

Oakfield Lodge School

Warmingham Road, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 4PP

Inspection dates

25–26 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- After the previous inspection, the development of the school was hampered by regular changes in leadership and high staff turnover.
- The rate of improvement has increased significantly with the appointment of current leaders. Despite them overseeing significant improvements across the school, pupils do not benefit from a good standard of education.
- Leaders' systems for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and judging the quality of pupils' learning lack precision.
- The curriculum does not fully meet the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Subject leaders have not given enough thought to the development of their curriculums.
- Pupils are not supported well to develop their literacy skills.
- Pupils who need support for their special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are not helped as well as those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Teachers do not routinely set pupils challenging work.
- Teachers' use of assessment does not consistently help them to improve pupils' learning.
- Rates of absence remain too high, as do the number of fixed-term exclusions issued by leaders.
- The development of pupils' cultural and spiritual understanding is not as strong as other aspects of their personal development.

The school has the following strengths

- New leaders have transformed the school's ethos and culture.
- The number of pupils who do not have a place in education, employment or training when they leave the school has dramatically reduced.
- Pupils are making much faster progress in key stage 4, particularly in art and mathematics.
- Many more pupils are being reintegrated into mainstream schools or joining special schools.
- Improved training for teachers is leading to significantly better teaching.
- Pupils behave very well. They enjoy warm and respectful relationships with staff.
- Pupils benefit from good arrangements for their personal development.
- Leaders have further strengthened the school's safeguarding culture. Pupils are supported effectively to manage risk themselves.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - refining the strategies that leaders and managers use to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of pupils' learning over time
 - further developing the breadth of the curriculum to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, including the most able and those who stay at the school for a longer period, and to offer pupils greater choice over what they study
 - developing subject leaders so that they can improve the richness of the curriculum in their areas
 - improving the ways in which the school helps pupils who need support for their SEN and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that the new management committee holds leaders to account for building upon the clear improvements that have been made across the school.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - giving greater attention to the development of pupils' literacy skills in English and across the curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers provide pupils with work which reflects consistently high expectations of what pupils of all abilities can know, understand and do
 - developing the accuracy and usefulness of assessment to help teachers to plan future learning that builds upon what pupils already know and addresses gaps and misconceptions in their learning.
- Reduce rates of absence and persistent absence by continuing to address these issues with a broad range of strategies.
- Reduce rates of fixed-term exclusion by developing alternative ways for leaders to reinforce their high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- Further enhance pupils' personal development by increasing the range of opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural and spiritual understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- After the previous inspection, the rate of improvement was hindered by regular changes in leadership and a high turnover of staff. Clear and sustained improvement has only been secured since the appointment of current leaders during the previous academic year. As a result, much of the school's work still requires further improvement to be good. The quality of teaching, although improving, remains variable. Rates of absence and fixed-term exclusion have increased further and many of the changes that needed to be made are still at an early stage of their implementation.
- New leaders have introduced many systems to remedy long-standing weaknesses. For example, they have improved the way that the quality of teaching is monitored and pupils' learning is evaluated. Despite this, these systems are underdeveloped and do not consistently provide leaders with the information that they need to further improve teaching and pupils' progress.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum fully meets the needs of all groups of pupils. For example, despite the introduction of English literature to the key stage 4 curriculum, there are not enough opportunities to stretch the most able. Furthermore, pupils do not have enough choice over what academic subjects they study in key stage 4. This limits the potential for pupils to achieve more broadly. In addition, the curriculum is not sufficiently tailored to support pupils who are likely to stay at the school for different periods of time.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and committed to improving the delivery of their subjects. Despite this, they have not given enough thought to the development of the curriculum in their areas. Too many subject leaders base their curriculums solely on the demands of national examinations. As a result, valuable opportunities are missed to add richness and greater meaning to the curriculum.
- New leaders are unwavering in their determination for the school to be good for the first time in its history. Their 'no nonsense' approach has galvanised staff and injected the school community with a renewed sense of determination and optimism.
- In a short period of time, leaders have introduced changes that have led to clear improvements across the school. Pupils' behaviour has improved greatly, as has the support for their personal development. Furthermore, the quality of teaching has improved across much of the curriculum. Crucially, these improvements have had a significant impact on pupils' outcomes. More pupils are being successfully reintegrated into mainstream schools or proceeding to a special school that meets their needs. Moreover, all pupils from the 2018 Year 11 cohort advanced to a range of appropriate destinations. Current pupils are also making significantly faster progress, particularly in mathematics, art and across key stage 4.
- Leaders have a very clear understanding of what the school does well and which areas require significant attention. They are frank and honest about areas of the school's work that they feel are not good enough. Leaders' actions have already secured clear impact in different areas. Where weaknesses remain, leaders have clear and appropriate plans to secure the improvements that are necessary.

- Leaders have become more outward-facing in their quest to improve the school. They enjoy productive relationships with local mainstream schools. This has helped to improve the arrangements that the school puts in place to support pupils with their reintegration to mainstream schools. It has also enabled staff to improve their teaching by working closely with colleagues from mainstream schools.
- Leaders have drawn effectively on the support offered by the Adelaide Academy Trust. Subject teachers work collaboratively with groups of teachers across the trust who teach the same subject. This has contributed to the improvements in teaching that have been made across the school. Leaders from the trust have also supported leaders to improve the precision of their self-evaluation and to develop different systems for monitoring the school's progress. Leaders appreciate the support they receive from the trust. However, at the same time, they have ensured that they are not over-reliant on this help.
- Leaders have a sound rationale for the design of the curriculum which is based upon a determination for every pupil to successfully proceed to an appropriate destination in the shortest time possible. Some aspects of the curriculum make a strong contribution to the fulfilment of this objective. For example, the core curriculum of English, mathematics and science helps to prepare pupils for the demands of future academic learning. Furthermore, additional subjects like food technology and art make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Vocational learning is also a strength of the school's work. Pupils benefit from a personalised and structured approach to work experience and work-related learning that provides excellent preparation for a range of potential post-16 destinations.
- Leaders ensure that where they use alternative provision, it makes a valuable contribution to pupils' development. In particular, they use alternative provision to add breadth to the curriculum and to support pupils with their next steps by providing a range of bespoke creative, therapeutic and vocational opportunities.
- Leaders have greatly improved the education received by pupils who are tutored. Great care is taken to ensure the safety and well-being of these pupils. Furthermore, teaching for this group has improved as a result of the tutoring being undertaken by school staff who receive the same training, support and guidance as staff who work in the main school.
- The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a clear vision for how support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities should develop. She has already greatly improved the school's identification and assessment of pupils who are presenting as potentially having undiagnosed or unmet needs. This has led to more pupils being assessed for an EHC plan and moving to schools that are better placed to meet their needs. Despite these improvements, pupils who require support for their SEN and/or disabilities are not helped as effectively as those with an EHC plan. Teachers have only recently received training on the local authority's new SEN toolkit and it is therefore too early to assess the impact of this work.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding effectively. Leaders ensure that SMSC development is woven throughout the curriculum and influences, for example, the choice of books that are studied in English. The development of pupils' social and moral understanding is particularly strong. Pupils regularly take part in discussions about controversial topics, which enables them to deepen their understanding of right and wrong. For example, they debate the

advantages and disadvantages of applying the death penalty for certain crimes. Despite these strengths, the development of pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding is not as strong, although pupils clearly hold attitudes that are respectful and accepting of others who are different.

Governance of the school

- Members of the recently formed management committee share leaders' determination to provide pupils with a good standard of education. Members share exceptional experience of working in education. Many have direct experience of leading and working in schools with pupils who have complex needs.
- Members use their knowledge to hold leaders to account and to ensure that there is a sound rationale for any changes that are made. They challenge leaders to ensure that the improvements they have made are sustainable and will lay the foundations for future development.
- Members are actively involved in school life. They are regular visitors to the school and seek first-hand reassurance that the changes being made are having a positive impact on pupils' life chances.
- Members diligently oversee the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.
- Members of the previous interim executive board, which disbanded in April 2018, were instrumental in securing the appointment of the current headteacher. However, they experienced less success in ensuring that previous leaders improved the school following the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have strengthened the school's safeguarding culture significantly since the previous inspection. Leaders have ensured that staff share a thorough and nuanced understanding of the safeguarding risks that are potentially more prevalent among pupils at the school. Staff are exceptionally vigilant to signs of neglect or abuse. When they have concerns, they use the school's systems to inform safeguarding leaders in a swift and appropriate manner.
- The school's safeguarding culture is underpinned by the strong relationship that pupils enjoy with members of staff. Pupils are clear that they would feel comfortable telling any member of staff if they had worries or concerns.
- Pupils are also supported well to be able to manage risk for themselves. Staff are highly skilled at talking to pupils about threats, such as child sexual exploitation, involvement with gangs and different forms of criminality. Leaders also enlist the help of external speakers, such as members of the emergency services, who talk from first-hand experience about different risks. As a result, pupils say that they feel more aware of the potential harm that could be caused by different behaviours.
- Staff receive thorough safeguarding training that enables them to support pupils effectively. Particular attention is paid to issues that pose a greater risk in the school's context. For example, staff have recently been supported to develop an awareness of the risks attached to pupils' potential involvement in national drug networks.

- Leaders liaise effectively with a range of external agencies to support pupils and their families. In particular, leaders enjoy a productive working relationship with those responsible for safeguarding at the local authority.
- Leaders fundamentally understand the risks attached to high levels of absence. To reduce these risks, they have robust procedures in place for ascertaining the whereabouts of any pupil who fails to attend. They also have stringent systems in place to ensure the safety of pupils who access alternative provision or who are tutored away from the school site.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across much of the curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. Despite this improvement, teaching continues to require improvement. This is because teachers' expectations of what pupils can know, do and understand are still not consistently high enough in some subjects. As a result, teachers do not routinely provide the challenge over time that enables pupils to make fast progress across the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of assessment is also variable. Teachers do not consistently have a clear understanding of why and how they assess pupils. They are sometimes unsure, for example, whether they are assessing to evaluate pupils' progress over time or to identify gaps or misconceptions in pupils' prior learning. Furthermore, teachers have only recently begun to moderate the accuracy of their assessments with colleagues from other schools. As a result, some teachers lack confidence in evaluating the progress that pupils have made.
- Pupils are not supported well to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum and in English lessons. Although teachers focus on developing pupils' vocabulary and the depth and technical accuracy of their writing, this is not done in a systematic way that facilitates strong rates of progression. Some pupils are supported with additional literacy lessons, but the impact of these is often lessened by the curriculum content which fails to grab their interest.
- The improvements that have been made to teaching have been underpinned by the excellent relationships that teachers and other adults have built with pupils. Pupils respect and trust staff. They are keen to impress them and do well. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and show clear pride in their learning. The careful way most pupils now present their work reflects this important shift in the school's learning culture.
- Teaching assistants support pupils very effectively within lessons. They help pupils to focus, think deeply and be creative.
- The teaching of mathematics has emerged as an important strength. Staff in this subject have high expectations of all pupils' learning. They are skilled at building pupils' confidence and then moving them on to more demanding work. They ask probing questions of pupils that encourage them to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to a range of different problems. Teachers' use of assessment in mathematics is very effective. Teachers assess pupils to find out what they know and can do. Teachers then use this information to ensure that pupils complete work that

addresses gaps in their learning before they are set more challenging tasks to complete. As a result of these improvements, pupils are now making fast progress in mathematics.

- Teaching in other subjects is improving and has clear strengths. Pupils produce excellent work in art due to teaching that carefully matches the needs of every pupil. Pupils are supported to understand precisely what they need to do to improve their work and become more accomplished artists. Pupils are also supported well to develop their scientific knowledge and understanding through the completion of regular and thought-provoking practical experiments.
- Teachers ensure that little time is wasted in lessons. They explain to pupils what is expected of them and the purpose of different activities. This contributes to lessons being purposeful and productive.
- Since the previous inspection, teachers' subject knowledge has improved significantly. This shift has been accelerated by the appointment of permanent teachers who are specialists in the subjects that they teach. Teachers' understanding of how to teach effectively has also improved due to the experience that new staff have brought from their previous schools. Improved training for teachers, such as the provision of opportunities for staff to observe teaching in mainstream schools, has also developed teachers' understanding of the characteristics of effective teaching and learning.
- Pupils in alternative provision, including those who attend The Fermain Academy on a full-time basis, say that they are well taught. These pupils say that they are making good progress due to teachers' high expectations and the challenging work that they are helped to complete.
- Leaders have also improved teaching for pupils who receive daily tutoring. Leaders monitor the quality of tutoring closely. The work of these pupils shows that teaching is pitched at a level that is helping them to make steady progress. Furthermore, improvements in the way that these pupils present their work indicate that tutors' expectations are now higher than in the past.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a sea change in pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils are engaged in lessons and keen to do well. Crucially, pupils are supported to take greater responsibility for their own learning. This attitude was reflected in several comments that pupils made to inspectors. Pupils typically commented that they now see their work ethic and attitude as being the decisive elements in determining their life chances.
- These improvements to pupils' personal development have led to many positive consequences, such as better behaviour and improved presentation of work. Importantly, improvements in this area have underpinned the increased success that the school has experienced in moving a greater proportion of pupils to appropriate destinations.

- Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of work-related learning. For example, they are supported to write their curriculum vitae and are given useful guidance on their interview technique. Pupils also learn from appropriate work experience and a structured programme of vocational learning. They sample a broad range of vocations, such as construction and catering. They also take their learning to greater depths in vocations that they opt to pursue. These options lead to relevant qualifications and a range of potential post-16 pathways. Improvements in this area have helped the school to significantly increase the proportion of pupils who proceed to an appropriate destination at the end of Year 11.
- Pupils respond positively to the school's ethos of care and respect. Pupils speak politely to each other and to adults. They are friendly and appropriate in their manner. This reflects the importance that the school attaches to the development of good manners. Staff act as excellent role models in this respect. Furthermore, many of the trips that are organised, such as visits to the Trafford Centre, aim to provide opportunities for pupils to interact positively with members of the public.
- Pupils are considerate of each other's needs. They say that bullying is very rare and that discriminatory and prejudicial language is never heard. Pupils told inspectors with a refreshing simplicity that 'we just accept people for who they are.'
- Pupils are provided with careful support to help them maintain their mental and physical health. For example, pupils are taught about nutrition and healthy eating in science and food technology. They also benefit from regular visits from a school nurse and help with specific health-related issues, such as smoking cessation.
- Pupils are encouraged to be active. Many pupils cycle several miles to school. In the summer term, pupils completed the 'daily mile challenge', which involved pupils running a mile each day. Pupils take part in activities that are designed to engender a love of physical activity and the outdoors. For example, pupils in key stage 3 take part in regular opportunities to learn within an outdoor environment, and pupils enjoy weekly enrichment activities such as football and fishing. Pupils also complete the John Muir Award, which encourages pupils to connect with nature.
- Staff have been supported to help pupils with their emotional health and general well-being. They are trained to identify and help pupils who are experiencing mental health difficulties. The school's mental health first-aider has also delivered training on suicide prevention and self-harm. As a result of this work, staff are acutely aware of the increased prevalence of mental health issues and pupils receive timely and appropriate help when they experience difficulties.
- Those parents and carers who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the impact of the school's work on their children's personal development. In particular, they all spoke fondly about specific members of staff who they felt had played a pivotal role in transforming the way that their children viewed themselves and education. Typical comments from parents included: 'They go out of their way to help' and 'They really understand the children and treat them with respect.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.

- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the site. However, the school's work in this area continues to require improvement because rates of absence and persistent absence are still too high. As a result, the impact of improved teaching and personal development is significantly reduced.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence increased further during the previous academic year. Pupils' attendance is well below historical national averages for all schools and below historical national averages for pupil referral units. Despite this, leaders have implemented a broad range of strategies to improve attendance, which include fining parents who fail in their duty to send their children to school; working closely with the local authority's educational welfare officer; supporting parents through the help of a family liaison officer; promoting the virtues of regular attendance among pupils and parents; and rewarding pupils for regular attendance. Because of this work, there are emerging signs that attendance is beginning to improve. For example, there has been a significant improvement in attendance each week during the current academic year.
- Leaders are also able to demonstrate how they have had a significant impact on improving the attendance and behaviour of many pupils since they joined the school.
- Pupils behave very well during the school day. They respond positively to established routines. For example, they are compliant and friendly when they hand in their mobile phones and are checked for banned items at the start of the school day.
- Staff mingle with pupils during break and lunchtime. This helps to further strengthen relationships and ensures high levels of supervision.
- Leaders go to great lengths to ensure that pupils who access alternative provision or tutoring away from the school site are well cared for. These pupils are supported in the same ways as others to improve their attendance. Leaders' quality-assurance systems ensure that appropriate care and attention are given to the personal development of these pupils.
- Despite these improvements, there was a pronounced spike in the number of fixed-term exclusions during the previous academic year. Leaders have shown that a large proportion of these exclusions were issued for pupils who were caught smoking on the school site. New leaders decided to issue fixed-term exclusions for this misdemeanour to reinforce the school's messages about healthy living and to highlight to pupils the new leaders' expectations for pupils' conduct. School information shows that most of these exclusions were issued to pupils who were in Year 11 and have now left the school. Leaders' behavioural records show a reduction in other forms of misbehaviour, such as those relating to violence and aggression.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The changes that leaders have made across the school have led to significant improvements to pupils' outcomes. However, these outcomes still require improvement because pupils make less progress in English than in mathematics and because pupils in key stage 3 make significantly less academic progress than pupils in key stage 4.
- Since joining the school, leaders have been able to accelerate significantly some promising trends that have begun to emerge over time. In particular, the number of

pupils who advanced to further education, employment or training at the end of Year 11 greatly improved in 2018 in relation to previous years. Currently, all pupils from the 2018 Year 11 cohort are settled in an appropriate destination. This reflects the strong improvements that have been made to pupils' preparation for the next stage of their education.

- Pupils are also achieving significantly more qualifications by the time that they leave the end of Year 11. For the first time in the school's history, every pupil who left Year 11 in 2018 did so with a qualification in both English and mathematics. The range of pupils' qualifications has also broadened because of the amendments to the curriculum that have been made.
- The number of pupils successfully joining a special school or being reintegrated into a mainstream school has also increased significantly. This is important as it represents the fulfilment of leaders' intentions for the curriculum. This development also reflects the improvements that have been made to teaching and pupils' personal development, as well as the enhancements that have been made to the support for pupils during the period of transition.
- Pupils make considerably quicker progress the longer they have been at the school. This improvement over time is due to the school's strong work to boost pupils' personal development and get pupils ready to learn. Typically, pupils make slow academic progress when they join the school. This is particularly the case for pupils who join during key stage 3.
- Pupils are making much quicker progress in subjects where teaching is showing the fastest improvement. In particular, pupils are making much faster progress in mathematics as a result of significant improvements to teaching. Pupils continue to make fast progress in food technology, art and on their vocational courses.
- Pupils' progress in English is not yet good. This is because pupils are not systematically supported with the development of their literacy skills across the curriculum and in English lessons.
- There are no discernible differences in the progress of different groups within the school. Disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and both genders achieve equally well. Furthermore, pupils who access alternative provision make similar progress to their peers. As a group, pupils who are tutored away from the school site attain less well than others. This is because their starting points are often lower than those of pupils in the main school. Despite this, these pupils make steady progress and attain useful qualifications by the end of Year 11.

School details

Unique reference number	136676
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10046557

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	Management committee
Chair	Ian Southern
Headteacher	Gemma Bailey
Telephone number	01270 685626
Website	www.oakfieldlodge.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	head@oakfieldlodge.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school moved to a new site in November 2015. Since then, the school has been housed in temporary accommodation. The construction of the new school building is about to start.
- An interim executive board (IEB) replaced the governing body in May 2015. In April 2018, the IEB was replaced by a management committee.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has been supported closely by the Adelaide Academy Trust. Plans for the school to join the Adelaide Academy Trust are well developed. However, the regional schools commissioner has paused this process and the school remains maintained by the local authority. Two members of the management committee, including the new chair of the committee, are employees of the Adelaide Academy Trust.
- The school caters for boys and girls who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion.

- A small number of pupils have an EHC plan. A number are in the process of assessment for a plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. A very small number are looked after.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has had three different substantive headteachers and one interim headteacher. The current headteacher has been in post since February 2018 and the current deputy headteacher has been in post since September 2017.
- For many years, a high proportion of staff have been on temporary contracts or on supply. However, all staff, including those who tutor pupils off site, are now on permanent contracts.
- There are more pupils on roll than the temporary accommodation can house. The local authority has therefore decided that a large proportion of pupils in Year 11 will be taught at The Fermain Academy for the current academic year. The school also uses a number of other alternative providers to complement the education provided by the school: Reaseheath College, 'Cre8' and 'Project Ink'.
- A number of pupils are tutored away from the school site. Some pupils are tutored at their homes whereas others are tutored in spaces such as public libraries and council offices.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders.
- Inspectors observed lessons with school leaders and conducted an extensive scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed behaviour around the school, including observing pupils as they arrived at school and during breaktime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, plans to improve the school, information on attendance and behaviour, documents relating to safeguarding and information that illustrates how much progress pupils have made since joining the school.
- Inspectors met with members of the management committee, including its chair. Inspectors also met with representatives from the local authority and the Adelaide Academy Trust.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of parents and considered the school's own work to capture the views of parents. There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. No comments were made by parents using Ofsted's free-text facility.
- Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils and informally with others. They also considered the results of the school's own work to capture the views of pupils. Inspectors considered the views of one pupil who completed the Ofsted questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with a group of staff. There were no responses to the staff questionnaire.
- An inspector visited two of the alternative providers used by the school.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nell Banfield

Ofsted Inspector

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