

# Oaklands School

Montgomery Way, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 1NU

**Inspection dates** 17–18 September 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- The excellent leadership and management of Oaklands and the wholehearted commitment and teamwork of staff and governors have resulted in the school sustaining, building and improving on its outstanding achievements since its previous inspection.
- Outstanding teaching and support enable students to make exceptional progress from low starting points in all subjects, especially in English, mathematics and science. Very occasionally opportunities are missed to encourage more-able students to learn independently.
- There have been rapid gains in students' reading and writing skills. A programme has been introduced to teach early skills they may have missed in previous settings. Increased time has been given to practise these skills.
- The curriculum is rich and rewarding. It gives students the opportunity to gain awards in a wide range of subjects which are well matched to their needs, interests and abilities. They are extremely well prepared for their future lives.
- Students thrive in the nurturing environment of the school and make huge gains in their confidence and self-esteem. This is often through the opportunities given by the school's strong creative and performing arts programmes.
- It is clear that students enjoy school and feel safe there and parents agree with this. As a result, attendance levels are high and attitudes to learning are excellent. Behaviour in lessons and around school is outstanding.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have been highly effective in ensuring the school continues to go from strength to strength. The headteacher and deputy headteacher constantly check that the work of the school is meeting the needs of the students and is the best it can be.
- Members of the governing body provide excellent support and challenge to ensure standards are maintained and continue to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors reviewed students' work in books and discussed with them what they were learning in lessons. Both inspectors met with groups of students to discuss their views of the school and their learning and progress.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, and senior and middle leaders. Documents were scrutinised including those relating to school improvement planning, governance, student performance and progress and safeguarding.
- Telephone conversations were held with a representative of the local authority and with the School's Improvement Consultant.
- Parents who collected their children from school were interviewed. The 23 current on-line responses on Parent View were taken into account as was a telephone conversation with a carer. Inspectors also analysed 39 staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Oaklands School makes provision for students who have statements of special educational needs for moderate learning difficulties with additional complex needs, usually speech, language and communication difficulties and/or social, emotional behavioural difficulties.
- The school is situated in Cheshire West and Chester but admits students from Cheshire East and occasionally, from other local authorities.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is twice the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.) The majority of the students at Oaklands that are eligible for this funding are eligible for free school meals and a small number of students are in the care of the local authority. There are no children of service families.
- Almost all students come from White British backgrounds.

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

- Improve the rate of progress of the most-able students even further, by seizing all opportunities, as they arise in lessons, for them to learn independently and try things out for themselves.

## Inspection judgements

### **The achievement of pupils** is outstanding

- Students start at the school with skills which are below and often well below those typically expected for their age due to their disabilities and special educational needs. The vast majority make outstanding progress in all areas of learning, particularly in science and mathematics, because teachers plan lessons which capture their interest and provide activities which are well matched to their learning needs. Very occasionally, too much is done for higher-ability students when they could learn and find things out for themselves.
- As a result of their outstanding progress, many students achieve GCSEs in mathematics, science, English, art and expressive and performing arts. They also achieve a huge range of external awards in other subjects such as singing, horticulture, hospitality and catering, nail and beauty, photography and computing, among others. Students can choose subjects as options in the curriculum, to reflect their interests and abilities and they learn skills which they can take forward to their next placements and into employment, helping them to hold down jobs in the longer term.
- There have been significant improvements in English since the introduction of a systematic phonics programme for older students, which has helped to fill gaps in their learning. Phonics is the sounds letters make. The timetable now gives additional time at the start and end of each day to practise phonics and build literacy skills. There has been a whole-school commitment to improving English with all staff involved in training and delivering the programme. Many students have made much better than expected progress in this subject in a short space of time.
- Students' progress is monitored exceptionally well so that any student who is making less than expected progress, in any subject area, is quickly identified and provided with support to help them catch up. This reflects the school's unfailing commitment to ensuring every student is given an equal opportunity to achieve their potential. Pupil premium funding, for the very high number of students who are eligible to receive it, is used very well to provide additional support so that no groups of students achieve less well than others. The school uses pupil premium funding to provide a support group for the small number of children who are in the care of the local authority, to enable them to meet and enjoy activities together out of school and these students have made very good gains in their personal and social development.
- Although most students arrive at the school with poor communication skills, it is notable that they very quickly develop their confidence through the opportunities provided to participate in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, choir, music and drama presentations which are a feature of the school. Students embrace these opportunities and become confident and articulate young people.

### **The quality of teaching** is outstanding

- The quality of teaching across the school has improved since the previous inspection. Due to rigorous monitoring of staff performance, over time the proportion of teaching which is outstanding has increased and is now never less than good.
- Teachers plan lessons which are exciting and fun. For example in a lesson about the civil war, students moved around the classroom matching statements about the war to the causes of 'power, money and religion'. Their next activity was to do some role play around these statements to help them think about and understand the causes of war and express their own views.
- Lesson planning clearly builds on prior learning, and teachers and teaching assistants are very good at assessing students' progress in lessons. They question exceptionally well and work together to ensure students' understanding. Lessons have good pace and the best possible use is made of time.
- Technology is used very well. Students use laptops and other technology to research information

and make presentations and teachers use whiteboards well to give visual support to learning.

- Students are taught to take pride in their achievements as a result of which the quality of their written work is very high. Student work in art portfolios for GCSE, for example, is of an exceptional quality, with the teacher skilfully guiding students to look for new and original ideas or to adapt ideas they have seen.
- Courses in independence and life skills ensure students are prepared for their future lives. Lessons help them to understand the principles of healthy eating. They buy food and cook their meals and enjoy doing this because they can see it will help them in their lives. Mathematics lessons are planned to help students use their learning in a practical way, such as working out a perimeter to measure for a carpet.
- All staff contribute their own skills and knowledge to offer a vast range of clubs and activities at lunchtimes and on options day, giving students a wide range of choices to match their needs and interests. Students really look forward to making their choices and participating in these activities.
- Adults provide particularly well for students who have additional needs; for example, by providing signing support or using radio aid equipment for deaf students or providing visual prompts for students who need help to organise themselves. Staff go the extra mile, as do other students, to learn how best to meet these additional needs, as a result of which they make just as exceptional progress as others.

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

- Students say they love coming to school and demonstrate this by high levels of attendance, promptness to lessons and exemplary behaviour in class, in the playground and around the school. Where there are occasional incidents of poor behaviour, they are managed swiftly through well-understood support systems led by senior staff, so that they do not disrupt learning. Attendance has improved year-on-year and is now well above the average for secondary schools.
- Parents are very confident that the school keeps their children safe and every parent who completed the Parent View questionnaire said they would recommend the school to others.
- Bullying is rare because of the atmosphere of mutual respect. There are frequent reminders in assemblies about different forms of bullying and how to report them. Students are confident their views will be listened to and will make a difference. The student council is very effective in making proposals and taking action to improve aspects of school life. Older students look out for younger ones in the playground and sometimes mentor others experiencing particular difficulties.
- Students' attitudes to their learning are outstanding and this makes a massive contribution to their rapid progress. Students are keen and eager to contribute in lessons but listen respectfully to the views of others.
- Students really enjoy the reward system. They particularly work hard to collect 'nuggets' which contribute to the achievement of a day out for the whole school. This effectively helps students develop a sense of citizenship in the school.
- Students not only feel safe but they learn how to keep themselves safe, for example in a Year 11 lesson about sexual health, students discussed the topic with an impressive level of maturity. The highly effective development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills in the rich curriculum ensures students consider the needs of others, for example through the link work with schools in Soweto and in Ireland.
- The school routinely monitors students' social and emotional well-being and takes action to put support in place for individuals whenever things appear to be going wrong.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and leadership at all levels are extremely highly regarded by governors, staff, parents and students. They offer inspirational leadership and work exceptionally well as a team to drive improvements in school performance.
- While the school has a clear purpose in providing outstanding care and support for its students, there has been an increased focus on improving academic success in recent years. A comprehensive performance management programme and relentless focus on students' progress in all subjects has resulted in an exceptionally high standard of teaching across the school. Recent strengthening of middle leadership is enabling closer monitoring and mentoring for staff and students.
- The curriculum is outstanding, offering rich and varied subjects for study. The deputy headteacher leads a regular review of the curriculum to ensure it matches students' interests and abilities and prepares them for their future lives.
- Partnerships with parents are very strong. Parents feel very well informed about what their children are learning and are confident that they are well supported. Parents and carers are invited to attend training which helps them to understand how their children learn and support is provided to families when they need it. Transitions in and out of school are especially well planned.
- The local authority maintains a light-touch link with the school. It is confident that not only is the school maintaining and improving standards, but that it is also sharing best practice with other schools through the highly effective leadership and participation of the headteacher in a number of partnership groups.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has grown in knowledge and confidence since the previous inspection. It has broadened its membership and undertaken extensive training. As a result, the governors now offer outstanding support and challenge to the school and make a significant contribution to school improvement planning and monitoring. They effectively scrutinise student progress data and monitor the performance management programme, ensuring pay progression is linked to Teachers' Standards and to consistently good and outstanding teaching. They agree how the pupil premium funding should be spent and request information to ensure it is used effectively to provide support and enable participation to close gaps for those eligible to receive it.

## 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>	111504
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	426274

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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	125
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Aileen Parry
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kevin D. Boyle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 551048
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