

Oakwood School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Oakwood School is an independent special school owned by the Barford Care Group. It exists to provide education for boys and girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who have been unable to fulfil their potential in mainstream schools. Its mission statement is 'to provide a high quality education to each child according to individual need within a caring and nurturing environment'. The main school building is situated in a village to the north of Leicester and there are further classrooms approximately a mile and a half away. The school opened in August 2005 and is registered for up to 20 young people between the ages of eight and 18. There are currently six young people on roll between the ages of 11 and 16. All of the young people live in residential care and most have a statement of special educational needs. The school works with local providers to provide vocational courses for its young people. The headteacher has been at the school for three years. The last school inspection by Ofsted was in June 2009.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Young people are provided with a good quality curriculum and are consistently well taught; consequently, they make good progress in their learning and in their personal development. Staff make an outstanding contribution to the young people's welfare, health and safety. The school's safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and meet current guidelines, and the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school successfully meets its aims in helping young people to succeed and in improving their behaviour. The school meets all but one of the independent school regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It is well matched to young people's interests and made relevant to them. As a result, young people enjoy learning and are motivated by the topics and subjects they cover. Sufficient emphasis is placed on the development of young people's skills in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of how much reading should be completed for homework, and of how reading should be best supported by carers. As a result, some young people receive more support from carers than others in developing and

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

consolidating their reading skills. Effective use is made of computers and technology to support learning across all subjects, and this has improved since the last inspection. Young people use a range of appropriate software on laptop computers in classrooms and display confidence in using desk top computers in the information technology suite. In a photography lesson observed during the inspection, there was much enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning as young people applied layering techniques to photographs they had taken of themselves playing the guitar.

Learning activities are carefully planned to ensure complete coverage of all the required areas of learning and also to allow teachers to apply flexibility to ensure that young people's individual needs are met. For example, the study of modern foreign languages is successfully combined with food technology to support a young person's improved engagement and interest in learning. The curriculum has expanded since the last inspection. A range of broader learning opportunities is offered to young people in conjunction with other local providers, including vocational courses in catering, hair and beauty and motor mechanics. A work experience programme successfully enables young people to develop confidence for the next stage of their lives. A good selection of extra-curricular activities further broadens the range of learning opportunities open to young people, their life skills and their independence. Young people's needs are also well met through additional provision, such as therapy sessions.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers are unfailingly positive, calm and patient in their dealings with young people. This nurturing approach encourages them to engage in learning well and build trusting relationships with staff. Teachers successfully ensure that the pace of learning is carefully matched to each young person's ability and readiness to learn. Should they find it difficult to focus on learning, teachers skilfully capture their attention and swiftly engage them in conversation to re-integrate them into learning. Young people do not always present their work well in their books and each member of staff has different expectations for presentation. This is mainly because there is no clear school presentation policy for staff and young people to follow.

Teachers use on-going assessment in lessons very well to gauge when additional support or further challenge is required to help young people make good progress. They provide frequent verbal feedback to young people in lessons about their work and this helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. The quality of teachers' marking is less strong and does not make enough impact on improving learning. This is because teachers do not always identify young people's next steps clearly enough. Young people are regularly assessed in key areas of learning and the school keeps records of the results. However, staff do not always meet the school's target of termly assessments for each young person. As a result, it is difficult for leaders to precisely track the progress that each young person is making each term in developing reading, writing and mathematics skills. However, over time, records reflect that progress in all areas is good. For example, over a year one young person increased their reading age by one year and eight months. Staff recognise that as most of the young people have so much ground to make up, progress as well as

achievement must be tracked rigorously and young people's targets should also reflect this.

All young people make good progress from their starting points in developing key skills and in improving their behaviour. Most young people in Year 11 secure pass grades at GCSE in English and mathematics and make good progress towards securing the entry level certificates in adult literacy and numeracy. They also make good progress in meeting the targets set within their individual education plans and in other subjects, including art, history and geography.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Young people's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is promoted through a wide enrichment programme, which includes friendship groups and mixing with other young people and adults in various community based projects. A strength of the school is in the strong professional relationships formed between staff and young people and the opportunities provided for them to develop their social and emotional skills throughout the school day, including at break times. Progress in this respect is good, as was acknowledged by the young people themselves. School staff work closely with care staff to ensure that young people attend school regularly and are punctual. Behaviour is good; young people's behaviour is improving because it is managed very well and they respond well to the school's clear expectations. They learn to manage their own behaviour and understand the consequences of it. Daily discussions and an end-of-day summary of behaviour, attendance and effort ensure each young person's contribution to the day is acknowledged positively. Staff are exemplary role models and help young people to develop a sense of right from wrong. They also effectively promote the development of young people's tolerance and harmony within the school community and more widely throughout society. This is enhanced by visiting areas of the nearby city and different places of worship. Through voluntary roles and work experience, young people are developing the personal qualities that will help them to take on the responsibilities of working and adult life. They acknowledge that staff care about them as individuals and that they feel safe. Successes are celebrated by regular feedback to their carers. Staff also organise open days and celebration events in recognition of young people's academic and sporting achievements.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for young people's welfare, health and safety is outstanding because they are exceptionally well cared for. All the required policies and procedures are in place and these are rigorously implemented. Staff give the highest priority to safeguarding young people. They are supervised well at all times, including on any outings, where risk is rigorously considered beforehand. There are very strong communication links between education and care staff to promote young people's welfare. Young people are encouraged to be open and honest; their views are valued and are taken seriously. Incidents of bullying are rare, but effectively dealt with. Staff are well trained in managing young people's behaviour, applying sanctions and rewards fairly and consistently. Staff are trained at the appropriate levels in child

protection and there is a designated person responsible for this. Safeguarding procedures rigorously follow current requirements; the school has appropriate procedures in place for the recruitment and vetting of staff and others, and guidance is followed systematically. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and to maintain healthy lifestyles. They receive information about relationships, sexual health and internet safety. Young people undertake a full programme of physical activity, and their enjoyment and participation are high. The school routinely checks fire systems and portable appliances. Staff are appropriately trained in first aid and accidents are few. Risk assessments on the premises are rigorous and the accommodation is well kept and maintained. The school has exceptionally close links with a range of professionals who provide different levels of support for each young person according to their needs. The school shows a very strong commitment to inclusivity and to making sure there are no barriers to learning for any young person and that no one is disadvantaged by the difficulties they face.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required checks have been made on the proprietors and staff to confirm their suitability to work with young people. These are accurately recorded on a single central record, as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school building is located on the main street of a village on the outskirts of Leicester. There is space for car parking to the rear, but no outside recreational space at the main school building. The school makes good use of the nearby park and local leisure facilities to compensate for limitations in the outdoor space. There are six classrooms which are used flexibly, but include separate rooms for the teaching of art and information and communication technology or music. The school makes appropriate provision for young people who are unwell while at school. All parts of the building are suitable for purpose and enable effective learning to take place. They are kept in good order. The Woodlands site provides two small classrooms and other facilities, and young people have access there to information and communication technology resources and a large outside play space. They are also able to use a large kitchen on this site for lessons in food technology.

Provision of information

The school continues to provide strong links with carers and outside agencies, including young people in other schools and the referring bodies. Carers welcome the regular progress updates through regular telephone calls or personally at handover times. Written reports for twice yearly reviews are comprehensive and fulfil the terms of each young person's statement. These focus more on their achievement than on their academic progress, but do reflect the young person's progress in their personal development, including their attendance and improved attitude to learning. The prospectus contains all of the required information, including the particulars of academic performance in the preceding school year and of the number of complaints

received. The school is not currently providing local authorities with a statement of income and expenditure for each young person, as required by the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedure is clearly written and meets requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- provide the local authority with an accurate annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of each young person (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Identify progress targets for each young person clearly and ensure that assessment procedures enable the school to accurately identify if sufficient progress has been made.
- Improve the consistency of presentation of work and of marking across the school, so that young people understand precisely what they must do to improve and what their next steps are.
- Promote very regular reading and opportunities to work at home which closely follow what the young people are learning in school.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with behavioural emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	2 August 2005		
Age range of pupils	8–18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 5	Girls: 1	Total: 6
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 1	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,167		
Address of school	20 Main Street, Glenfield, Leicester, LE3 8DG		
Telephone number	0116 287 6218		
Email address	JCollighan@barfordcare.com		
Headteacher	Jennifer Collighan		
Proprietor	Tony Puliafito		

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.

13 December 2012

Dear young people



Inspection of Oakwood School, Leicester, LE3 8DG

Firstly, thank you for being so helpful during our visit. We really enjoyed our time with you. I particularly enjoyed learning more about the solar system in a science lesson and my time at the City Farm. I notice that some of you are not so keen on writing, but this is really important and you must still work hard at this. I am pleased that you understand that reading every day will really help you in all of your other subjects. You told us that you think that your behaviour is improving and that staff manage it well. It is good that you all come to school every day and want to be there. You love working on the allotment and at the farm, and learn much when you are there. You are making good progress and are developing work skills through your college courses and work placements. Most of you are getting ideas for what you want to do when you finish school. Well done.

Oakwood is a good school and the range of activities you do is also good. The adults all really care about every one of you and make sure you are kept very safe. The school meets all of the regulations that we had to check, except one. It must supply some additional documentation to the local authorities that fund your places at the school. It is keen to keep getting better and so we have suggested the following improvements.

- Give you targets for the progress your teachers expect you to make in every subject each term and to keep checking you are making enough progress.
- Improve the presentation of your work in books and make sure that teachers' marking helps you to understand exactly what you must do to get better.
- Make sure you read regularly and plan some activities to do at home which will help you with what you are learning in school.

We hope you continue to attend well, make the right choices about your behaviour, and make lots of progress in all your subjects.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector