

Oakbank

Hyde End Lane, Spencers Wood, Reading, RG7 1ER

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is not enough good teaching. Some teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough and, as a result, some students do not make good progress.
- Until recently, students did not achieve well in English. Their writing skills are not sufficiently developed across all subjects.
- Some students with special educational needs have not made enough progress because, in the past, there was more focus on their behaviour than on their academic learning.
- Since the school opened, frequent changes of teachers and leaders have not provided students with a settled start to their secondary education.
- Attendance rates are below average.
- Students do not work purposefully and productively in all lessons, and sometimes, poor behaviour from a few students disrupts the learning of others. Teachers have not succeeded in instilling good learning habits in all students.
- School leaders' and governors' recent actions to improve the school have not yet had enough impact on teaching and students' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The Interim Principal has brought a down-to-earth strength and rigour to the school, and standards of achievement and behaviour are quickly rising.
- Improved systems, and more checks on teaching and students' progress, are beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching.
- Good teaching in mathematics, science and art is leading to better progress.
- Students are happy and feel safe in school.
- School leaders now have an accurate view of the school's areas for development, and have a growing sense of direction and ambition.
- The newly appointed leader for English and special educational needs has brought energy and experience, and has already made a significant impact on students' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 13 lessons, including eight jointly with senior and middle leaders.
- The inspector looked at students' work in lessons and a sample of students' books from all classes.
- The inspector talked to students informally and met with another group of students to discuss their views on progress, teaching, and behaviour and safety in the school.
- Meetings were held with the Interim Principal, school leaders, the education adviser for the school and four members of the governing body, including the Chair.
- The inspector also met groups of teachers and the attendance officer.
- The inspector took into account the 45 responses to the online parent survey (Parent View) and the 10 responses to the paper-based staff questionnaire. The inspector met with two parents.
- The inspector checked the school's records on safeguarding and child protection. She also evaluated the school's records of students' progress, behaviour, attendance and exclusion.
- The inspector evaluated the school records of performance management.
- A range of documents, including the governing body minutes and the school's evaluation of teaching, were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oakbank School is a free school that opened in September 2012 on the site of a former local authority secondary school. The school is sponsored by the CfBT Education Trust.
- There are currently 145 students on roll in Years 7 and 8. The school is oversubscribed for September 2014.
- The majority of the students are White British. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is the number of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students who have disabilities or special educational needs and are supported at school action is well above the national average, as is the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students who receive additional funding through the pupil premium because they are known to be eligible for free school meals is close to the national average for secondary schools.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The founding Principal resigned during the autumn term of 2013. Since that time, the school has been led by two Interim Principals, the current one having taken up the post in January 2014. A permanent Principal has been appointed to start in September 2014.
- An Assistant Principal with responsibility for English and special educational needs took up her post at the start of the summer term 2014.
- The school is partnered with Oxford Spires Academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - are clear about what they want students to learn, how much work they need to do and what level they are aiming to achieve
 - keep students' focus on their work so that they are more purposeful, diligent and productive in lessons
 - set tasks and prepare materials that are suitably challenging and matched to the age and ability of secondary students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs
 - question students more effectively to check their understanding and improve their communication skills
 - give students helpful guidance about their work and allow them time to improve their work in response to feedback
 - insist upon high standards of presentation and neatness in books and take firm action to help students keep their work orderly.
- Increase the rate of students' progress in English by:
 - providing a challenging, interesting and age-appropriate programme of study to prepare students fully for the next stage in their education
 - tackling students' weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar effectively throughout the curriculum
 - providing more opportunities for students to practise longer pieces of writing.

- Improve behaviour by ensuring that:
 - attendance improves to be in line with or above the national average
 - all staff apply the behaviour management systems clearly and consistently with all students
 - all staff insist that students conform to the highest standards of uniform, presentation, punctuality and readiness to learn.

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - improving the system for collecting, recording and analysing information about students' progress and attainment
 - making sure that there is sufficient capacity and clear accountability in the senior team to tackle weaknesses in English, behaviour and students' achievement.

- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students in the current Year 8 group joined the school with below-average starting points. The proportion of students with high prior attainment is significantly lower than that found nationally. The school's records of progress for Year 8 show that students are making expected progress in mathematics. However, too few students are making more than expected progress in both English and mathematics.
- Until January 2014, students' achievement was inadequate in English. Only very recently have students begun to make better progress. The school has made effective use of the additional pupil premium funding. For example, the school can demonstrate that extra individual tuition in reading and programmes to improve spelling have led to improved progress in English for those students known to be eligible for free school meals. In mathematics, students known to be eligible for free school meals are making similar rates of progress to other students in the school.
- The school's records show that disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus are beginning to make better progress in both English and mathematics. However, students with statements of special educational needs do not achieve as well as other students in the school.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make the same progress as other students in the school because extra help is provided where appropriate, and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Standards of literacy are not high enough and students do not have enough opportunities to improve their writing skills in other subjects. Although students have dedicated time for reading, this is not having a strong enough impact on their written work.
- Students' spelling, punctuation and grammar are below age-related expectations. A significant number of students are reluctant to put pen to paper, and lower-ability students are not supported well enough to produce meaningful and fluent longer pieces of writing.
- School leaders are confident that their assessments are much more accurate now, when compared with those of a few months ago. They have compared teachers' marking with that of teachers in the partner secondary school. School leaders have also made good use of some standardised national tests to compare with their in-house assessments.
- Evidence seen in books and observations of teaching confirmed that the most-able students are making good progress in mathematics and science. Some students told the inspector that since January 2014 they have found work more challenging and that their levels have 'gone up'.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is good. Teachers' expectations of how much students can achieve in a lesson are too low. Some students' books show unfinished and messy work that is undeservedly praised by teachers.
- Until recently, teaching in English was inadequate. Students studied topics and texts that were unchallenging and tasks set were not appropriate for their ages or ability. As a result, they fell behind. The newly appointed leader for English has resolutely set about making necessary changes to the content of the English curriculum. Her energy and determination are having a significant impact on students' confidence and progress in writing, reading and speaking.
- In some teaching observed during the inspection, students did not see the point of tasks they were doing or understand why they were studying a particular topic. Some are not sure of their current levels or targets and do not know what to do to improve.
- Teachers do not use questioning well to check on students' understanding. Students are typically hesitant when discussing and forming ideas, and teachers do not do enough to help them to be confident and fluent speakers.

- In more successful lessons, teachers maintain the momentum of the lesson and demand studious concentration from students. In a very successful art lesson, the teacher insisted with steely determination that students devoted their full and undivided concentration to improving their levels. The teacher did not praise substandard work, but demonstrated techniques, encouraged persistence and pushed students to work out of their comfort zones. As a result, the students took their work seriously, benefited from a sense of accomplishment and made visible progress in a very short time.
- Better teaching is also seen in mathematics and some science lessons because teachers are acutely aware of students' responses and their levels of understanding as the lesson progresses. For example, students made good progress in a mathematics lesson because the teacher took extremely careful account of how much they understood and was prepared to take more time on a particular topic, patiently repeating and re-explaining ideas until students grasped the concept.
- The quality of marking is too variable. In some cases, students respond to their teachers' comments and make improvements to their work. However, there is little evidence of a consistent policy on marking. Students told the inspector that, although marking is more helpful now in English and mathematics, some books from other subjects are not marked very often. Some teachers are meticulous about correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar, but students are not being given strategies to help them improve the accuracy of their work, so the same mistakes are noted over and over again.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because it is not good in all lessons. Students told the inspector that their behaviour depended on which lesson they were in and which teacher they had. Parents and carers also do not all agree that behaviour is well managed in the school.
- Before the arrival of the Interim Principal, systems to manage poor behaviour were not rigorous enough and the disruptive behaviour of a minority of students was allowed to affect the learning of others. Senior leaders recently introduced an 'on-call' system and the 'seclusion room' for students who needed to be removed from lessons. This has been an effective deterrent and has significantly reduced disruption to learning.
- A disproportionate number of students with special educational needs were previously being removed from lessons, but school records show that this has improved and there are fewer occasions generally when the seclusion room needs to be used.
- The school is a welcoming place and students are typically well-mannered and friendly. Students told the inspector that the school was 'like a family'. They said that when bullying occurs, it is nearly always dealt with effectively. However, some students told the inspector that there is some swearing and derogatory language used casually around the school and that this is not always challenged by teachers. Students who spoke to the inspector were concerned about this and knew that it was not right.
- Not all students take enough pride in their work or their uniform. Students have not acquired sufficiently good learning habits because not all school staff insist upon the highest standards of uniform, punctuality and presentation of work.
- Attendance requires improvement as it is below the national average. However, attendance has improved this year because of better systems and the attendance officer's attention to detail. The school can point to specific cases of improved attendance for many students. Persistent absences have declined recently, which is also a positive step forward.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are well supported by staff and feel safe in school. Staff have made sure that students have useful guidance on the safe use of the internet and social media. The site is well supervised by staff at breaktimes, lunchtimes, and at the beginning and end of the school day.

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- The current and previous Interim Principals are highly experienced and have acted firmly and decisively to raise standards in the school. The current Interim Principal has overhauled most systems in the school and provided firm guidance for other leaders. He has made sure that students' progress, books and the quality of lessons are relentlessly checked and evaluated. As a result, school leaders and governors now have a much more realistic picture of how the school is doing. However, leadership and management require improvement because new approaches have not yet had a significant enough impact on improving students' behaviour and raising standards, particularly in English.
- An unsettled period in which there were several changes of staffing led to insecurity. Some students left the school to take up places in other schools. The leadership structure of the school is still not completely established, in that the new Principal has not yet taken up her post and other leaders are relatively new in their roles.
- Under the direction of the Interim Principal, school leaders have stepped up their actions to improve teaching and students' progress with a greater sense of urgency. Recent appointments have strengthened leadership in the school, notably in English and art. In addition, some existing strong teachers have been given more opportunities to take a lead, such as in mathematics.
- Teachers have been set challenging targets for their performance, and teaching that requires improvement is monitored strictly. The Interim Principal can identify teaching that has improved significantly as a result of close supervision and coaching. However, the school's current systems for recording, checking and analysing students' progress are limited and do not enable school leaders and governors to make objective comparisons with other schools.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium have their needs assessed carefully. If they need extra help, they receive it, and their progress is evaluated carefully. If they are not making progress, then changes are made.
- Better identification of the abilities and difficulties of students with special educational needs is leading to improved behaviour and better progress, although this is still not good.
- The school's extended day enables students to develop additional social and cultural attributes through a comprehensive activities programme. The House system is intended to foster a spirit of competition and loyalty among students, but this is not yet really established. The current curriculum is not yet enabling students to be fully prepared for further study or employment. However, there are plans to offer a broader range of subjects from next year and as the school grows in size.
- The school benefits from a partnership with an academy also sponsored by the CfBT Education Trust. Teachers and leaders from the partner school regularly visit to provide guidance and support with improving teaching, managing students' behaviour and validating assessments of their progress.
- All statutory safeguarding requirements are met. All staff are fully committed to keeping students safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement. Governors have been slow to strengthen leadership, and improve standards of achievement and behaviour. As a result, the school has not developed as successfully as it should have. Governors' commitment and devotion to the school are unquestionable and there is little doubt that governance is improving. They have gained skills and expertise as a result of the challenges they have faced since opening the school. Their roles and responsibilities are now better defined and they have ensured that safeguarding is a high priority. Governors have an increasingly accurate view of the school's performance under the Interim Principal, including the quality of teaching and the achievement of specific groups of students, such as those eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs. The Interim Principal provides governors with regular and thorough accounts of how teachers' work is checked and whether they are meeting their performance management targets. Governors are now in a better position to ask direct and challenging questions of school leaders.

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	138367
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	426387

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Knott
Interim Principal	Andy Kilpatrick
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0118 988 3616
Fax number	0118 988 3616
Email address	enquiries@oakbank-cfbt.org

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

