

# The Oaktree Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134328
<b>Local authority</b>	Middlesbrough
<b>Inspection number</b>	381673
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Marian Thomas

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>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	6
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Management group
<b>Chair</b>	Jan Brunton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Leanne Chilton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 November 2008
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Marian Thomas

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed two teachers and a higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) in seven lessons and parts of lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the teacher in charge of the unit. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the local authority members of the management board, and school staff, including senior managers. The inspection team took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development planning, examples of pupils' work, and health and safety documentation. The inspector also took into account the views of six parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

## Information about the school

Oaktree is a very small pupil referral unit. It meets the needs of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 who are identified as being at risk of permanent exclusion from their mainstream schools. All of the pupils currently attending are boys. They come from across Middlesbrough and are of White British origin. Pupils attend on a sessional basis in either the morning or afternoon for a term whilst continuing to attend their mainstream school. All pupils have an identified special educational need. Currently there are six pupils on roll, none of whom are in the care of the local authority, and a higher than average proportion are known to be eligible for free school meals. Since the last inspection the unit has moved its base from within a primary school to a separate site. Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the teacher in charge. A member of the local authority is the appropriate authority, but management decisions rest with the management board.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- Oaktree is a good pupil referral unit which has maintained its good standards since the last inspection. It is not yet an outstanding unit because the standards achieved by pupils in writing do not yet equal those in reading and mathematics and teachers' marking does not consistently provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Pupils attend the unit for a short period of time during which staff make great efforts to address their attitudes to learning and gaps in knowledge. As a result, they make good and often accelerated progress academically from low starting points. Overall pupils make excellent progress in reading and good progress in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). The majority makes at least satisfactory progress in writing.
- Teaching is good overall. The majority of lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and a good variety of tasks and activities which meet pupils' needs well. Relationships between pupils and staff are exceptionally strong. Pupils show a high level of respect towards staff and each other which promotes a calm and harmonious atmosphere across the unit.
- Behaviour is excellent. Staff have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and use the behaviour management system consistently. This, coupled with activities which help pupils to manage their emotions more effectively, leads all pupils to make excellent gains in their personal and social development. Pupils feel safe. Attendance is excellent. Parents and carers comment that children are upset if they have to miss a day.
- The unit is led and managed well by the teacher in charge. Management of performance is effective. This is evidenced by clear improvements in pupils' attendance and achievement since the last inspection. Self-evaluation is accurate and the management of teaching is linked clearly to staff performance

management. Parents and carers appreciate the good work of the unit as evidenced by the wholly positive responses given to the inspector.

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

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by ensuring that planned literacy activities include more opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills.
- Ensure that the marking of pupils' books gives them clear indications of how to improve their work.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

The majority of pupils who enter the unit have levels of skills and knowledge below those expected for their age due to gaps in their learning. Many also lack the skills required for learning, for example how to sit down and listen in lessons. Despite these barriers, pupils who attend the unit achieve well overall. Progress in mathematics and ICT are good, with the majority making better than expected progress over time. Whilst the majority also makes steady progress in writing, this is slower than in other areas of the curriculum. Although with such small numbers overall attainment varies it is often below average overall, but increases to average in reading by the time pupils leave. There are currently no pupils in Year 2 to ascertain a secure judgment on reading at the end of this year.

Pupils learn effectively in lessons. The focus is sharply on helping pupils to overcome barriers to their learning. A consistent approach to managing behaviour and high expectations ensure that lessons are conducted in an atmosphere conducive to learning. Due to a sustained and effective programme, pupils often improve their reading skills dramatically. Evidence of the impact of this could be seen at the beginning of the school day when pupils arrived in the classroom and immediately collected their books and started reading to each other and staff. This demonstrated clearly their enthusiasm and new-found enjoyment in developing their reading skills. Examples of writing show that pupils are making less progress overall. This is largely due to a lack of opportunities for pupils to undertake extended pieces of writing in which they can practise and improve their skills.

Unit leaders quite rightly accept that because pupils remain on the roll of their mainstream school and attend the unit on a part-time basis, improving pupils' overall achievement is undertaken in partnership with their school. The effectiveness of these partnerships could clearly be evidenced in the sustained and continuous achievement made by past pupils, whose progress the unit continues to track for a year after their return to mainstream school. Further evidence of the unit's success in promoting pupils' achievement could also be seen in the return of only one pupil to the unit in the past three years.

The skilled support offered in the nurturing environment of the unit ensures that all groups of pupils overcome their individual special educational needs and make good progress in relation to their starting points. Systems to track pupils' progress are used effectively and underachievement is identified quickly. Parents' and carers' views agree with the inspection findings that their children are making good progress.

### **Quality of teaching**

Pupils benefit from the consistently good levels of teaching within the unit which enable them to make good progress academically. Unit staff work very closely together to ensure good outcomes for pupils. Teachers' planning meets the needs of all pupils and is consistently shared with teaching assistants. This results in learning time being maximised due to high-quality and well-directed support for pupils. The effectiveness of this strategy could be seen in an interactive science lesson where pupils were investigating the properties of solids, liquids and gases. Activities included pupils' investigation of actual objects and liquids including tomato sauce and golden syrup. The class was then divided into two groups, one led by a teacher, and the other by a teaching assistant. Each group explored the range of objects and liquids excitedly. Good planning and preparation led to both the teacher and teaching assistant questioning pupils equally well. As a result, both groups succeeded in investigating the viscosity of the golden syrup and its place in the liquids' category. The majority of lessons have good pace and offer a range of activities and practical tasks which engage learners well. Reading and mathematical activities are appropriately planned and lead to good and often better progress for the majority of pupils. However, planning for writing activities does not always give pupils sufficient opportunity to produce lengthy, well-structured scripts. As a result, progress in writing is slower overall. Much effort is made to develop pupils' communication skills at all levels including through partnerships with outside agencies.

Teachers mark pupils' work diligently and use praise and the sticker reward system effectively to encourage reluctant learners. However, whilst marking is positive it sometimes lacks information for pupils on how to improve their work to reach the next level. As a result, whilst pupils are very clear about how to improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning, they are less clear about their academic targets and this slows their progress overall.

The curriculum has a positive effect on teaching because it is imaginatively planned and links closely to the needs of pupils. Close links with mainstream schools mean that teachers build well on prior learning. Despite the lack of facilities, physical education is taught regularly, for example through trips to the local swimming baths. Through assemblies and visits from a range of different organisations and groups pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is enhanced. Parents and carers reflect the inspection findings and in their view teaching is good as expressed by the comment: 'Teachers here are just brilliant. My son can't wait to come to school each morning.'

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour both in and outside lessons is outstanding. Despite their high level of social, emotional and behavioural needs, pupils work hard together showing respect and very caring attitudes towards each other and staff. Their achievements are celebrated on every occasion. A relentless and successful focus on supporting pupils' personal and social development increases pupils' self-esteem and belief in their own abilities. As a result of this and the strength of the relationships with mainstream schools, the vast majority of pupils improve their behaviour dramatically and make a successful transfer back to school after a short period of time.

Parents, carers and pupils agree that the unit keeps pupils safe and makes an excellent contribution to developing their understanding of what constitutes safe behaviour. Overall attendance is high and for many pupils is 100%. Parents and carers report a marked change in their children's attitudes to attending school, commenting that they are now upset if they have to miss time for any reason. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to the unit and appreciate how much staff have helped them make progress in improving their behaviour. A comment made by one expressed their views well: 'Coming to the unit has really helped me to understand what makes me angry and how I can avoid getting cross and getting into trouble.' Pupils recognise that bullying sometimes takes place particularly in the larger environment of mainstream schools. They are clear about the different forms that bullying can take and feel that the work they undertake in both ICT and through the personal, social and health curriculum prepares them well for their return to school.

## Leadership and management

The teacher in charge has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and has a clear view of the considerable strengths and areas for development within the unit. She has, with the support of staff, been skilful in moving the unit on since the last inspection, as evidenced by the significant improvement in pupils' attendance. The systems used to track pupils' progress and set targets for learning have been improved and pupils' overall achievement has been raised. The strong culture of self-evaluation and the clear strategies used in future planning ensure that staff are clear about what is needed to raise attainment further. Effective monitoring of teaching leads to a continuous and carefully planned programme of professional development for all staff which has improved outcomes for all pupils. The successful focus on reading has accelerated progress, and raised pupils' levels of confidence and enjoyment of reading. Staff and individual pupils feel valued in this highly inclusive community and systems which promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination are securely in place. As a result, all groups of pupils make equally good progress. There is a clear picture of sustained improvement and the unit is highly respected by the local authority. The unit has good capacity to improve further.

Since the last inspection the management board has increased its capacity to challenge the unit's leadership through its appointment of headteachers to the board, from a range of settings. Leaders and members of the board ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is at the heart of the school ethos. The management board in partnership with school leaders ensures that all requirements are met.

The curriculum is well matched to the needs of all and offers many opportunities for developing pupils' social skills. For example, the planned grouping of pupils is constantly changed in order to ensure that pupils learn to work with individuals other than their chosen friends. Staff strive to provide a good balance of activities that sustain pupils' interests. They are well prepared for their return to mainstream school. Visits from members of different faith groups and assemblies based on moral issues have contributed successfully to the school's good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The continued successful engagement of parents and carers is evident in the unanimously positive responses on the unit's performance received during the inspection. Parents and carers are very clear that staff communicate well and always go the extra mile in supporting the needs of pupils.



## 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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



29 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of The Oaktree Centre, Middlesbrough, TS1 3LQ**

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting you all and talking to you about school. I was very pleased to hear how different you feel about yourselves and about school while attending The Oaktree Centre. You clearly appreciate how much progress you have made in improving your behaviour and your attendance is good.

I agree with those of you who told me you felt the centre was good. I particularly liked the polite way you greeted visitors and how hard you all worked at improving your behaviour. I enjoyed joining you in lessons and was impressed with the way you all tried so hard and the good progress you are all now making.

There are just two things I have asked your teachers to do to make things even better:

- give you more opportunities in lessons to write longer pieces of work, for example write a longer story
- ensure when teachers mark your books that they tell you exactly what you need to do to make your work even better.

I want to wish you all good luck in the future particularly those of you who are going back to school soon.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas  
Lead inspector

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