

Oaks Park High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133405
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	381505
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Clare Gillies

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,541
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	322
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Lupton
Headteacher	Stephen Wilks
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2008
School address	45–65 Oaks Lane Newbury Park Ilford IG2 7PQ
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. Inspectors observed over 50 lessons and part lessons and saw, along with assemblies, tutor time and extra-curricular activities, approximately 60 teachers. Meetings were held with several groups of students including members of the school council, members of the governing body, senior leaders and members of staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at lesson observation records, the development plan, current monitoring data, and subject reviews. They analysed questionnaires completed by 566 parents and carers, over 100 staff and 222 students chosen at random from all years.

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

- The progress of all groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs.
- The actions being taken to raise standards in subjects at GCSE and A level where the school has identified potential underperformance.
- The quality of students' independent learning and how well teachers match work to students' individual needs, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How effectively subject leaders contribute to improvements in the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average school retains a focus on its music specialism. The school has more boys than girls, particularly in Years 7 and 11. Students come from many minority ethnic groups, predominantly from Asian backgrounds; about one third of students are from White British and other backgrounds. Just over half the students speak English as an additional language but few are at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than average. A slightly lower than average proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has International status and has received a Mayor of London award for its contribution to community cohesion and a Transport for London gold award for sustainable travel.

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

The school’s effectiveness is outstanding. The headteacher, governors and all staff are rightly proud of what has been achieved in the school’s first decade. Reflecting its growing popularity, it is oversubscribed, including a growing sixth form from where many transfer to university. A parent wrote that, ‘The school has brought out the best in our children.’ This reflected the comments of others.

The curriculum, students’ personal development and the quality of care, guidance and support they receive have securely maintained and built on previous levels of excellence and remain outstanding. Other elements of the school’s work have been significantly strengthened and are also now outstanding. These are key aspects of leadership and management; its contribution to community cohesion; and students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

A-level results have improved in the last three years and most are close to national averages. The percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, has increased every year and is above average. In a few subjects, too few students reach the highest grades. Teaching is good, although occasionally teachers are not precise enough when planning to meet fully the specific individual needs of the most-able students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Nevertheless, overall, they make progress at a similar rate to their peers.

Students enjoy school life and most study enthusiastically and behave well. They make good progress because teaching and learning are predominantly good. Teachers encourage students to think for themselves and they, and students, use technology well to make learning interesting and efficient. The school is at the forefront of website developments to support learning. With numerous international and local links, recognised in its awards, the school’s contribution to community cohesion is outstanding.

The outcomes of departmental reviews and observations on the quality of teaching and learning are accurate. The school’s very clear and well-focused plans for improvement reflect its sophisticated and accurate analysis of the steps needed to raise standards. The significant rise in examination results, improvements in rates of progress and attendance since the previous inspection, senior leaders’ perceptive self-evaluation, and a rigorous and challenging governing body have ensured the school’s overall effectiveness has improved from good to outstanding and generate

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an outstanding capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching to outstanding in order to improve GCSE and A-level results in 2012, especially the percentage of higher grades, by:
 - preparing work which consistently challenges students of all abilities, especially the most able
 - ensuring teachers incorporate the specific learning targets of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities more precisely into their planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment gaps between girls and boys, and those known to be eligible for free school meals and the rest, have narrowed significantly in recent years. Analysis of other sizeable groups' progress and attendance confirms they achieve equally well. The recently strengthened inclusion team is acting to reduce rapidly the very small minority of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities who, for a variety of reasons, do not achieve as well as expected.

Students work enthusiastically, particularly when asked to study in pairs or groups. They always try to answer questions when asked. In lessons observed, students sensibly evaluated their own and others' work, and contributed thoughtful and constructive comments. Students have very good relationships with teachers which help their confidence and willingness to learn. Their concentration lapses only occasionally when they find work too easy or too difficult.

Students are very aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are very keen to take action to improve their health. Road safety lessons are linked to successful encouragement to walk or cycle to school, reflected in the Transport for London award. Discussions on the health and social impact of knife crime or drugs give students a great deal of knowledge and understanding. A large majority of students participate in sports and the school's fitness centre is very popular.

External speakers contribute much to the excellent personal, social and health education lessons. Students' very thoughtful contributions to discussions about behaviour, human rights, and moral and ethical issues show their ability to reflect deeply about others. They have very good insight and respect and celebrate religious and cultural diversity in a mature fashion; these are strongly promoted through the curriculum, assemblies and international links.

Bullying is rare because students, and parents and carers, can easily report any concerns and know that senior leaders respond quickly and effectively. Students feel very safe and enjoy school, confirmed by their high levels of attendance and the very positive responses in all the inspection questionnaires. Students appreciate that the

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school respects their views on rewards and sanctions. Students behave well and respond quickly to any additional guidance from staff about their conduct where occasionally necessary.

Many students act as sports leaders in local primary schools and take on other positions of responsibility. They are keen fundraisers for international and local charities, the latter including organisations that have helped staff and students, for example The Meningitis Trust. Students are extremely well prepared for their futures, having above average literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills, and excellent personal skills and qualities. They have realistic yet high aspirations. Year 11 triple science students, for example, visited Cambridge to learn about physics courses.

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	2
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	2
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Around the school, displays, including students' work, are bright, up-to-date and inspiring. Teachers set clear objectives for lessons that help students' concentration. A few teachers talk for too long, but most vary the style of learning well and prepare stimulating resources, such as artwork inspiring composition in music and excellent presentations and film clips in the humanities. Teachers know the importance of giving students time to answer questions and many are skilful at responding to answers with further questions that extend their thinking.

In particularly successful lessons, teachers prepare resources at different levels so

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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that all students make at least good progress. However, teachers do not always make full use of their assessments of students’ abilities to ensure tasks are finely tuned to the full range of needs. For example, higher-attaining students are not always given scope to extend their understanding and, occasionally, lower-attaining students struggle to keep up. Teachers assess work accurately and give helpful feedback. Marking is effective and contributes well to students’ good understanding of what they need to do to improve, although it sometimes lacks clear diagnosis of the most important weaknesses.

The excellent curriculum is customised each year to offer a wide range of courses that match students’ strengths and interests. In Year 7, learning skills lessons complement the focus on reading and writing, and students who need extra help work together in a small group. By the end of Year 9, students have been guided to the best combination of academic and vocational subjects or apprenticeships for them. Memorable experiences contribute significantly to students’ excellent personal development. The wealth of extra-curricular options, ‘super learning’ days and local, national and international trips is outstanding. Students choose from a large number of extra-curricular sports and clubs, from trampolining to tennis or rugby to rowing. Reflecting the school’s specialism, they may have instrumental lessons and/or join in music groups. At lunchtime, they might opt for chess or philosophy club.

The inclusion team provides very effective, targeted support for any students who need it. Excellent partnerships with external agencies and professionals enhance this when necessary. Students who speak English as an additional language receive expert help and rapidly acquire fluency and confidence.

Students settle quickly in Year 7 because transition arrangements are extremely thoughtful and exceptionally well planned. Staff identify gaps in learning quickly, for example weak reading skills, and swiftly address them. Senior leaders come up with imaginative ways to help individual students who might underachieve, such as a Year 11 ‘Lazy Boys Academic Success Club’ to help their preparation for GCSEs.

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 headteacher’s determined leadership has secured the growth and extremely successful development of the school and has established a strong senior team. The headteacher shares his perceptive analysis of the next stages for development with

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all staff. His expectations for the future are clear and understood. Staff feel, rightly, that the school is well led, as do the students. They know what they are expected to achieve and share the determination to do so.

Staff morale is very high and enthusiasm is evident at all levels of leadership and management. The school welcomes newly qualified teachers, valuing that their skills complement the expertise of more experienced ones. Professional development of staff has a high profile. Subject leaders analyse data about standards carefully and evaluate where improvements are needed. The school is currently working to enhance subject leaders' already accurate monitoring of teaching by ensuring all are equally adept at determining and giving effective feedback to teachers.

The governing body keenly supports the school's focus on health and personal development because it values how sports and music contribute to students' physical and emotional well-being. It has a wealth of relevant expertise, for example in care, finance or anti-social behaviour, which enhances its work and enables it to bring a good level of challenge to school leaders. Members of the governing body keep a careful eye on the school's finances and ensure it gives good value for money. All safeguarding procedures are securely in place and child protection has a high profile. Thorough and effective policies to safeguard students are known well by staff and reviewed in full consultation with staff and students.

The school's numerous partnerships, including those with the police, external agencies and schools, contribute significantly to students' well-being. They also complement its outstanding contribution to community cohesion, which is continuously evaluated and extended, and recognised by its award from the Mayor of London. It encompasses teachers and students working in local primary and special schools, musical and sporting links, and preparation for involvement in the Olympics. The school stays open late as a centre for the local community which strengthens its excellent partnership with parents and carers. Over four out of five of them who responded to the questionnaire feel that the school listens to their suggestions and concerns.

The school has many global links with schools in New York, Beijing, Tanzania, Sierra Leone and Bangladesh, for example, as well as European countries. Using video conferencing, online platforms and exchange visits, students are fully involved in valuable activities that extend their understanding of cultures and economic diversity. Students understand the importance of tolerance because they value their own religious and cultural differences, knowing that discrimination is unacceptable. The care that goes into the curriculum pathways of each individual student reflects the school's determination that all students have equal opportunities to succeed and be prepared for worthwhile futures. Sophisticated monitoring and evaluation of the performance of different groups means that any remaining unevenness, such as that between the attainment of boys and girls, or those known to be eligible for free school meals, is reducing rapidly.

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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	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	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Although AS-level results fluctuate, those for A levels have improved steadily and rates of progress show a continuous upward trend. Students make at least good progress in the majority of subjects and leave as mature adults with excellent interpersonal skills, well prepared for future study and work. Retention rates and success rates are just above average, partly explained by the school's wide curriculum choices and good careers guidance.

Teachers encourage independent learning and research by providing materials for study or guiding students to internet sites. Students work hard, are attentive and enjoy sharing their findings, though at times students' presentations lack imagination and flair. Students rightly value the rigorous monitoring of their academic progress and the feedback they receive.

Attendance is above average and sixth formers contribute much to the whole school. In addition to leading houses and taking on other responsibilities, they willingly help younger students, for example befriending Year 7 students or helping Year 11 students with revision.

Leaders are effective, blending support for students' overall welfare and their academic development. Currently, they are rightly developing a sharper focus on improving performance by reviewing the GCSE grades required to join courses.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Over one third of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire, a higher than average percentage return. About 60 of them wrote comments, two thirds of which were positive, predominantly referring to the good teaching, the 'exceptional' and supportive staff, and the high quality of care. Minor concerns were raised about behaviour, a lack of challenge and either too much or too little homework. During the inspection, inspectors found that behaviour is good and that students are challenged sufficiently to achieve well, though they have recommended that the school improve this aspect of its work further. The school is currently reviewing its homework policy.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oaks Park High 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 566 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1541 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	264	47	292	52	7	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	253	45	298	53	8	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	201	36	320	57	28	5	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	163	29	354	63	25	4	6	1
The teaching is good at this school	196	35	334	59	23	4	2	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	163	29	325	57	57	10	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	140	25	366	65	44	8	3	1
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)	181	32	321	57	25	4	2	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	161	28	345	61	34	6	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	206	36	294	52	36	6	7	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	128	23	351	62	40	7	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	214	38	308	54	17	3	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	259	46	278	49	16	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



12 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Oaks Park High School, Ilford, IG2 7PQ

We very much enjoyed the two days we spent with you and appreciated your welcome. I am sorry that we could not meet more of you, but those we did speak to, and your questionnaire responses, confirmed that you enjoy school and rate it highly. You are right to, as it is an outstanding school.

You make good progress because you are taught well and encouraged to learn independently and think for yourselves. You enjoy working in pairs or groups and teachers give you some excellent materials to use or steer you to useful websites. You use information and communication technology confidently and learn the basic skills that you will need in the future. GCSE results are above average.

We noted many exciting things so it is hard to list them all in this letter. Highlights include the wonderful activities, trips and visits you have, the excellent care you receive, your understanding of how to lead healthy and safe lives, and how well you get on with each other and celebrate cultural differences. Many of you contribute much to the school by helping each other or supporting pupils in other schools.

Even outstanding schools have aspects of their work that could be better. So, to improve GCSE and A-level results, especially the percentage of higher grades, we have asked teachers to always plan work that matches your different standards and abilities more precisely. You can all help your school by continuing to work hard so that you achieve the best you can.

Whatever your plans for the future, we hope you all achieve them and have happy and successful lives.

Yours sincerely

Clare Gillies
Lead inspector

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