

# Oakley School

Pembury Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 4NE

**Inspection dates** 11–12 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Senior leaders have been very successful in raising expectations significantly since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders are supported very well by the new middle management team and an increasingly influential governing body. Leadership and management are effective at all levels.
- As a result, standards have risen steadily over the past two years and pupils are now attaining at higher levels. All groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well compared with pupils of the same age and starting points nationally.
- Standards have risen because senior leaders, middle managers and the governing body have cooperated very well in raising the quality of teaching.
- Teaching is typically good, with no significant differences in between the two sites or between key stages. As a result, pupils make good progress across the school.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. They follow requests and instructions and interact with each other and with adults cheerfully. Their attendance is high.
- Oakley is a safe school. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and pupils are very well looked after.
- The early years provision is good. Children make good progress in all areas of their learning. They are well prepared for moving into Year 1.
- Post-16 provision is good. Students are prepared well for leaving school. They achieve well and make very good progress in their personal development.
- Pupils make very good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which includes an understanding of traditional British values.
- The school has well-established partnerships. These provide additional learning activities for pupils on site, in the community and in other establishments, such as colleges and local businesses that provide work experience placements.
- Parents are generally very supportive of the school. Virtually every parent would recommend it to others.
- Every member of staff knows what the school is trying to achieve, and the large majority are supportive of how it is trying to do this.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always challenge the most able pupils sufficiently, and not all subjects contribute enough to developing secondary-aged pupils' reading and writing skills.
- Pupils are not routinely encouraged to evaluate their own work and suggest how to improve it.
- Procedures for recording and reporting how well the school is doing are effective and accurately identify development areas, but they are not always well enough prioritised.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classes in all key stages. They observed 16 lessons, each of which was taught by a different teacher. A school leader accompanied inspectors on all but one of these observations.
- Meetings were held with four members of the governing body, including the Chair, the school's improvement partner and an external consultant employed by the school.
- Discussions took place with all members of the senior leadership team and six middle managers.
- The inspection team took into account the views of the 36 parents who completed Parent View, the online questionnaire, and from the letters that two parents handed in to the school.
- Inspectors examined the questionnaires that 70 members of staff completed.
- An inspector met with a group of pupils on each site in order to get their views of the school.
- Short meetings took place with representatives of two organisations that teach vocational courses in school to small groups of pupils, and an occupational therapist.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' work and a very wide range of documentation. This included information about pupils' progress and achievement; attendance records; safeguarding procedures; behaviour logs; leaders' reviews of the school's strengths and development areas, and improvement planning.

## Inspection team

Mike Kell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Carol Vant

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Oakley is much larger than the average special school and is located on two sites. The primary and secondary schools are seven miles apart.
- The school is a local area provision for pupils with a variety of difficulties. The vast majority have moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autism or speech and language communication disorder. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- There are twice as many secondary-aged pupils as there are pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Two thirds of all pupils are boys.
- There are a small number of children in Reception and all of them attend full time.
- Pupils come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. Over half of the pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for almost a third of its pupils, which is higher than the national average. Pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for the very small number of children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school also receives additional physical education and sport funding for primary-aged pupils.
- The school's senior leadership team has changed since the school was previously inspected. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2014, and one of the two assistant headteachers has recently been seconded from another local special school until the end of the summer term 2015.
- Seven members of staff have a middle management responsibility, such as leading a key stage or being responsible for English or mathematics throughout the school. Five of these took up post in the autumn of 2013 and two of them as new appointments to the school.
- A local authority officer carried out a review of governance after the last inspection. The vast majority of the governing body were governors at the time of that inspection, although a new Chair has been appointed.
- Groups of pupils attend other establishments regularly for part of their education. The most notable of these are West Kent College, Hadlow College and Stone Ness (land-based studies). Other partners provide work-related learning courses on the school site, such as J and S Opening Doors which is a community interest company that runs an enterprise project.
- The school receives termly visits from the local authority's school improvement partner.
- As the school was judged as requiring improvement in its last inspection report, Ofsted carried out three monitoring inspections between July 2013 and April 2014.

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

- Develop the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring that staff consistently:
  - build on the already good profile of challenging work to provide the most able pupils with work that further extends their knowledge and understanding
  - develop even more opportunities for the pupils themselves to evaluate their work and suggest how it can be improved
  - plan how they can make an even better contribution to developing pupils' reading and writing skills in all subjects on the secondary site; by making better use of their knowledge of pupils' levels.
- Refine the already effective procedures for recording and reporting how well the school is doing clarifying the prioritising of long- and short-term plans for improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Working closely together, senior leaders and the effective governing body took decisive action after the previous inspection. They recognised the need to develop a culture of greater expectation and challenge if Oakley was to become a higher achieving school. They achieved this successfully by getting the commitment of all staff to support this journey. Everyone knows what the school is trying to achieve.
- Pupils are making much more progress than previously, in a calm and orderly school. Leaders ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to learn in a school that is free of discrimination or harassment. Pupils are always encouraged to show tolerance and respect the rights of others, and they know the difference between right and wrong. By developing these personal qualities, pupils are very well prepared for adulthood in modern Britain. This readiness is further developed by pupils' good understanding of different faiths and religions.
- The development of an entirely new middle management team was an important factor in the school's improvement. These middle managers contribute significantly to the drive towards raising expectations throughout the school.
- Leaders have raised the overall quality of teaching through a very structured and comprehensive teacher support programme. Within school, this includes regular staff training, mentoring and collaborative working so that less effective staff can learn from their most skilled colleagues. The school also makes very good use of other avenues to raise the quality of teaching, such as opportunities for staff to pursue professional development courses. All staff have visited high performing schools to observe best practice.
- Teachers' performance management procedures are used very well to supplement the pursuit of outstanding teaching. Teachers' Standards underpin these arrangements and all leaders and managers use them very effectively to write demanding annual objectives.
- Despite the far-reaching improvements that leaders have made, leadership and management are not outstanding. Leaders regularly review how well the school is doing, and their judgements are generally accurate. However, they do not always record these findings, or report them to the staff and governing body in a way that clearly shows the priorities for further development. Leaders identify broad development areas rather than restricting themselves to the few most important priorities that will have the most impact on raising standards further. Nevertheless, the school continues to improve and demonstrates a good capacity for further development.
- Leaders and middle managers monitor information about pupils' learning and behaviour meticulously. They check every pupil's progress very regularly, and put in place supporting measures if individuals are not on track to meet their challenging targets. Leaders monitor behaviour across the school equally thoroughly and so they are very well placed to identify any patterns or trends of inappropriate behaviour that might be creeping in.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funding to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Spending is planned well and the effect that it has on individuals' progress is measured. The enhanced progress made by pupils who receive additional support for English or mathematics indicates the impact that it has had.
- Physical education and sport funding has been used well to broaden pupils' opportunities to engage in physical exercise. The money has funded new activities, such as horse riding, dance and attendance at a local outdoor adventure centre, which have improved pupils' physical fitness and given them new interests.
- The school provides a good range of learning activities. The learning that is planned for each key stage focuses well on developing pupils' communication, including their literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Post-16 students have access to a good range of work-related courses at local colleges, where their attendance and progress are carefully checked.
- Classroom-based learning is supported very well by opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in the community. Residential visits for some year groups provide additional opportunities to learn about living and working with others. A very small number of pupils also get the chance to accompany pupils from another school on an annual trip to Gambia, which provides an invaluable experience of another culture.
- Older pupils and post-16 students receive good careers guidance and advice. All students who have left school in the past two years have gone on to a college course.
- The local authority provides very effective support. It receives very good information about the school from its improvement partner and from other officers who have supported it over the past two years.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met. It fulfils its responsibilities well.

- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are very secure. All staff training is up to date and policies and procedures are fit for purpose and encourage staff's vigilance. The effectiveness of these procedures is checked regularly.
- Governors receive regular reports from school leaders. They examine these and routinely seek clarification or question their contents. As a result, they have a good understanding of pupils' achievement and of their behaviour and attendance.
- The governing body has a good awareness of the quality of teaching and how it is developing. They are very supportive of leaders when they have to implement support mechanisms for individuals or, ultimately, competency procedures.
- Leaders provide the governing body with good information about teachers' performance management. Governors know how this process works and they understand that pay increases are linked to higher expectations and performance.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They generally behave well in lessons, and they have an enthusiastic and positive approach to learning. Their behaviour around the school is very good. They move around in an orderly way and use the playground safely and with consideration for others. Lunch is a very sociable and amenable occasion.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because the school recognises that occasionally the action of a few pupils with the most challenging behaviour disrupts learning. These situations are managed very well by staff, but they do momentarily distract others from the task in hand.
- Pupils behaved courteously and maturely in the meetings that were held with an inspector. They confirmed that they knew the school's code of conduct and also indicated that, just occasionally, the behaviour of a few pupils disrupts what they are doing.
- Pupils were very welcoming of the inspection team. They initiated conversations and there were many occasions when they greeted the inspection team and held open doors for them.
- The staff, pupils and parents all agree that bullying is not an issue in the school. Staff respond quickly to any instances of potentially intimidating behaviour. There have not been any racist, homophobic or other discriminatory incidents since the previous inspection. The school has not had the need to permanently exclude any pupils, and short, fixed-term exclusions are rare.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are invariably respectful, and pupils also respect their surroundings and the learning materials that they handle. The school is free of graffiti and litter, and pupils do not mistreat the many wall displays around the school.
- Pupils enjoy school and so they attend as often as they can. The attendance rate is high and they have positive attitudes to school life.
- Pupils' behaviour when pupils are off site, or in lessons with staff from partner organisations who visit the school to teach particular courses, is just as good, and their attitudes are just as positive as when they are working with school staff.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Parents, staff and pupils agree with inspectors that the school is a safe place. Parents did not raise any concerns about their children's safety, and the staff are unanimous in their belief that pupils are safe. The pupils themselves also told inspectors that they feel safe.
- All staff have received the relevant child protection training and are familiar with the latest guidance about keeping children safe in education. Leaders and the governing body have updated the school's policies to reflect this guidance.
- The school takes appropriate steps to ensure all adults' suitability to work with young people prior to being allowed in the school. Vetting procedures are secure and an appropriate number of staff and governors are trained in safer recruitment.
- Behavioural incidents and situations that require staff to intervene physically are logged appropriately and both staff and pupils are subsequently interviewed to get their views about what happened and why. Leaders monitor all of these logs very well and so they have an up-to-date picture of behaviour and any possible consequences for pupils' safety.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying and how to try and remain safe, and this includes understanding of cyber bullying and the potential risk of incorrect internet use. However, the effectiveness

of the school's work to keep pupils safe is not outstanding because pupils have only very limited understanding of the meaning of homophobic bullying or what it entails.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching across the school is typically good, with no variation between key stages.
- Teachers routinely discuss with pupils the focus of each lesson and explain to them what they are going to do and what they are expected to learn. This consistent introduction to all lessons gives structure to pupils' learning and prepares pupils well for what is to follow.
- Pupils are generally provided with activities that encourage new learning and enable them to make good progress. This is because staff usually use their knowledge of what pupils have already achieved to plan the next stages of learning. However, this results in good, rather than outstanding, progress because these activities are not always sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. In a few instances, the initial work is too easy. At other times, the introductory activities do present an appropriate level of expectation, but when the pupils have completed them there are not even more demanding tasks available.
- Pupils' generally good behaviour and positive attitudes mean that lessons usually run smoothly, with no time lost in dealing with disturbances. Staff manage effectively the few occasions when pupils with the most challenging difficulties lose concentration and focus to the extent that their actions disrupt others. They are skilled at defusing the situation and refocusing the pupil.
- Teaching promotes pupils' oral communication skills well. For instance, adults' good use of questions encourages pupils to explain their ideas, which develops their speaking and listening skills well. Adults also make good use of questions to check pupils' understanding of what they are doing.
- English lessons routinely make a strong contribution to extending pupils' reading and writing skills, which include the teaching of phonics (recognising the sounds that letters make). Teachers on the primary site know pupils' reading and writing levels well and so they set work in all subjects that encourages them to practise and develop these skills even more.
- Secondary-aged pupils and post-16 students are taught by a number of different staff, and teaching is not so effective in using all subjects to contribute to the development of these pupils' reading and writing skills. Not all staff use information about pupils' reading and writing levels to plan in sufficient detail how they are going to do this. As a result, the reading and writing activities presented are not always at a level that stretches all pupils enough.
- Mathematics teaching is good, and teaching in all subjects makes an effective contribution to the development of pupils' mathematical skills. Staff make good use of opportunities to reinforce the names of shapes, for example in art and design and technology, and to draw attention to patterns or sequences of numbers.
- Teaching assistants are well briefed about their roles. They make a good contribution to supporting the learning of the individuals and small groups with which they work.
- Staff have improved the way in which they point out to pupils what they need to do next to improve their work. More constructive marking of work and oral feedback contribute to raising standards. However, staff still do not include the pupils themselves enough in this process by getting them to take more responsibility for their work by judging what they have achieved and whether they could have done it better, and if so how.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Pupils were not making enough progress at the time of the previous inspection. This has been addressed and pupils now make good progress throughout the school. Their achievement by the end of each key stage is not yet outstanding because of the legacy of underachievement in the past. However, there are clear signs of improving standards over time.
- Pupils achieve well. Very few make less than the progress that is expected of them and a significant number exceed these national expectations. As a result, pupils' progress is good compared with pupils of the same age and starting point in other schools.
- Pupils in all key stages make good progress in mathematics. A large majority perform in line with national expectations, with many exceeding these targets.
- Achievement in English by the end of Key Stage 2 is as good as in mathematics. Pupils do not make quite as much progress in English by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 as they do in mathematics, but it still

indicates good achievement overall. These older pupils achieve particularly well in speaking and listening, but their progress in reading and writing is less marked, although it is still good. This is because not all staff in all subjects contribute enough to developing and extending these key literacy skills.

- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics indicates that pupils are beginning to close the gap between their attainment and that of all pupils nationally. As a result of the improvement in standards, the school has introduced higher level accredited courses in Key Stage 4 and in the post-16 provision. This development ensures that all pupils and students are sufficiently challenged. None have yet completed these courses, but the coursework that they have completed so far and their good progress in lessons indicate that they will succeed at an appropriate level.
- There is no noticeable difference in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of their classmates. This reflects the appropriateness of the way this funding has been used to accelerate their learning. Disadvantaged pupils' performance matches the progress made by others in the school, being slightly better in mathematics than in English.
- Different groups of pupils make similar progress. The achievement of boys and girls is similar, and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds perform equally well.
- The most able pupils achieve well. Their progress is not outstanding because not all teaching routinely stretches and challenges them enough.
- Older pupils' and post-16 students' qualifications and their understanding of the world of work help to prepare them well for leaving school and moving into continuing education, employment or further training. Every school leaver in the past two years has transferred successfully to college.

### The early years provision

is good

- The provision is well led and managed. The middle manager responsible has a very clear understanding of what the provision is trying to achieve and has developed a team that plans carefully all elements of children's development.
- Very strong links with the nurseries from which children arrive ensure a very smooth transition. The children and their families know the staff and so the children settle quickly.
- The link with nurseries give staff a very good understanding of each child's stage of development, which they quickly verify and then devise learning plans that build on this foundation.
- A good combination of adult-led activities and free play gives children many opportunities to explore their surroundings in a safe and structured classroom. This includes making good use of outdoor learning space.
- Teaching is good. Adults know each child extremely well and record their small steps of progress. This enables them to plan activities that encourage learning and they generally respond very well to their needs and interests. Teaching is not outstanding because adults occasionally miss the opportunity to extend children's learning. They do not always make the most of moments when children demonstrate that they have a good understanding of an idea. They do not immediately take the challenge to the next level to see if the child can apply this knowledge in a slightly more demanding activity.
- Children enter Reception with starting points that are well below what is typical for their age. They make good progress from these starting points in all areas of learning, particularly with their communication skills and social development. This prepares them well for transfer into Year 1.
- Children behave well because the classroom is calm and adults manage them in a consistent way. Children know what is expected of them and so they acquire good understanding of routines and learn how to deal with change.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- The post-16 manager, supported by the relevant senior leaders, provides effective leadership and management of the provision.
- The range of learning activities and opportunities provided are well suited to students' age and interests. A good focus on key literacy and numeracy skills is supplemented well by a variety of other courses that are matched to students' ability. As a result, all students follow accredited courses and achieve well in those examinations that the school has been running for some years. However, as other accredited courses were only introduced in 2014, no students have yet completed them, but the progress that they have made so far in their coursework indicates that they will achieve well.

- Students follow a comprehensive and effective work-related learning programme. This includes careers guidance and also features accredited courses that are taught at local colleges and which are directly linked to work opportunities, such as construction, hair and beauty, and catering. Furthermore, all students have work experience placements, which in the majority of cases is off site with local businesses.
- Students are taught well. Teaching recognises the importance of providing learning activities that enthuse students by referencing them to day-to-day events and situations, such as reading bus timetables and using money to buy cooking ingredients. This allows students to apply their learning in a practical way.
- Students' preparedness for leaving school is developed very well through the very good progress that they make in activities designed to enhance their personal development. For instance, travel training prepares them for using public transport independently, cooking contributes to developing their self-help skills and activities such as shopping, and learning how to use a bank helps them to appreciate personal finance.
- Students' behaviour is good. The students generally get on well with each other, set a good example to pupils across the rest of the school, and they respect the views of others. They appreciate the differences between people and this stands them in good stead for an adult life in modern Britain.
- Students' safety is ensured through staff's rigorous application of all relevant policies and the use of risk assessments for all activities. These procedures ensure that students are safe when they are off site too, such as when on work experience or taking part in travel training.
- The provision is not outstanding because teaching is not outstanding. It has the same areas for development as in the main school.

## 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>	132148
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	453643

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>	4–18
<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>	181
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	42
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Bernstein
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gordon Tillman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13–14 March 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 823096
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