

Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit

Gores Lane, Formby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L37 3NY

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Daily 'praise time' effectively motivates and encourages pupils to achieve the Oakfield goal of 'success every day'.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning, social and behavioural skills in the short periods of time they attend the unit. They achieve well.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers work closely with skilled support staff to create a positive, calm and nurturing environment which underpins pupils' good progress.
- The recent focus on literacy skills has improved reading. Writing and mathematical skills also develop well.
- Staff manage behaviour effectively and unnecessary confrontation is avoided. As a result, behaviour is mostly good.
- Pupils are well guided to reflect on their actions and to make the right choices. They learn to manage their own behaviour better and to control their responses.
- Pupils say they feel safe in the unit, most enjoy their experience there and trust staff to help them. Parents agree.
- The curriculum has been invigorated and is now good. Liaison with mainstream schools is stronger and pupils' work is planned jointly with mainstream schools to ensure continuity.
- The appointment of a permanent headteacher has provided much needed stability since the last inspection. Consequently, Oakfield has made rapid strides forward. Renewed systems work well and the unit continues to improve and develop.
- Leadership and management are good. Teaching and learning and pupils' progress are checked well.
- The revised management committee provides effective support and challenge.
- Oakfield is well supported by the local authority and provides a good facility for schools and pupils in Sefton.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few pupils are not fully stretched and lesson plans do not consistently have personalised goals. Not enough pupils check their own work or know how to improve it.
- The new system to check pupils' work does not yet fully analyse whether pupils are learning to their full potential.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons and three periods of shared community time. They observed all of the school’s teachers and classes that were on the timetable during the inspection.
- One lesson was jointly observed with the school’s headteacher at the Oakfield site and two lessons were jointly observed with the teacher-in-charge at the Jigsaw site.
- Pupils led a tour of the school; inspectors also listened to them read and discussed their work with them.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, members of the management committee, staff and pupils.
- A meeting was held with two representatives from the local authority.
- Information from the school’s most recent parental questionnaire was taken into account. Insufficient responses were available on the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be able to access them.
- Staff views were gathered from discussions and from the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at information and documentation about pupils’ progress, teaching, planning and the monitoring of the school’s work. The school’s documents on safeguarding were reviewed, together with records of attendance and pupils’ behaviour.

Inspection team

Linda Clare, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frank Carruthers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit (the unit) provides for pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion together with pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. It uses two separate sites, Oakfield and Jigsaw.
- The provision may be full time or part time at either site. Pupils may have single registration at the unit or be dual registered with their 'home' school.
- The unit's age-range has changed since its last inspection. On the Oakfield site, pupils are all aged between 11 and 14 years. The Jigsaw site now caters for pupils aged 4 to 11 years. Formerly catering for pupils aged 7 to 11 years, it was changed in September 2012 to admit children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- All pupils attending the school have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Some have additional needs including attention deficit hyperactivity disorders or autistic spectrum conditions. A very small number have statements of special educational needs.
- Pupils can join the unit at any time and the vast majority stay for up to two terms, occasionally a little longer.
- Almost 60% of the school's pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, this is well above the national average.
- Currently, there are seven girls and 41 boys on roll and most pupils are of White British heritage. This reflects the unit's typical population.
- The pupils at risk of exclusion maintain school links with their 'home' mainstream primary or secondary schools across the Sefton area.
- The school works with Cornerstones Training, the Fairbridge Centre, the Shaw Trust and Learn Fit organisations to support individual older pupils.
- The unit has achieved the Eco Schools Award and holds Healthy School status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan work to stretch pupils of all abilities in every lesson
 - making sure each pupil knows what he or she has to achieve by the end of each lesson
 - providing ways for pupils to check their own work to reinforce their learning
 - making sure pupils know what they have to do next to make their work even better.
- Ensure that pupils' progress at all key stages is more precisely checked to confirm that they all make the amount of progress their ability indicates to be possible.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the unit with a wide range of abilities. Most are working at levels that are generally lower than expected of pupils their age nationally or are below their own target levels as a result of emotional, behavioural or social needs. For a small number, periods of absence, additional conditions and disorders or learning needs have contributed to their difficulties.
- They settle well, learn to trust staff and make good progress. This enables most pupils to achieve or exceed their target levels by the time they leave the unit.
- The small number of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside pupils in Year 1 and 2. Here, they learn to follow routines, start to understand how to make good choices and have much support to help them develop appropriate social and communication skills. These skills equip them well for the future.
- Reading is fostered effectively and creatively, illustrated well by the popularity of the enclosed reading den in Key Stage 2. Small teaching groups support pupils to achieve well at both sites.
- Pupils use information and communication technology well, particularly so for independent research. In one lesson, pupils used new applications to develop advertising posters. They willingly shared ideas with others and competently demonstrated the pathways to complex visual effects.
- Pupils with additional needs and learning difficulties make as good progress as other pupils and are well supported. Literacy and numeracy skills develop well and there is no difference between the progress of girls and boys, those from minority ethnic groups or those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- As a result of a flexible curriculum and careful attention to equality of access to engaging activities, the unit ensures that when there are girls on roll, they are in no way disadvantaged. Their progress is well checked and activities are flexibly arranged to meet their interests, for example in beauty or dance.
- Pupils enhance achievement in their social skills and community awareness through the use of local sporting facilities and on reward visits. They have a good awareness of safety, demonstrated well in a cookery lesson when making chocolate chip cookies.
- Standards of pupils' work are compared against those of mainstream peers to ensure parity. Procedures are being implemented to extend this for the school's newly established Reception and Key Stage 1 groups.
- Pupils develop well the skills for moving on. Strong links with their destination schools, transition meetings and very effective preparation give pupils confidence to return to their home schools. A small number of Year 9 pupils have successful part-time placements with vocational or training agencies as part of this process.
- When they return to mainstream or to more specialised placements, pupils benefit from a period of settling-back or settling-in support from Oakfield staff. This helps almost all to remain there.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and some aspects of lessons observed were outstanding.
- Pupils generally enjoy their tasks and try hard because the planning of their lessons pays good attention to their interests. Their books show the pride they take in their work – one pupil sent his books to the inspectors because his work had been missed when his group was observed.
- Pupils are expected to make at least good progress in their work and plans show what 'some' or 'most' pupils should learn. However, personalised goals for pupils for each lesson, to link to their reasonably challenging targets, are not consistently in place.
- Questioning is used well and is flexibly adapted to ensure all pupils actively participate in sessions. Teachers are not afraid to change planning and lesson direction to meet needs arising

and their skill in reshaping tasks is a strength of the unit's work. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to boost confidence and ensure pupils keep on track with their tasks.

- In a few lessons observed, one or two more-able pupils finished their work quickly and awaited the teacher's attention and additional work. This limited their progress and provided potential for less appropriate behaviour. On these occasions and to their credit, pupils waited patiently.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught well and good examples of persuasive writing linked different lessons observed to the current 'Fast and Furious' film theme.
- Staff work hard to ensure that lessons are enjoyable and capture imagination. Very good links between the assembly subject of biodiversity, a related trip and the regular unit 'challenge' (time-restricted task) had pupils enthusiastically engaged in discussing their knowledge of local wildlife while designing their publicity materials.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked and some books have constructive comments to help further learning. Some pupils contribute views on how well they feel they have done, particularly at Key Stage 2. As yet, not all pupils are regularly involved in the checking of their work or are helped to know what they could do to improve it.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning improve well and they value the rewards they earn for good work and appropriate behaviour.
- On both sites, a purposeful atmosphere prevails in lessons and more social times are relaxed and well supervised. In conversation pupils are polite and show good manners. Punctuality to lessons has improved since the last inspection.
- Personal and life skills are reinforced well every lesson with good focus on building pupils' self-esteem. Daily gatherings, known as 'praise time', celebrate success and allow staff to feed back to the unit as a community how well individual pupils have completed tasks.
- The constantly changing population of a short-stay environment is a challenge to pupils, but they cope very well and show much tolerance of others whose behaviour may be at a stage of requiring more support than their own. 'Making the right choice' is emphasised consistently and very effectively.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. This was well illustrated as pupils spoke of their confidence in referring incidents to adults and noted that bullying was infrequent but dealt with quickly if it happened. A comprehensive personal, social and health education scheme helps pupils to learn how to keep safe and they have a good awareness of cyber-safety.
- Systems to support pupils' well-being and pastoral needs are robust. The strong and caring unit network includes weekly staff reviews of pupils' behaviour and personal development to ensure consistency of staff response and the most effective support for pupils.
- The unit takes good care to ensure that pupils on visits or at alternative placements are subject to careful checking and have risks assessed. Their timetables off site are known and recorded. Attendance is above average at the unit for younger pupils. The attendance of older pupils is improving well as they travel independently each day using their bus passes.
- Oakfield works in effective partnerships with a wide range of academic, social, justice and medical agencies to strengthen its holistic approach to pupils' development and progress.

The leadership and management are good

- Using his wealth of experience, and ably supported by senior staff, the headteacher has led a rigorous review of the unit's work. As a result, the issues of the last inspection have been successfully resolved.
- At the Oakfield site, the deputy headteacher's skill and knowledge of the unit have valuably informed an effective combination of previous best practice and developing new initiatives. The Jigsaw site is very well managed and the introduction of the younger key stages has been

accomplished efficiently. Teachers and support staff have good experience and morale is high.

- Teaching is good and managed well. Teachers' performance is monitored and pay progression is properly linked to appraisal. Professional development for staff is linked appropriately to the unit's improvement planning and teachers' targets reflect its priorities. Senior managers are aware that more precision is needed in some targets for teachers and this is being addressed.
- Systems to check pupils' progress are newly strengthened and good advantage has been taken of the unit's position within the local authority to call upon services to further development, for example in testing pupils on entry. However, pupils' progress in their short stays at the unit is less well checked to see whether it could have been even better.
- The unit knows its strengths and areas which need improvement; its evaluation is accurate. The more specific action plans are thorough and the current plan has been effective in achieving its goals.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is well linked to work at pupils' home schools, particularly for younger pupils, and builds on their progress. Improved information and communication technology ensures pupils develop good keyboard skills, which they use to link more creative subjects and broaden learning. As a result, pupils' progress is improving.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and much work is in evidence to ensure that discrimination is understood and tackled effectively. Work such as the 'Get over it' display promotes cohesion across and beyond the unit's community. Equality of opportunity is central to the unit's work to ensure all have the means of re-entering mainstream or moving to more specialised education.
- Integration has strengthened as the unit successfully recognises, advertises and embraces its core purpose. The rate of pupils returning to and retained in their home schools has risen. The unit is working closely with the local authority and other schools to trial a national exclusion initiative, which has reported a fall in permanent exclusions over its two year period.
- The unit works cooperatively with parents to engage and involve them in their child's education. Daily diaries are reported to parents weekly as staff update pupils' achievements and provide links to useful services or activities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee has delegated responsibility for the unit and provides strong, focused attention. Committee members take an active and keen interest in Oakfield's work and are committed to its success and development. Members know the unit's strengths and areas for development, and monitor teaching and pupils' progress well through regular reports and visits. The committee ensures that all statutory safeguarding arrangements are in place.
 - The unit does not yet have financial delegation as this has been deferred until September 2013. As is common with units of this kind, it does not receive pupil premium funding. (Additional funding provided to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and the children of military personnel.)

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

Unique reference number	104850
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	404960

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	4–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Steve Hall
Headteacher	Zyg Kulbacki
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2011
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