

# Oakdale School and Acorn Nursery

Cheetham Hill Road, Dukinfield , Cheshire, SK16 5LD

## Inspection dates

5–6 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- From mostly very low starting points, the great majority of pupils make progress that is at least good and achieve well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are particularly skilled at helping pupils learn to communicate.
- Once children can begin to express their needs and wishes they make good progress in their personal and social development as well as in their reading and number skills.
- The school is very good at finding out why a few pupils do not do as well as they should and make sure they get the extra help they need.
- The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. She knows what the school needs to do to improve and works very hard to give pupils the best opportunities to enjoy success.
- The staff works well in teams to manage behaviour so that it is outstanding and helps everyone to learn.
- Parents are very happy that their children are taught well and are looked after safely.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding and there is a little that requires improvement. This is because lesson targets from individual education plans are not always incorporated into the lesson plan.
- Sometimes pupils find it difficult to join in with group activities and on these occasions they are not always directed to other learning activities.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 12 teachers, a music therapist and teaching assistants. Two of these were shared observations with the headteacher and an assistant headteacher.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, with senior staff, a group of pupils, therapists and a representative of the local authority.
- The team took into account the views of parents expressed in the school's own questionnaire but there were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors also reviewed responses from the 52 returned staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including data about pupils' progress, records of behaviour, school self-evaluation and improvement planning; reports of inclusion, music therapy and partnership work.

## Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Oakdale School and Acorn Nursery is the local authority primary provision for pupils with severe, profound and complex needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils often attend for a period of assessment initially.
- Some pupils have multiple barriers to learning including medical, physical and sensory conditions. About half of pupils have autism spectrum conditions and the proportion of these pupils has increased since the last inspection. As typical in such schools, two thirds of pupils are boys.
- Over half of pupils are of White British heritage. There are growing numbers from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds who have English as a second language.
- The number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is high. Pupil premium is the government's additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and children of service families
- The headteacher is new in post since the previous inspection. Almost half of classes have teachers who are new to the school and new to working with pupils who have a range of complex needs. Many teaching assistants are also recent appointments.
- Most children begin school in Acorn Nursery which is a shared provision jointly managed with the co-located primary school. A few children join the school at later stages, sometimes after failed placements in other settings.
- The school is part of a group of teaching schools and supports the development of skills and training for teaching assistants working with pupils with special educational needs. It is also a part of an Early Years Best Practice Partnership. The school provides an early years' outreach service and has a team of staff to support inclusion.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding by:
  - more clearly identifying the intended learning for individual pupils in all lessons
  - linking pupils' individual targets into lesson plans so that small achievements can be measured in order to plan for their next steps
  - ensuring pupils are engaged in purposeful learning for as much time as possible, by more consistently offering alternative activities when they find it difficult to join the group.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start their education in Acorn Nursery with poor skills compared with other children in the shared setting. Where possible, the early years outreach team, which is based at the school, ensures a smooth transition into the nursery for these children so that they can get off to a flying start. Children quickly settle into the structured routines of the nursery which help them learn to listen, to wait for turns and to share.
- A few pupils start school at later times but make good progress because the staff is particularly skilled at helping them to express their needs and wishes through a range of different communication methods. This helps to reduce anxieties so they can begin to learn. Music is often used very effectively to help pupils to express their emotions and this was seen in a session with the music therapist when children joined in playing instruments and dancing in front of the class.
- Pupils have opportunities to work alongside those from the neighbouring school with support from the inclusion team and as a result they develop their social skills very well. They begin to make good progress in developing early reading and numeracy skills and many are especially skilled in the use of technology.
- The school assesses its pupils constantly and aims to integrate them into mainstream schools wherever possible and does this very successfully.
- Pupils develop their self-esteem, physical and social skills in activities such as physical education, rebound therapy, hydrotherapy and swimming sessions. They enjoy trips out into the community and activities which provide memorable experiences, such as a Jubilee street party.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium benefit from additional music therapy, access to after school clubs and to additional support. This helps them to make just as good progress as other groups of pupils.
- All groups of pupils make equally good progress because of the individual approach to meeting their different needs.
- However, achievement is not yet outstanding because not enough teaching is outstanding.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is not outstanding because many teachers and teaching assistants are new to the school.
- Nevertheless, teaching is mainly good and new teachers are developing the skills and knowledge they need to be as effective as they can be. Pupils are given work which is well matched to their needs and abilities. Occasionally, it is not clear enough what individual pupils are expected to learn in the lesson. Lesson planning does not always link pupils' individual targets to the activity in order to measure their small steps of progress and plan their next steps effectively.
- Teaching assistants are used very well. They provide very good support to pupils when it is needed but also help them to learn independently whenever possible. Some pupils with autism spectrum conditions sometimes find it difficult to work in a group and are not always consistently re-directed to other activities, which will help them to make progress in their learning.
- All staff are especially skilled in helping pupils to communicate, which is essential to be able to learn. Signs, symbols, pictures, real objects and switches are used very consistently at all times and are well-matched to the needs of each individual. Pupils are supported to develop their social skills such as making choices and learning good manners at snack times.
- Teachers often incorporate music into their lessons to help their pupils use communication. There is a real sense of fun and enjoyment in these sessions when pupils who find it difficult to participate, join in enthusiastically.

- Throughout the day, staff make sure that pupils' mobility and therapy needs are sensitively addressed, often during lessons so as not to disrupt their learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The school is outstandingly successful in helping pupils learn to manage their own behaviours extremely well.
- The highly structured routines, clear visual timetables and symbols give pupils confidence to know what is happening and reduces the anxieties, which can cause difficult behaviour.
- The school is a calm and orderly place and pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons contributes to this. Occasional outbursts are due to the extreme difficulties some pupils face and are always very well managed through consistent approaches.
- Parents are happy that their children are looked after well and that bullying is not a concern. Those who have high levels of health or medical needs are cared for by very well trained staff.
- The school has gone to extraordinary lengths to find ways to help pupils and their parents to understand how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using computers. Pamphlets and information leaflets have been produced to support parents' understanding.
- Attendance is high compared to similar schools and absences are almost always due to ill-health. The school has rigorous procedures to check on absence and ensure pupils are safe.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is totally committed to improving the quality of teaching following staff changes and a change in pupil needs over time. She provides highly effective leadership to the school.
- Other members of the senior leadership team, who are also quite new in place, are developing their roles and responsibilities rapidly. They share a clear view of what the school needs to do and collect and analyse data very well. Middle leaders are expected to take responsibility for their areas and have received training to support the development of their roles.
- Teaching and learning are monitored very well and staff are held to account through rigorous performance management arrangements. This is helping the quality of teaching to improve quickly.
- The school enjoys excellent partnerships with its neighbouring schools and with other agencies to enrich learning and to share best practice. In particular these partnerships provide plenty of opportunities for Oakdale pupils to learn alongside pupils from other schools.
- The very good curriculum has been recently reviewed to better meet the needs of a changing pupil population. Opportunities are provided, for example through residential experiences, to try things which they may not otherwise have a chance to enjoy. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported throughout the day and in theme days such as Chinese New Year which was being celebrated at the time of the inspection.
- Parents feel very well supported by the school, both on a personal level to manage specific problems which arise at home and through shared workshops on subjects such as toileting, feeding or behaviour. The school has recently identified a teaching assistant who speaks several languages, so that she can liaise with parents who find it difficult to come into school.
- The local authority has a good understanding of the school's position and offers light-touch support. They share, with the inspection team, a view that the headteacher, her staff and governors, have a very good capacity to improve the school further.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The work of the governing body has improved significantly since the last inspection. Governors are more involved and well-informed about the day to day issues which affect the school and are able to provide very good support and challenge to help the school to move forward. They ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory requirements by scrutinising and monitoring progress data and performance management information to match it to pay progression. Governors are involved in lesson observations in order to get a first hand view about the quality of teaching. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are securely in place. In response to parental concerns, the governing body have taken recent action to ensure that arrangements at the beginning and end of the school day ensure pupils' arrival and departure more safely.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106281
<b>Local authority</b>	Tameside
<b>Inspection number</b>	403008

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	107
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Palmer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Linda Lester
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 September 2007
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 367 9299
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