	69	8	6	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	13	76	61	22	18	7	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	19	80	64	13	10	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	25	20	73	58	12	10	6	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	32	71	57	6	7	5	4

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 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.



24 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakfield School, Frome BA11 4JF

On behalf of the inspection team, I am writing to tell you about our findings during the inspection. Thank you for talking to us and being so helpful and courteous during our visit. We were very impressed by your positive attitudes and the extent to which you take part in all the school has to offer. Yours is a good school and here are the main findings of our visit.

Good teaching has raised the standard of education and it is getting better. Your attendance is good and you enjoy coming to school because of the interesting lessons and projects the school involves you in. It is good to see that you are involved with local events, particularly art, drama and environmental projects. This certainly helps build your confidence. You are good at taking on responsibilities and I could see that this really helps you all get on so well together. You receive a good level of care and those of you who struggle with your work receive extra help to improve.

The adults who run the school have good ideas about what to do to make it better. They have done a good job so far and I have asked them to do a few things to make it better. Firstly, to make sure that all teachers match the questions they ask in lessons closely to your level of ability so that you can make faster progress. Secondly, to ensure that the discussions in lessons help you focus on your targets. Thirdly, to make sure that when they mark your work, teachers provide you with instructions on how to make it better.

We saw only good behaviour during our visit but not everybody, including your parents and carers, think this is always the case. Lastly, we want you to help your school review how it manages behaviour and look at ways it can improve people's perceptions of this. We know you can play your part by behaving as well out of school as you do in school.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk

Her Majesty's Inspector

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