

The Oswaldtwistle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134127
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	381613
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2012
Lead inspector	Eric Craven

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

Type of school	Pupil Referral Unit
School category	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Mike Carroll
Headteacher	Mark Bocker
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Eric Craven
Terence McKenzie
Jean Alexander

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. As well as observing nine lessons taught by eight staff, visits were made to some of the provisions the school commissions to provide alternative education and vocational studies for students. Around five hours were spent observing teaching and learning. Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, two members of the management committee and a representative of the local authority. A tour of the school was made accompanied by two students and a meeting was held with a small group of other students. Inspectors held telephone conversations with senior staff from secondary schools and a local college of further education. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, assessment data and school improvement plan. One questionnaire was returned by parents and carers and was analysed along with those from staff and students.

Information about the school

The Oswaldtwistle School is a larger than average-sized pupil referral unit providing for students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools and increasingly those who are at risk of exclusion. It also provides for students arriving from out of the area and those the local authority finds difficult to place. It is known in the local authority as a short stay school. Since the last inspection it has developed its outreach work and has a team of staff supporting mainstream schools. Recently, the local authority's pregnancy and parenting service has been incorporated into the school. It has two sites about 10 miles apart and uses a variety of alternative educational and vocational placements for students, including four colleges of further education. Students come from the Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley districts of Lancashire and many are transported to and from the school. Around a third are girls. A small number of students are in the care of the local authority. The vast majority are of White British heritage. At 42%, the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection. It has Healthy 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good pupil referral unit that has made substantial improvements since its last inspection. It is not yet outstanding because more of the teaching needs to be good or better for the students’ rates of progress to improve further.
- Teaching is good overall and has improved because of the training staff have received on assessment. This means teachers are clear about students’ abilities and needs. However, assessment information is not used consistently to specify individual learning objectives for students in lesson planning. There is insufficient attention given to literacy and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Even though their attainment is low, students achieve well in their academic studies and in the development of personal and social skills. They learn to get on with one another well and to deal more effectively with the difficulties they face.
- Students’ behaviour improves when they are at the school or supported elsewhere by staff and it is generally good. Most students value their learning and appreciate the achievements they make. Any minor difficulties tend to be dealt with effectively and students say they feel safe. Safeguarding arrangements are very robust. Most of the students improve their rates of attendance while at the school.
- The school has taken great strides forward in helping mainstream secondary schools reduce the need for exclusions. Its work is greatly valued by these schools and other alternative education providers with whom it is in partnership.
- Improvements at the school demonstrate it is well led and managed. Staff are encouraged to play a full part and training records show they have benefited from professional development they have received. However, monitoring of teaching is not routine and sufficiently robust and the views of parents and carers are not sought systematically enough.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further by:
 - using the data now available to regularly include learning targets for individual students in lesson plans to help them understand what they are expected to achieve and to match work more closely to their needs
 - ensuring literacy and numeracy are embedded in planning and the delivery of subjects across the curriculum.

- Make more use of management information to inform improvement planning by:
 - observing lessons more routinely and with rigour
 - formalising and making systematic the way the school seeks the views of parents and carers.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In comparison to learners nationally students' attainment is low. This is most often because of previous poor attendance and disruptions to their learning caused by their behaviour difficulties. Once they settle at the school the progress they make improves as incidents of challenging behaviour become less prominent and learning comes to the fore. They learn to appreciate others' needs and differences and their attitudes to others and their own learning improves. Their confidence and self-esteem increase as they begin to realise they can achieve and in lots of cases return to mainstream school or move on successfully to further education and training. The school's data show large proportions of students making good progress in English, mathematics and science and that they are achieving their targets. Observations of lessons showed that because students are known very well by staff and treated very much as individuals there are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups of students, including those with statements of special educational needs. There are examples of students producing very good literacy work, such as in a lesson where a student produced a lengthy and very amusing poem of which he was rightfully very proud. However, their skills in literacy and numeracy are in most cases less strong than other aspects of their learning. Those students who met with the inspectors were able to talk confidently about what they had learned and how much they had improved during their time at the school.

Staff from secondary schools report that the work of the school's intervention and reintegration team is successful in helping students get back on track and not be excluded. They also note how those students who had reintegrated into mainstream schools from the short stay school had been well supported and were in most cases realigned with their education. The work of the staff supporting pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mums was also praised and showed how the girls had been able to continue with their studies and gain the qualifications they were seeking. Students in vocational placements are also achieving well.

Quality of teaching

In the lessons observed, teaching was most often good, endorsing the school's own judgement on the quality of teaching. However, there are still a few lessons that are not of this quality. In almost all lessons the relationships between staff and students are good and these are used well to implement the school's agreed nurturing approaches such as tolerance, learning from mistakes, flexibility and responsiveness. Students value these approaches and are able to talk about how fresh starts and second chances have been significant in changing their attitudes for the better. In lessons where the teaching is good there are often enjoyable starter activities that capture students' interest and practical activities that help sustain it. In some of these lessons staff are skilled at asking probing questions that get students to think carefully and to stretch their imaginations. In others, the pace of the lesson does not give sufficient vibrancy to learning and changes of activity are not well judged to ensure students retain their enthusiasm and focus. In a cookery lesson where the teaching was good, students made real progress because they were clear what was required of them through the skills list they were given. Also, they were presented with good opportunities to reflect on their efforts and achievements so they knew how well they were doing. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is hampered because it is not routinely included in the teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics.

Given that most students stay on the roll of the school for relatively short periods of time teachers are sensibly assessing students very frequently so they have a good understanding of their needs. Using these assessments teachers respond well to underachievement by adjusting the support needed, particularly for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, learning targets for individual students are not consistently used in lesson plans and therefore students do not always know precisely what they are expected to achieve in the lesson. This also means that in some lessons work is not matched as well as it could be to their individual needs.

The students seen at their alternative placements said they were getting on well. Their learning was good because they were encouraged to make choices and manage it themselves. They were receiving good support. The teaching at these placements very much mirrored the approaches taken by staff at the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The students who met with inspectors report that behaviour is typically good, a view endorsed by the inspection team and the one parent and carer questionnaire returned. The school's records show, and students say, that incidents of any kind of bullying are rare. There is a reducing trend in the need to use fixed-term exclusions. There have been no permanent exclusions in the past few years and only one incident requiring physical restraint this academic year. Students have confidence that staff deal with unacceptable behaviour effectively. The few pockets of difficult behaviour seen during the inspection were managed well and tended not to disrupt the learning of others. However, a couple of instances where students used foul language were not challenged robustly enough.

Students know their behaviour targets which are frequently discussed with their tutors. Staff show respect and consideration for students who say these are some of the tangible things that help them improve their behaviour. The behaviour of students observed in alternative placements was splendid.

Students often have poor records of attendance when they start at the school. It is testimony to them enjoying being there that in most cases they improve their attendance. The number of certificates being issued for weekly attendance of 100% is increasing. There are still a few students with very low attendance despite the tenacious work of the school, led in this respect by the student support officer. There are a series of examples of students increasing their attendance very markedly, most often because the curriculum is mapped out well to meet their needs and interests.

Safeguarding arrangements are managed extremely well by the deputy headteacher. Staff training is up to date and the safeguarding records are monitored well. The vetting of staff appointments meets statutory requirements. Students say they feel safe and are confident they can turn to staff for any support they might require.

Leadership and management

There have been a number of significant improvements since the last inspection when the school was judged to be satisfactory. Not least the partnerships developed with secondary schools. These achievements and the drive of the headteacher and other senior leaders demonstrate the capacity for further improvement. A number of staff in their questionnaire returns did not feel that their professional development was given sufficient attention. However, the school's records show that there has been a suitable range of in-house and external training that has helped improve the quality of teaching, extend students' achievements and ensure their safety.

Senior leaders have a broadly accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning that is gleaned through scrutinies of planning and informal observations of teaching. The lack of routinely rigorous monitoring of teaching does not give individual staff enough detailed feedback or help leaders analyse how the quality of teaching might be changing over time. Leaders consult well on plans for further development once they have been drafted. The views of parents and carers are gathered but in ad hoc ways that do not systematically inform the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Senior staff have good arrangements to check on the provision and outcomes of students educated away from the school's two sites. The management committee makes a good contribution to the leadership of the school. Committee members bring a range of suitable experiences and expertise that put them in a good position to probe the information they receive with some authority. They have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are of good quality. The committee's liaison with the local authority is very effective.

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced at Key Stage 3 and personalised well at Key Stage 4, taking good advantage of the array of opportunities for learning experiences it has developed with its partners. As a result, students' needs are provided for well in the school, in alternative education and vocational providers, at colleges, and in mainstream schools. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall because of the strong emphasis staff place on helping students get back in control of their own behaviour and improve their attitudes to others. Their interest in learning is in most cases re-ignited. Staff are watchful to ensure students are treated fairly and they are equally vigilant and forthright in tackling any forms of discrimination they encounter.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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).

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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



11 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Oswaldtwistle School, Accrington, BB5 3DA

I am grateful to those of you who spoke with me and the other inspectors during the recent inspection of your short stay school. Your views are valued and I am pleased to say that the inspection team agrees with you that the school provides you with a good education.

There have been changes since the last inspection that have helped improve the quality of teaching and in turn your achievements. In the short periods of time some of you are at the school, you get back on track so you can move back into school or to other places of learning. Your behaviour is, in most cases, good and where it is occasionally a problem, staff deal with this effectively. It was pleasing that you told us you feel safe and that bullying is rare. The school's records show this is the case as well. It is also pleasing that so many of you improve your attendance – do keep up the good work so you can continue to achieve well.

The school is led well by senior staff and the management committee. The development over time of the staff's work with mainstream schools to prevent students being excluded is good and the opportunities many of you have to learn in other places that match your needs and interests are also good.

We have asked senior staff to make some changes to improve the school further. These include making work more specific to your individual needs in lessons, getting all subjects not only English and mathematics to contribute to your learning in literacy and numeracy, and making better use of information that shows how well the school is doing.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Lead inspector

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