

Oakfield High School and College

Long Lane, Hindley Green, Wigan, WN2 4XA

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
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 starting at the school have much lower standards in education than most nationally. Nevertheless, their achievements are outstanding.
- Throughout their time at Oakfield almost all students make extremely rapid progress, far in excess of that expected. Occasionally, students' learning is slowed a little by having to make use of written materials in classes that are too difficult for them.
- By the end of Key Stage 4 and in sixth form almost all students leave with a range and level of qualifications far beyond the expectations of their parents and others.
- The sixth form is outstanding and makes a strong contribution to the excellent personal developments of students.
- Most teaching is outstanding and it ensures the successes of students. Occasionally, students are not shown exactly what is expected of them and how to make the best possible progress.
- The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding. In class, their impeccable attitudes to learning help them settle very quickly into classes. At break times and around the school students' behaviour is exemplary.
- Students report that they feel very safe here and this view is supported by parents and staff. The care and support provided by the staff is of a very high quality.
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher has, with the full support of the governing body, continued to improve teaching since the last inspection. Their work has resulted in students making even greater progress and gaining better qualifications.
- Leaders and managers at all levels in the school contribute effectively to its success. The focus for all is on providing the best quality of education and care to the students. However, they do not always ensure that all of the learning demonstrated by students in lessons is captured and recorded by staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors watched parts of 10 lessons with eight different teachers, often accompanied by the headteacher. Shorter visits were also made to classrooms. They spent almost five hours in classes and visited an alternative provision placement to check that students are safe and receiving appropriate courses for learning. They spoke with managers in three local secondary schools that utilise the school’s outreach service.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior members of staff including from the sixth form, teachers, staff and students at the alternative educational provision. They met with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and the school adviser from the local authority.
- Informal discussions were held with students of all ages during lessons and around the school at break times.
- Account was taken of 21 responses available on Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. Two parents came to meet the inspectors. There were 65 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including records of students’ work and their achievements, progress, behaviour, attendance, and the school’s plans to further improve them. Records of the quality of teaching were looked at as were documents showing the school’s view of its own performance, improvement plans and outreach work. Documents related to the work of the governing body and policies concerning keeping students safe were seen.

Inspection team

Terence McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Helm

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oakfield High School and College educates boys and girls aged between the ages of 11 and 19. They can join the school at any stage of their secondary education but the majority come at the start of Year 7. A further substantial proportion joins at the beginning of Key Stage 4 or at the start of the sixth form.
- All have a statement of special educational needs in respect of moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties or behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Some have physical disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and other communication difficulties.
- Around one-third of the students are girls and almost all come from a White British background.
- More than half are entitled to support from the pupil premium funding and this is much higher than the national average for all schools. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Oakfield provides an outreach service to other local secondary schools but none of the students at the school are dual registered. Some come from local secondary schools to receive a few of their lessons at Oakfield.
- The school gained the highest (Gold Standard) award for Investors in People in January 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable students to always have the best opportunities to make and demonstrate the maximum progress in their learning by ensuring that:
 - the writing that they are expected to read and make use of in lessons is always correctly matched to their levels of ability and understanding
 - they are always given clear expectations for learning
 - staff always record students' learning quickly and efficiently so that the evidence of progress made is not lost.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- From their very low starting points, all groups of students make rapid progress that is maintained throughout the school until they leave. Outstanding achievement is demonstrated by all and there are no discernible differences between students with moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties, those with physical disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions or any with behavioural difficulties.
- Students make outstanding progress in each of the key stages and in the sixth form. Boys and girls do equally well in English and mathematics throughout the school, as do those known to be eligible for free school meals. As a result, almost all students gain recognised qualifications, including English and mathematics before leaving school and this is a superb outcome for a school such as this.
- All students are fully included in learning and there is no discrimination against any because courses of study are so well matched to their individual needs. As a result, almost all students leave school at the end of Year 11 or sixth form with five or more GCSE equivalent qualifications. Others gain Entry Level Certificates and complete other courses that help them move on successfully to the next stages of their education, training or employment.
- Teachers take great care to ensure that tasks set for students take close account of their needs. This results in all, including the most able and least able students, being always challenged to learn. An example of this was seen by inspectors during a lesson for physical education in which all students took part despite their difficulties and disabilities.
- The first activity of the day is always a structured reading session. A great deal of thought and preparation is given to this by staff. The most able students are encouraged to acquire the reading skills that help them to gain access to higher levels of study. Weaker readers catch up in their reading and many become independent readers for the first time, thus opening up areas of study that were previously closed to them. Students were keen to show off their reading skills to inspectors during these sessions and proud of their progress in reading.
- Just occasionally, teachers overestimate the reading abilities of some students and provide them with written materials that are too complex or untidily presented on white boards. This prevents a few from gaining all that they can in their learning.
- The range of courses available to students is exciting and motivating for them. In the upper school, expert tutors are brought in to supplement the skills of the staff so that students gain qualifications in floristry, horticulture and technology.
- Students placed in alternative provision are motivated by the nature of their courses to succeed and they do well by gaining externally accredited qualifications. The local schools supported by Oakfield through outreach report that their students benefit greatly from the service and close gaps in their learning as a result.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- School records indicate that much of the teaching is outstanding and that it is never less than good. Throughout the inspection, outstanding and good teaching was consistently seen by inspectors. High quality teaching is instrumental in enabling the great majority of students to make exceptional progress and to gain better than expected qualifications.
- All classroom staff are skilled in the teaching of reading and all are involved in the daily reading sessions. Most have undertaken training in phonics (the sounds that letters make) so that when supporting students there is consistency of approach by staff and students do not receive mixed messages that would otherwise confuse them.
- Generally, a great deal of care is taken by staff to ensure that students' literacy skills are enhanced. For example, in a mathematics lesson witnessed by inspectors the teacher ensured

that each student could understand the mathematics materials that they were working on and that they were capable of presenting their mathematical findings in an appropriate fashion.

- The teaching of English and mathematics is very well managed so that close attention is paid to helping students gain important skills in literacy and numeracy.
- When students enrol here, the staff take great care to ensure they fully understand the special educational needs, learning difficulties and disabilities of each one. Tests are used, particularly in English, reading and mathematics to ensure that courses of study are well matched to students' levels of ability. Regular checks are made to ensure that students make the expected degrees of progress and that all are on track to meet their long-term targets.
- Through this highly effective use of information about how students learn, staff can tell if any are falling behind in their studies. Staff quickly move to provide additional help and assistance to any that are not on track to meet their targets. School information shows that these observations are extremely successful and play a large part in ensuring that almost all students make better than the progress expected of them throughout their time in the school.
- Occasionally, the expectations for learning are not as clear as they should be. Here, students' tasks do not provide the best opportunities for each to learn and make the best possible progress. For example, a student explained to an inspector that he had completed yesterday's work but was not sure what he was expected to do today.
- Students make such excellent progress because of the high quality support they receive from staff. The work of teaching assistants is directed very effectively. As a result, their efforts are almost entirely concerned with supporting learning rather than behaviour. Indeed, in this school the outstanding behaviour results from the intense focus on teaching and learning.
- A number of parents of existing and previous students spoke with inspectors. They were all keen to stress that their children have done so well at this school because of the efforts of the staff. One said of the school: 'this is a marvellous place, I wish all children could come to school here!'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning in their classes. This results in them wasting little time in settling into lessons. They hardly ever lose their concentration because they are provided with interesting things to do. Their very positive attitudes are also helped by the high quality of support they receive from the staff.
- Outside class and around the school students' behaviour is exemplary. They get on very well together. They show very high levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development both inside and outside the classroom. Many stay behind after school to join in with clubs and activities. When asked by inspectors why they do this, three students replied that it provides more chances for them to be with their friends and staff.
- When questioned by inspectors, students were enthusiastic about the school. Many said that they 'love coming here'. When asked why, they stated 'because of the staff – they really look after us!' One said 'it is such a good school because staff make sure you do your best!'
- The rates of attendance are extremely high compared to special schools nationally. Since 2012, the average rate of attendance has risen from 92% to the current level of 96%. Unauthorised absence and absence for holidays taken in term time is almost unknown.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- This is because of the care and support they receive from the staff, including in the arrangements for child protection. There are high levels of supervision at break times. When asked, students reported that bullying and harassment are rare here. Any issues are quickly dealt with by staff so there is little opportunity for serious incidents to occur. Exclusions are very rare.
- The school places great emphasis on helping these potentially vulnerable students to keep themselves safe. For example, the curriculum for personal, social and health education deals with bullying, sex education and the misuse of substances, such as alcohol and drugs. The

school has recently gained an award for the work it has done in helping a substantial number of students to travel independently to and from school.

- Parents report that this is a very safe place for their children to be and their views are supported by the staff.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. This is because since the last inspection the headteacher has concentrated on improving the quality of teaching so that a continually improving service can be provided to the students. The headteacher constantly challenges the teachers to improve on their high quality work even further and this is clearly linked to the outstanding progress made by all groups of students.
- The headteacher has been fully supported by the governing body, members of the senior team in school and leaders and managers at all levels. Furthermore, all have been involved in ensuring that the safety of students is as great as they can possibly make it through providing supervision, support and guidance to students. Systems for managing behaviour have been developed that are clearly linked to maintaining students' success in learning and full concentration of effort in their classes.
- The headteacher has ensured that managers at all levels are given the support and responsibility they need to work effectively. As a result, the levels of management are highly supportive of each other, through the senior team to middle managers and classroom teachers. All work together to ensure that students have the best chances to succeed, through providing high quality lessons and an excellent range of courses.
- Courses of study provide memorable experiences for students. This was seen when some sixth form students proudly showed inspectors their displays of flowers. This accredited floristry course is one of many that could stand them in good stead when applying for work upon leaving school. The exciting range of courses encourages high rates of attendance.
- The management team have developed and set in place improved systems for understanding how well students are doing in their studies. However, managers have not always shown staff how to quickly collect in the main points of students' learning in lessons and this results in some evidence of achievements being lost.
- Morale amongst staff is very high with almost all reporting through their questionnaires that they are proud to work here. Since the last inspection, much has been done to help parents have more opportunities to help in the running of the school, and as a result, they are more involved in their children's education.
- The effectiveness with which the management is shared throughout the school enables the headteacher to offer a wider advisory management service to the local authority. This is greatly appreciated by other local special and secondary schools, as is Oakfield's outreach service.
- The school, in turn, benefits from excellent support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The work of the governing body has improved since the last inspection through maintaining its stability and providing high quality support and challenge to the headteacher and other managers. Members have taken careful note of the headteacher's efforts to improve teaching through, for example, making sure that the performance management of teachers is operated appropriately. They are told about the targets set for teachers and they review these several times each year to be sure that targets are being met. In this way, they ensure that any underperformance is dealt with swiftly by the headteacher. The use of performance related pay for teachers has been in operation in the last year. The governing body oversees the performance management process of the headteacher and holds her to account in respect of the targets set. Minutes of the governing body meetings show that when members have been provided with details of students' progress and attainment they ask searching questions. Governors challenge school managers to explain that students receive the best service possible, for example, in ensuring that the use of the pupil premium funding supports the

progress of those entitled to the funding and that any gaps in their learning are closing. Members of the governing body have been instrumental in helping the school make significant changes, for example, in recently transferring the entire service to one site. Through this process, governors have ensured that the school is on a much more secure financial base. Other aspects of school finance are handled correctly. Members ensure that all statutory duties are undertaken and the requirements for safeguarding are met.

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	131530
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	439650

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Brown
Headteacher	Catherine Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2011
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