

Oakleigh School & Acorn Assessment Centre

Oakleigh Road North, Whetstone, London, N20 0DH

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Inspirational leadership has led to the school sustaining high levels of achievement and pupils' personal development.
- Leaders have the highest expectations of staff and pupils, leading to consistently outstanding practice.
- Pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds make excellent progress and their achievement is outstanding. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers fully understand pupils' needs and how to help them overcome difficulties in their learning.
- Pupils' make excellent progress in acquiring literacy and communication skills and mathematical knowledge.
- Pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning; their behaviour both in and outside classrooms is excellent.
- The school's outstanding promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in a highly supportive, tolerant and happy learning community.
- Early years provision is of outstanding quality and provides children with the confidence and learning skills to make outstanding progress.
- Pupils feel safe and secure. The school's systems to safeguard children are rigorous.
- Parents and carers have a very high regard for the school. They know that the school's leaders and staff will always work with them to ensure the best outcomes for their children
- The governing body is well informed, well organised and totally committed to achieving the best outcomes for the school.
- Middle leaders are highly committed and skilled. The newest middle leaders have not yet fully established formal ways to monitor and evaluate performance across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all of the classrooms and observed learning and achievement in 14 lessons. They also observed an assembly, pupils arriving at school, lunchtime arrangements and pupils playing outside.
- An inspector visited the two classrooms at Colindale Primary School, which are part of the Acorn Assessment Centre provision.
- Inspectors also looked at attendance information, safeguarding arrangements and other key documents.
- A random sample of pupils' work was analysed and comparisons made between the achievements of different groups of pupils. Inspectors analysed the school's performance data showing the attainment and progress of pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, a group of governors and a group of parents and carers. An inspector held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority and met with a headteacher from another school, who acts as the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of 59 responses to the online questionnaire for parents and carers (Parent View), which included four questionnaires completed on paper and 46 questionnaires from school staff.

Inspection team

Barnard Payne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oakleigh School is a special school catering for pupils aged from two to 11 years with severe and complex learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- In common with other schools with primary-aged children, the school also receives the primary physical education and sport premium, designed to help primary schools improve the quality of the physical education and sport activities they offer their pupils.
- A large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, covering a wide range of backgrounds. The majority are from homes where English is spoken as an additional language.
- The school's early years centre provides services for children aged from birth to five years with a range of special educational needs. The provision includes a home teaching service for families whose children are not in early years settings or schools. The children who come into the early years centre go on to a wide range of educational provision when they are five. This inspection focused solely on those children aged 2–5 years in the nursery and reception classes.
- The Acorn Assessment Centre is based on two sites: Oakleigh School and Colindale Primary School, on the other side of Barnet. It caters for children aged from two to five years who have a wide range of special educational needs. These include children with specific medical conditions, physical disabilities, social and communication disorders, sensory impairments, autism spectrum conditions and/or other learning difficulties.
- The two Acorn classrooms at Colindale are subject to exactly the same leadership and management as those at Oakleigh. The school uses no alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop systems for the recently appointed middle leaders to extend their formal monitoring and evaluation skills.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, the school has sustained the highest levels of pupils' achievement and personal development during the five years since the previous inspection. The headteacher is supported by an extremely effective leadership team. The school has excellent capacity to bring about further improvement.
- The school's governing body and leaders at all levels are highly committed, ambitious for the pupils and passionate about the school. Teachers and support staff show an equal passion in their work and are very proud of their school. All contribute to a culture of high expectations.
- The school has very committed middle leaders, who are high-quality practitioners in their areas. They have been well supported in developing their roles. However, recently appointed middle leaders have yet to fully develop formal monitoring and evaluation systems to help them identify aspects to improve.
- The school has robust systems in place to monitor and evaluate its work. These include regular observations of teaching and learning. The school's performance management has ensured that teaching is of consistently high quality and full account is taken of the national 'Teachers' Standards'.
- Rigorous assessment systems enable the school to track pupils' progress and achievement and take account of the wide range of ability, so that pupils making smaller steps in their learning are tracked as diligently as others. Assessments are checked both internally and with other special schools to ensure accuracy.
- The school targets its pupil premium funding effectively, ensuring that eligible pupils make the same outstanding progress as others. The provision made for each pupil receiving the pupil premium is clearly set out in the school's policy. This leads to an evaluation of the impact of each type of intervention and support.
- The school provides an excellent curriculum, carefully tailored to address individual needs. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They meet people from many different backgrounds and learn about different faiths. They learn to respect fundamental British values, learning about rules, fairness, mutual respect and tolerance. The school has achieved the International School Award and has links with schools abroad, which promote pupils' understanding of the wider world.
- The school places great emphasis on high achievement and developing excellent attitudes to learning. There is a consistent focus on pupils' ability to communicate, leading to their increasing independence in making and communicating choices and taking control of their environment. This reflects the school's total commitment to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. The school fosters excellent relations between pupils, and between pupils and staff, and ensures there is no discrimination of any kind.
- The school makes highly effective use of the primary physical education and sport premium funding to improve the quality and breadth of physical education and sport. The school analysed its existing provision, identifying any gaps, and has implemented a wide-ranging programme. It has supplemented some activities from other funds. An outstanding range of outdoor equipment, highly effective use of sports coaches from Tottenham Hotspur Football Club and a variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs form part of the provision. This is fully inclusive, catering for all groups; for example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have equal opportunities to work with external sports coaches.
- The school makes full use of local authority support and training. The local authority recognises the excellent skills and expertise of the staff. It commissions the school to provide support in other settings for children from birth to five years old who have special educational needs. Staff also support their families and provide outreach support for mainstream schools.
- Safeguarding arrangements on both the Oakleigh and Colindale sites are rigorous and fully meet national requirements. Staff working in the classrooms at Colindale monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of children with the same rigour as on the Oakleigh site.

■ The governance of the school:

–The governing body is well informed and highly skilled, enabling it to hold the headteacher and other senior leaders to account for the outcomes for pupils. Governors ensure that the school promotes tolerance and respect. They have a very good understanding of pupils' performance information and have received relevant training. There are designated governor roles, which include safeguarding and the use of the pupil premium; these roles are undertaken systematically and effectively. The governing body has ensured that all financial resources, including the pupil premium and primary physical education and sport premium, are well managed and lead to outstanding outcomes for pupils. Governors are rigorous in making decisions about teachers' salary progression in relation to performance. They are very well informed about the quality of teaching and strongly support senior leaders in ensuring that all teachers'

performance is brought up to the school's high standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They acquire excellent attitudes to their learning. Where pupils have difficulties in managing their own behaviour, the school has established highly effective strategies to help them overcome them.
- Case studies show how the school does all it can to find solutions where pupils have problems. Parents and carers say that the school always goes 'above and beyond' what might be expected in order to address significant behaviour issues and enable pupils and families to deal with them.
- There is a high level of consistency in attitudes and behaviour, and in the management of behaviour, across the school. Behaviour outside lessons is of an equally high standard.
- The school does all it can to promote good attendance, which has improved in the years since the school was previously inspected. An analysis of the reasons for absences shows that they are predominantly due to medical issues, but these have reduced over the past year.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All groups of pupils feel safe and are kept safe. They love being in school. Parents and carers strongly agree that their children feel safe.
- The curriculum enables pupils to develop their understanding of what makes some situations unsafe. This includes taking responsibility for their own and others' safety outside classrooms, such as learning to use the outside play equipment safely. Pupils also learn appropriate behaviour when meeting new people, including how to greet them and interact.
- The school has established extensive systems and resources to safeguard pupils. In addition to ensuring that all staff receive relevant training, the school also employs a family worker and a psychotherapist. This extra provision enables the school to work closely with families.
- Safety procedures on the Colindale site are equally rigorous. While the Acorn accommodation is within the main school building, it is secure and safeguarding procedures are robust.
- Parents and carers are very positive about behaviour and have no concerns about bullying. There is no evidence of any bullying in the school and in all case studies and observations, pupils' attitudes towards one another are consistently positive.
- There is very effective liaison with other schools to ensure smooth arrivals for new pupils and transitions for leavers, both for children in the early years and for older pupils. Pupils are enabled to feel safe and secure when facing change.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils and an excellent understanding of what makes learning difficult for them. They rigorously check pupils' understanding and progress and use their assessment to set work at the right level to challenge each individual. Throughout the school there are extremely well-organised routines and resources to help pupils learn.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is highly effective. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of letters and sounds (phonics) using a variety of methods. In a Key Stage 2 lesson, the teacher quickly engaged pupils as they identified their names and chose who would go next. This developed their literacy and social skills well. The teacher made consistent use of signing and visual timetables and combined tactile and visual resources, phonics and written words, leading to outstanding speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Numeracy is often integral to other activities, which makes sense to pupils and ensures numeracy is easy for them to learn. For example, recounting the story of Goldilocks includes the number of characters and their relative sizes; in one session with early years children, where two pupils worked with an adult, they differentiated between small and tiny.
- Teaching assistants, therapists and other staff play key roles in ensuring high achievement. Together with class teachers they form highly effective teams. In one class, the morning snack was used to enable pupils to use and develop a range of communication strategies. The teacher and support staff made an excellent team, each absolutely clear about individual communication targets. Every pupil was engaged and understood the expectations and routines, using words, symbols and communication books to choose

which food to have and how many items.

- Teachers use a wide range of strategies and activities to engage pupils. In a lesson based on the book, *Where the Wild Things Are*, the staff created a very special experience using a variety of resources imaginatively, including making a forest and mist. There was great excitement as the class predicted the climax.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make substantial and sustained progress across the school. Their starting points vary considerably, but all abilities have the support and resources required to succeed. Their achievement is underpinned by the excellent learning skills and attitudes they acquire.
- Achievement in English is outstanding. Pupils use a variety of ways to communicate, including speech, signing, pictures, symbols and written words. The most able pupils can match words and read with adult support. There are excellent opportunities for speaking and listening which are integrated into all activities.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is outstanding. Teachers plan work for them that is suitably challenging, enabling them to make the same excellent progress as other groups of pupils.
- Achievement in mathematics is also outstanding. Pupils learn through using numbers, sizes and shapes in a variety of contexts, including counting how many people are in the room, number songs and stories. Groups and individuals have specific targets for mathematics that staff use effectively to develop each activity.
- There are no gaps in progress and attainment when comparing different groups of pupils. The achievement of those from homes where English is not the first language is as strong as that of other pupils, aided by teaching that breaks language and communication down into key elements.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium are provided with specific support and interventions, including separate programmes for each individual, and make the same excellent progress as other pupils.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The school's early years provision caters for a very wide range of abilities and needs. All groups of children make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education in Year 1. Their achievement is outstanding.
- When comparing the progress of different groups of children, there are no gaps. Teachers and support staff have an excellent understanding of children's starting points, the difficulties they might face and how to motivate and enable them to make sustained progress.
- Classrooms are extremely well organised. Activities are varied and very carefully planned to engage and stimulate children. When children enter their classrooms each day, they are immediately engaged in well-structured activities. Staff use the daily welcome and greetings very effectively to develop speaking, listening and personal development, and this is always fun.
- Children are introduced to a variety of communication tools, using speech, pictures and symbols. These help establish excellent learning skills, enabling children to express preferences and respond to different activities.
- The impact of teaching over time is outstanding. Assessment is rigorous and includes written notes and photographs to record each child's attainment and progress. Pupils' learning journey folders show excellent rates of progress over time in all areas of learning. The learning journeys are wide-ranging, thorough and fully annotated.
- Children acquire excellent attitudes to learning. They are very happy and secure and understand routines and expectations, for example using visual timetables. The ethos for learning is very strong in all early years classrooms. Their behaviour is outstanding.
- Children keep themselves and others safe in the classroom and outside. Procedures to keep children safe are excellent, both on the Oakleigh site and at the Acorn Assessment Centre site at the other primary school.
- Strategies for engaging with and involving parents and carers are outstanding.
- Expectations of leaders and managers are high and clearly communicated, and this leads to the consistently outstanding practice across the provision. They rigorously apply policies and systems to ensure that children are safe, happy and ready to learn.

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	101396
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	449545

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gilbert Knight
Headteacher	Jenny Gridley
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2010
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