

Oakfield House School

Station Road, Salwick, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 0YH

Inspection dates 28–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- Pupils who have been excluded from their previous schools, or have not attended for significant periods of time, enjoy school and are keen to attend. Their attendance shows excellent improvement.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in their learning once they have settled into the expectations and routines of the school. This includes the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Learning support assistants are making an increasing contribution to the quality of pupils' learning although the impact of their work is yet to be maximised.
- The school provides a safe and welcoming environment in which pupils with complex emotional and social difficulties learn how to manage their frustrations and anxiety effectively. Over time, they demonstrate outstanding improvements in their behaviour.
- School leaders and staff work very effectively together to ensure that pupils are safe and secure in school.
- Parents, carers and placing authorities express consistently positive views about the impact of the school on pupils' personal development, behaviour and achievement.
- The outstanding leadership and management ensures that staff share a common vision and work as a highly effective team.
- Senior leaders have established rigorous arrangements for checking the quality of all aspects of the school's provision. They have a thorough and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. The level of pupils' work is not yet compared fully against nationally expected standards.
- Senior leaders have ensured continuous improvement since the previous inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are outstanding.
- The proprietors and senior staff have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classrooms to observe the quality of pupils' learning and behaviour. He also observed pupils' behaviour and relationships around the school during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings and informal discussions were held with senior leaders and members of staff. Questionnaires submitted by 11 members of staff were considered.
- The inspector talked with the proprietors' director of education, a number of parents, carers, pupils and representatives of placing local authorities. He took account of surveys completed recently by parents, carers and pupils. There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View questionnaire for these to be considered.
- A number of school policies, procedures and records were scrutinised to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oakfield House is an independent day special school located in a former country house in a rural area near Preston in Lancashire. It provides full-time education for up to 36 boys and girls aged five to 12 years.
- Pupils are placed at the school by a number of local authorities in the north west of England. Of the current pupils, eight are looked after in the care of their local authorities.
- There are currently 22 pupils on roll. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs addressing their complex emotional and social difficulties; some pupils have autistic spectrum conditions.
- The executive headteacher also oversees the work of the company's local secondary special school.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in February 2012.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the skills of learning support assistants to give them most impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Extend the arrangements for checking and comparing the standard of pupils' assessed work against nationally expected standards.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Proprietors and senior leaders have established outstanding teamwork in which all members of staff share and implement a common vision for what pupils with complex needs can achieve. They have created conditions in which pupils, most of whom have experienced frustration or failure in previous settings, are able to make sustained progress with their personal development and academic achievement.
- The proprietors have ensured that all the independent school standards are securely met and that the school maintains a continuous ambition for improvement. Pupils are provided with equality of opportunity to succeed; a major strength of the school is in its ability to help pupils address their individual barriers to good behaviour and successful learning.
- Leaders and staff work tirelessly to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place in which pupils feel comfortable and able to address their anxieties. Leaders implement rigorous arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils, including robust procedures for staff recruitment and for the training of all staff in child protection and positive rewards.
- The school meets all the statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection. School leaders and staff work very effectively to ensure that pupils are safe and secure.
- Senior leaders, strongly led by the executive headteacher and headteacher, oversee excellent arrangements for the review and evaluation of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and hold staff to account effectively for the maintenance of high standards.
- Staff are provided with excellent opportunities for regular training in required aspects such as safeguarding, first aid and fire safety. Additional opportunities to enhance their qualifications and skills are available and appreciated by many members of staff.
- In this small school, middle leadership responsibilities, such as leading on the development of subjects and enrichment activities, are shared between senior managers and staff members. These arrangements are effective.
- Pupils are provided with a rich range of subjects and experiences which enable them to prepare effectively for secondary education. Arrangements for the teaching of core skills in literacy, numeracy and science are exemplary.
- Leaders and staff ensure that continuous and effective arrangements are in place to address the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. One class has, for example, prepared a display celebrating British values. This demonstrates the work they are undertaking to learn about services and activities in the local and national communities.
- Pupils' understanding of diversity in the local community is developed strongly by visits to churches and other places of worship, by visitors representing different faith groups, and through the celebration of international customs and shared meals. They are prepared extremely well for life in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders have established an environment in which pupils are enabled to make rapid and secure progress with the development of their reading, writing and numeracy skills. There has been continuous improvement in pupils' skills in these areas since the last inspection.
- Parents, carers and placing authorities speak warmly about the quality of relationships between home and school. Parents and carers are very positive about the impact of the school on their children's behaviour and social skills; a number express positive praise through statement such as, 'I feel that I now have my child back.'
- School leaders are outward looking and keen to learn from the best practice available in other schools and more widely. They make effective use of independent school improvement partners to assist with the development of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Secure arrangements for involving all staff in regular comparison of the school's standards against national expectations are at an early stage of implementation.
- The school's leaders and staff demonstrate excellent capacity for further improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**

The governors are extremely well informed about the quality of teaching, the personal development of pupils and their progress with their learning. They analyse data about the school's performance and ask searching questions about the extent to which agreed priorities are being achieved.

Governors contribute effectively to appropriate and rigorous arrangements for checking on all aspects of the school's work. They have established robust measures to ensure that each member of staff is suitably supported and challenged to meet agreed whole-school and personal targets.

Governors have a strong impact on the review and updating of relevant and effective policies for all aspects of the school's work, including the curriculum, the management of pupils' behaviour, safeguarding arrangements and pupils' achievement.

Working closely with senior leaders, governors ensure that good teaching and management are recognised and rewarded, and that underperformance is effectively addressed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- This reflects considerable progress in comparison with pupils' behaviour in previous placements. Pupils are placed at the school because they have experienced significant barriers to their learning, including serious difficulties in adjusting to the behaviour and social skills required within a school community.
- An increasing number of pupils with autistic spectrum conditions are joining the school. The staff are well trained and skilled at understanding the sensory and communication challenges faced by these pupils. Staff and parents confirm the considerable progress made in pupils' social development and academic achievement.
- The school enables pupils to overcome the challenges which they face in managing their frustrations and anger. Most pupils make rapid progress in accepting the requirement for cooperation and positive involvement in lessons. Their rapid development of excellent behaviour allows them to learn well.
- A minority of pupils take longer to adjust. Staff demonstrate exemplary patience, consideration and support for pupils, together with high expectations of the behaviour required in order to achieve well. The school's procedures for managing any inability to settle and cooperate are implemented consistently by all staff with excellent support from senior leaders.
- As a result of the consistent approaches and high expectations, staff are successful in engaging pupils in the full range of tasks and activities in the classroom and beyond. Pupils demonstrate a keen interest in their work and the ability to maintain their concentration for sustained periods of time.
- Older and more established pupils work well together when required. They also show considerable independence in working things out for themselves and checking their progress with their teachers and learning support assistants.
- Pupils of all ages demonstrate the ability to focus on their work and finish their tasks successfully. They are proud of the success shown in their completed work.
- Parents and carers, staff and placing authorities are very complimentary about the strong improvement in pupils' behaviour over time. They also comment positively on the excellent improvement in pupils' attendance which is in line with the national average.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils make an active contribution to the community, for example through collections for national and international charities, tending the school's eco-garden and vegetable plots, and responding respectfully to a diverse range of visitors to the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- All aspects of safeguarding are given a very high priority. This is evident in robust arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff, arrangements for staff training in all aspects of child protection, the assessment of risk and the management of behaviour.
- Pupils, as a result of carefully planned teaching, are very aware of behaviours which are not acceptable in school, including bullying. Pupils recognise that staff are very quick to deal with any signs of bullying or unkind behaviour. As a result, they and their parents and carers state that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They show a good awareness, for example, of healthy eating, the risks of substance abuse and the need for e-safety.
- Senior leaders and staff work very well together to ensure that the premises provide a safe environment for pupils. They complete effective routine risk assessments, together with regular checks on fire safety and maintenance, ensuring that any concerns are addressed and promptly resolved.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching contributes strongly to the excellent progress which pupils make from low starting points on entry to the school.
- Teachers and learning support staff demonstrate patience, resilience and good humour in their day-to-day relationships with pupils. They share a deep conviction and high expectation that pupils can develop suitable personal strategies to manage their frustrations and emotional difficulties.
- The school is very successful in enabling disadvantaged pupils, and those with special educational needs, to make outstanding progress. Pupils are helped to work through any self-doubts and negative attitudes, and enabled to achieve success.
- The school provides a rich variety of subjects and activities which enable all pupils to succeed. Teachers are very familiar with the particular learning characteristics of each pupil. They provide sufficient variety in tasks to enable each pupil to enjoy learning and to sustain their concentration.
- Excellent account is taken of pupils' statements of special educational needs. All pupils have access to the full range of required areas of learning, reflecting the content and standards of the revised national curriculum.
- Younger pupils, for example, demonstrated excellent concentration and perseverance as they identified the common features of fairy stories. They recalled impressive details about stories they had read together and could explain why these were fairy stories.
- Teachers are skilled at continuously checking on pupils' progress as they complete their tasks. As a result, individual pupils are provided with more challenging activities as they demonstrate, for example, success in initial methods for multiplying two digit numbers.
- Older pupils enjoyed a range of practical activities in a science experiment outdoors which enabled them to measure the distance travelled by different sounds. They were able to accurately apply their findings to their understanding of how bats find their food.
- Teachers are good at re-shaping learning activities in response to pupils' successes or misunderstanding. No time is wasted and pupils are continuously challenged to try something harder.
- Teachers mark pupils' work in a manner which highlights their strengths and provides them with targets for further improvement. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them and can identify their own successes.
- The school has implemented excellent procedures for the regular assessment of pupils' work across the full range of subjects studied. Teachers understand when individual pupils are making progress and where they may require additional support.
- Senior leaders make excellent use of assessment data to judge the extent of pupils' progress against national expectations. However, there are insufficient opportunities for all staff to work together to agree the features of good and outstanding progress over time.
- Teachers and learning support assistants work effectively together to manage the behaviour of pupils and to ensure that they concentrate appropriately on their learning activities. Learning support assistants are increasingly contributing to pupils' outstanding learning. Their individual skills vary from subject to subject and the training offered to them has not yet given them most impact on the progress of all pupils.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The outstanding achievement of pupils is very strongly promoted through agreed approaches to learning and consistent implementation of the school's expectations for managing pupils' behaviour.
- All pupils enter the school with standards of attainment which are below or well below expectations for their age. This is because of complex barriers to learning experienced in their earlier education. Over time, and once they have adjusted to the school's expectations and requirements, they make rapid progress.
- Almost all pupils make expected rates of progress from their various starting points across all aspects of reading, writing, speaking, listening and their numeracy skills. A large majority exceed national rates of progress in each of these areas of learning. Their progress in reading and mathematics is exceptional.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy reading and are proud of the books they read, including younger pupils' strong progress through nationally recognised reading schemes and older pupils' outstanding success with various books by famous authors.
- Disadvantaged pupils are closing the gaps in their learning and catching up with pupils of a similar age in schools nationally.

- The most-able pupils, whose academic potential may have been masked by complex emotional or social difficulties, develop confidence in themselves. They trust the staff and are increasingly willing, and effectively challenged, to take more confident steps towards achievements which reflect their abilities.
- Staff ensure that pupils are able to analyse and interpret meanings from written text, tables of data and the results of scientific experiments. The quality of teachers' questioning skills ensures that pupils are able to think deeply and to justify their spoken and written answers. Pupils demonstrate strengths in their ability to apply their learning to new challenges in different subjects.
- Pupils with identified special educational needs make progress in line with or in excess of national expectations from their starting points.
- The majority of pupils enter the school during Key Stage 2; a minority move into Key Stage 2 from the school's provision for younger pupils. All pupils are extremely well prepared for the transition to secondary education. Senior staff are particularly diligent and relentless in ensuring that each individual pupil is fully supported in their transition to a new placement.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	131666
Inspection number	463004
DfE registration number	888/6037

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day special School
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	Graham McEwan
Executive Headteacher	James Joyce
Headteacher	Paula Kitching
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,996
Telephone number	01772 672630
Email address	office@oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk

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