

# Oakgrove School

Venturer Gate, Milton Keynes, MK10 9JQ

**Inspection dates** 8–9 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b> <b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Students' achievement is outstanding, particularly in English and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 4 students have made more progress than many students nationally.
- Teaching is outstanding and enables students to make exceptional progress. Lessons are made fun through the range of interesting activities which students enjoy and ensure they learn quickly. Just occasionally, some marking of students' work does not live up to the high standards of the best.
- Regular reviews of learning through questioning ensure no student is left behind. Teachers find various ways to make sure students make rapid progress, if at first they do not understand.
- Students are proud of their school and demonstrate outstandingly mature, polite behaviour both in lessons and around the school.
- The school is very well led. The headteacher and all staff share a commitment to outstanding outcomes for all students including those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.
- There is no sense of complacency. All staff have a clear understanding of how well students are progressing and apply high levels of energy to drive continuous improvement in teaching and students' achievement.
- Checks on teaching and learning by leaders and managers are robust and accurate and deal quickly with any issue that does not meet the high standards of the school.
- The sixth form is good and continues to improve rapidly. Students are well supported and make good progress and the school is working hard to ensure they do even better.
- Governors know the school exceptionally well and are proactive in providing effective challenge and support for the school. They are committed to its continued improvement.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 50 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with senior staff.
- In addition, inspectors visited other lessons for a shorter period of time to get a full view of the whole school.
- Inspectors also observed an assembly, visited tutor periods and listened to students read.
- Inspectors talked to many students about their learning and experiences at school both formally and informally throughout the inspection. Meetings were held with five groups of students across the age and ability range.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 90 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and they also considered the letters and emails parents and carers sent to the inspection team. A meeting was also held with a parent or carer.
- Inspectors took account of the 72 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documents, including the school's own self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, minutes from meetings, tracking data of students' progress, safeguarding documents, and records related to attendance and behaviour, were looked at during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Kevin Harrison, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector
Ann Short	Additional Inspector
Trevor Woods	Additional Inspector
Michael Lafford	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is a slightly larger than the average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school became an academy in 2011. When its predecessor school, Oakgrove School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is just below the national average.
- The percentage of students for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium is just below the national average. Pupil premium is the additional government funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils looked after by the local authority, or those with a parent or carers serving in the armed forces.
- The proportion of students supported by the school who are disabled or with special educational needs is just below average. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational need or supported at school action or school action plus is well below average.
- The school enters some students early for English language and mathematics examinations.
- The school has specialist status in humanities.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Some students attend specialist courses at Milton Keynes College.

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

- Ensure that all marking is in line with the best practice in the school by:
  - making sure all written comments always clearly explain how well students are doing and how to further improve their work
  - always making marking precise to the subject
  - making sure students respond and use the marking to improve their work, and that this is checked upon by the teacher.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students make outstanding progress from their starting points when they join the school to when they leave.
- The proportion of students who gained five or more higher grades, including English and mathematics, in 2012 was better than the national average. This was also the case in 2011 and 2010.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to provide strong support, including the accelerated reading programme, to those students who previously underachieved. This is helping them to make rapid progress.
- In 2012, students made more progress in English than in mathematics, though in both progress was well above national. The school has put in place effective actions which have already improved progress in mathematics. This is seen both in lessons and in the school's tracking of progress.
- Five students who were entered early for higher mathematics GCSE in Year 11 all achieved grade A\*. Other students who took the foundation paper in Year 11 and achieved a C grade are now studying the higher tier in order to improve their grade. Those students entered early for English and who achieved high grades are able to study additional subjects, for example English literature.
- Achievement in humanities, the school's specialism, is particularly strong, with almost three times as many students achieving an A\* or A grade at Oakgrove than found in other schools nationally.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is good, and is particularly strong in those subjects where the topics studied are taught in a real-life practical way, such as applied business.
- Progress for disabled students and those with special educational needs is in line with that of other students in the school and significantly better than nationally because they are provided with strong care and guidance by staff and appropriate additional support materials to help them learn. A parent or carer wrote to say, 'Learning doesn't come easy to him and staff regularly keep me informed of his progress and are committed to ensuring he reaches his personal best.'
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress because staff provide clear guidance, to ensure that these students fully understand exactly what needs to be done to make progress.
- The school makes effective use of the pupil premium funding to provide additional staff and support to help students to make progress. In 2012, Year 11 students who were in receipt of the pupil premium had attained the equivalent of two thirds of a grade less than other students in English and a whole grade lower in mathematics. However, the school's own records show that these gaps are narrowing rapidly and that the progress of these students from their starting points is as good as that of their peers in both subjects. Current tracking shows that the gap between pupil premium students and other students is narrowing even further.
- Those students who attend alternative provision make outstanding progress and benefit from the wider experiences they are given in a vocational context. In 2012, all students successfully completed and passed their courses. One student has progressed onto an apprenticeship, while the others have continued into the sixth form or now attend the local college.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The consistently good and better teaching leads to the outstanding progress students make throughout the school. Teaching is invariably good and mostly outstanding.
- Outstanding teaching was seen in all three key stages in a wide range of subjects including English, French, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and history.

- Teachers are highly skilled in gaining and maintaining students' attention throughout the entire lesson by having a wide variety of different activities which the students enjoy and stimulate their interest in learning. Teachers' innovative approaches to revision were particularly successful, for example in textiles, where the students related the work they had completed in their individual coursework projects to different examination topics and questions, then shared their knowledge with other students via notes, models and diagrams.
- Students are keen to learn and respond enthusiastically. For example, in a history lesson, students reviewed their progress against their assessment targets and identified what further they could do to meet and exceed their target.
- A parent or carer commented, 'He loves school and the learning opportunities and topics offered and he is making great progress.'
- Generally, teachers make effective use of information about students' earlier learning to plan lessons that accurately match their precise learning needs so ensuring they make outstanding progress.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and highly skilled in developing students' interest and understanding of the topic being studied. In one typical lesson in English, the teacher used different poems to stimulate discussion and challenging questions to check understanding, moving students on quickly to make outstanding progress.
- Teachers give regular clear feedback on students' current progress and how to further improve their work, both during lessons and by marking students' books. There are many examples of exemplary marking particularly in English and the humanities. This is where students are clearly informed both how well they have done and more importantly how to further improve. However there are a few examples where this is not happening frequently enough and teachers do not ensure that students understand the advice given or respond to it to accelerate their progress.
- Teachers use questioning well, probing, challenging and drawing out answers to ensure the student really understands. For example in a mathematics lesson, the teacher rewarded the follow-up questions asked in response to the student's first answer; this ensured that the student fully understood the process and made outstanding progress, despite initial misunderstanding.
- Additional staff work in strong partnership with teachers and are used very well to support those students that need extra help with their learning. This ensures these students do not fall behind.
- Teaching in the sixth form is strong and students fully engage through their positive attitudes to learning and make good progress.

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

- Students are eager to learn and are proud of their school. They behave in a mature, responsible manner and are the central feature of the school's success.
- Students behave well, in lessons and around the school. They attend regularly, listen attentively, work effectively both independently and with others, enjoy a challenge and respond confidently to questioning.
- Students mix well together regardless of their background and create a welcoming, friendly, harmonious community. They are proud of the school and respond positively to the way that they are treated as unique individuals.
- Attendance is above average because students enjoy coming to school and want to learn.
- School data shows that behaviour continues to improve. Records show that internal exclusions are reducing because students clearly understand the expectations for good behaviour and the majority of students are keen to do well.
- Fixed-term exclusions are well below average and there have been no permanent exclusions since the school became an academy.
- Students know and are fully aware of different forms of bullying, such as cyber, racist and homophobic name calling. Students say that there are very few instances of bullying, which is very swiftly and effectively dealt with and rarely reoccurs.

- The school council provides good opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills. The councils are respected by both students and staff and help ensure that senior leaders take account of students' views.
- The vast majority of parents and carers agree that their child is safe and happy at school and supports good behaviour.

## **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- All leaders have high expectations focusing on ensuring students make at least good progress and achieve their full potential. Determination for the very best in everything is the basis of all decisions made and is underpinned by the school motto of 'Excellence, Innovation and Respect'.
- A parent or carer commented, 'The leadership at Oakgrove has enabled the school to remain true to its vision and created a centre of excellence. We are very proud that our children go to this school.'
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and his vision, energy and determination is shared throughout the entire school. He has created the conditions for staff to thrive and given independence and responsibility to a wide range of staff including middle and senior leaders, who in return provide outstanding support.
- The headteacher is a National Leader in Education and the school welcomes and supports other schools. There are well-developed plans to develop the school to become an 'all through' school with children aged from three to 19.
- All senior and middle leaders know and fully understand that their key focus is on ensuring that students make outstanding progress and achieve well; nothing must distract from this.
- Leaders successfully provide clear structures and policies to support behaviour for learning and to ensure students behave well and are kept safe.
- Leaders recognise the school's strengths and are quick to act upon any aspect of the school's work that does not live up to the high expectations of the school.
- There are well-established processes to monitor the quality of teaching, and quick actions are put into place to improve any that does not meet the high standards of the school. This is used effectively to support and challenge staff to continue to ensure that teaching has a positive impact on students' progress and achievement.
- Teachers are continually working to further improve their teaching which accounts for why so much is of a high quality. All teachers have targets to help them improve their work. These are linked closely to students' achievement and progress.
- Teachers work well together to share ideas of how to make lessons fun and well paced, so ensuring students achieve their full potential.
- A broad range of courses at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form provides good choice for students and enables outstanding achievement at Key Stage 4 and good achievement in the sixth form. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities makes a strong contribution to students' sense of enjoyment.
- Humanities subjects are central to developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development teaching the importance of respecting different views, cultures, opinions and lifestyles. Humanities often lead the school's 'shuffle days' where students work across subjects on topics such as 'Eco-Community Action' and 'Cultural Traditions and Diversity'.
- Safeguarding arrangements are thoroughly organised and fully meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is highly effective and fulfils its statutory duties. Governors use their wide-ranging skills to provide outstanding support and challenge. They clearly understand the school's many strengths and ensure that complacency is not an option, rigorously challenging the school to continue to build on the many strengths. Governors know about the quality of teaching and fully understand the arrangements for improving teachers' performance and rewarding good teaching. They also understand clearly how well the school's performance data compare with other schools' nationally. The governing body has an excellent

understanding of financial arrangements including the pupil premium funding. Governors are clearly aware of how it is spent and evaluate the impact that additional resources are having on the progress students make.

## 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>	136454
<b>Local authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	413349

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,168
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	152
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Megan Crawford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Barnes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 545300
<b>Fax number</b>	01908 236218
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