

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



14 November 2018

Mr Stephen Copley  
Headteacher  
Oakfield Park School  
Barnsley Road  
Ackworth  
Pontefract  
West Yorkshire  
WF7 7DT

Dear Mr Copley

### **Short inspection of Oakfield Park School, Ackworth**

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 2018 with Mark Dent, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be outstanding in November 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

You have maintained a strong focus on meeting the needs of each pupil. As a result, senior leaders, staff and governors have reviewed the curriculum and have ambitious plans to introduce a new curriculum from January 2019. Leaders are confident that the changes to the curriculum will more closely meet the needs of all pupils, and better prepare them for adulthood. In addition, the structure and content of the new curriculum will be precisely matched to the desired outcomes in pupils' education, health and care plans. You have clearly described the structure of the curriculum and you are working closely with staff and governors on these changes and the introduction of a new and more refined assessment system. Your plans to develop the role of middle leaders is an important step in ensuring the prompt and effective implementation of these changes.

Parents and carers told inspectors that you are a dedicated headteacher and that they highly value your leadership and the support provided by your deputy. One parent said that Oakfield Park is 'a wonderful school with amazing staff' and another commented, 'Since my son started at Oakfield Park he has been very, very happy. I couldn't think of a better place for my son to be.' The parents that spoke to an inspector were confident that their children are safe, well cared for and

making good progress. Parents valued the transition arrangements that helped their children start school and the support provided by other professionals, such as the school nurses and therapists. A few parents stated that they think communication with parents could be improved and they want to be more closely involved in planning for their children's future after school.

At the heart of the school is your commitment to meeting the needs of every pupil. Pupils have positive attitudes to school. They told inspectors that they enjoy attending school, they have lots of friends, they feel safe and they enjoy practical lessons, such as cookery.

You have worked effectively to develop the work of the governing body. Governors have successfully recruited new members with a range of skills that enables them to effectively challenge and support you, and other senior leaders. The minutes of governors' meetings show that governors are well informed about important strategic issues. The recently appointed chair of the governing body works closely with you and the designated safeguarding leader. Other governors have developed a link responsibility for different aspects of the work of the school, such as the curriculum, assessment and finance. Governors are reviewing their skills to ensure that they continue to be well placed to support the school and challenge leaders. Members of staff regularly attend meetings of the governing body to discuss their role in school and the impact of their work. Governors value these discussions, which have helped them develop a better understanding of the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. There is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school and the designated safeguarding leader is passionate about her role and responsibility to protect children. She works closely with the safeguarding governor, who regularly checks safeguarding procedures. Leaders work effectively in partnership with other agencies and services, and they challenge decisions when they consider the needs of pupils are not being met. Governors and leaders have completed training in safer recruitment procedures. The school's record of recruitment checks is complete and meets government requirements.

The designated safeguarding leader attends regular safeguarding training provided by the local authority. This information is shared promptly with staff and governors through the school's programme of regular safeguarding training, and the induction programme for new staff. As a result, staff and governors are kept informed of changes in guidance and legislation. Staff are knowledgeable about the risks that pupils face and know the procedures they must follow when a concern arises. Leaders have introduced an online recording system that enables a prompt response to concerns and the analysis of safeguarding information.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and know that they can talk to an adult if they are worried about anything. One pupil said, 'I feel safe because there are people to keep an eye on other people.' Most parents that completed Ofsted's

online survey and all those that spoke to an inspector agree that their children are safe in school. Pupils learn how to stay safe online. Leaders share e-safety information with parents in review meetings, newsletters and on the school's website. Inspectors also observed pupils working safely in practical subjects.

The arrangements for pupils arriving at, and leaving, school are well organised and supervised by senior staff. Pupils transfer safely between home to school transport and then to the school building. Some transport escorts also work as teaching assistants. These staff provide effective support for pupils at the start the school day. For some pupils with the most complex needs a daily programme of physical activity at the beginning of the school day helps pupils settle quickly. This ensures that they are ready to learn.

### **Inspection findings**

- Inspectors started by checking whether the school is a safe place for pupils. As a result of our observations, and discussions with pupils, leaders, staff, parents and governors, inspectors can confirm that safeguarding is effective and that the school is a safe place for pupils. Staff know pupils well and this results in pupils feeling safe and very well supported. This was evidenced in the warm and respectful relationships between pupils and staff.
- Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Leaders have prepared a detailed description of the school's strengths and areas for development. Areas for school improvement have been identified as a result of work with the school's improvement adviser, and a recent whole-school review with a peer headteacher. However, in leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, sometimes there is an overlap between what leaders consider as a strength and what they have described as an area for improvement. In addition, development targets are not described sufficiently precisely to enable leaders and governors to measure progress and understand the intended impact on pupils' outcomes.
- After a period of review, leaders have decided that they need to change the curriculum to ensure that it more effectively prepares pupils for adulthood. In addition, leaders want the new curriculum to improve the way teachers organise learning so that it more closely matches the desired outcomes in pupils' education, health and care plans. After consulting staff, parents and governors, leaders have decided that the curriculum should change from a subject-based approach. Leaders described seven strands in the new curriculum, including communication, which they consider as important for every pupil. Inspectors observed staff using British Sign Language to communicate with the small number of pupils that have a hearing impairment and benefited from this communication system. However, we did not observe staff using other sign languages to communicate with pupils who have delayed communication skills.
- At the time of the inspection, leaders were investigating different assessment arrangements and have plans to introduce a new system alongside the new curriculum, as soon as possible. Leaders have collected information about pupils' progress and compared this with similar information from other special schools.

The results of these comparisons enabled leaders to be confident that pupils have previously made strong progress.

- In line with the changes to the curriculum and assessment arrangements, leaders have introduced 'Golden Thread' files. These are individual pupil portfolios which contain information about each pupil's learning priorities and a record of their work. Inspectors checked several of these files and found that there were inconsistencies about how regularly work was included, and whether work was linked to pupils' individual education plan targets. It was evident that files were not systematically checked or evaluated sufficiently regularly to provide convincing evidence to support leaders' view that all pupils continue to make strong progress.
- It was clear from inspectors' observations that leaders and staff know each pupil well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to describe the needs of each pupil. Classrooms are well organised and learning activities are closely matched to the needs of each pupil. In the classrooms for pupils who have complex needs, staff use symbols to support pupils' learning and communication. The use of 'now' and 'next' cards and individual timetables help pupils understand the structure of the day and engage effectively in learning. Sensory activities are used well to stimulate and engage pupils in learning. The consistent and effective support of the teaching assistants enables pupils who have complex needs to take part in learning, manage their behaviour and develop independence well.
- Leaders have recognised the important role that middle leaders will play in the successful implementation of the new curriculum and in improving the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Consequently, the headteacher is working closely with teachers and governors to develop the role of middle leaders and refine the performance management systems already in place.
- In the last inspection, leaders were asked to refine the school's assessment procedures to provide an even more detailed record of the progress made by pupils who have the most complex learning difficulties. Inspectors saw evidence that leaders have successfully introduced a detailed assessment system for those pupils who have the most complex needs. Staff use detailed assessment records, supported by photographic and video evidence, to record the small steps in each pupil's learning. These assessments are regularly moderated in school, and with another local school. As a result of these changes, pupils with the most complex needs make strong progress.
- There is a strong emphasis on preparation for adulthood in the school's sixth form. Students follow a curriculum which includes externally accredited courses in functional literacy and numeracy as well as practical courses in horticulture, construction and sports studies. Students' progress through these courses is closely monitored by the senior leader of the sixth form who has introduced accredited courses for key stage 4 pupils. Sixth-form students have opportunities to take part in work experience placements in school and in the local community. Students run a weekly café and tuck shop and have responsibilities in school, such as helping on the reception desk. As a result, students leave school well

prepared for the next step in their education, employment or training.

- Inspectors wanted to understand how leaders used the additional funding, such as pupil premium funding, that the school receives to improve pupils' outcomes. Leaders described the different ways that this funding is used and have analysed the impact in detail. For example, leaders have identified those pupils who are not making the intended progress in the development of their literacy or numeracy skills. Funding is used to provide additional support for these pupils and leaders report that pupils quickly get back on track. Other funding has been used to purchase specialist resources, support curriculum activities and to purchase a new reading scheme. However, leaders have not ensured that the impact of additional funding is clearly described on the school's website. This is a statutory requirement.
- Inspectors wanted to understand what action leaders are taking to improve attendance of all groups of pupils and reduce the number of pupils that are persistently absent. Leaders' records indicate that attendance has improved over the last year and is now slightly better than that for other similar schools. Leaders know each pupil particularly well. They understand that, as a result of their complex health needs, some pupils are unable to attend school for extended periods. Leaders have developed strong links with other agencies and provide planning and advice to enable pupils to continue with their education when they are unable to attend school. Leaders know promptly when and why each pupil is absent, so they can be assured of each pupil's safety. Even so, leaders do not analyse absence by different groups of pupils, including the group supported by the pupil premium funding, and so they cannot identify any possible patterns of reasons for pupils' absence.
- Leaders are proud of the progress that pupils make to improve their behaviour and attitude to learning, and parents likewise. One parent recently contacted the school to state that he had 'renewed his faith in education' as a result of the positive changes in his daughter's behaviour. The senior leader with responsibility for behaviour has introduced a child-centred approach to behaviour management and clear reporting procedures. Staff use an electronic system to record pupils' behaviour and leaders analyse the results each week. As a result, some pupils have an individual action plan which describes how they are helped to improve their behaviour and overcome barriers to learning. Staff support pupils well in improving and managing their behaviour. There are respectful relationships across the school between staff and pupils and pupils clearly have positive attitudes to learning and they behave well.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to introduce a new curriculum and assessment system are implemented quickly
- the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans include measurable targets to assess the desired impact on pupils' outcomes

- they use monitoring information strategically to improve pupils' outcomes
- they develop the role and impact of middle leaders so that they contribute effectively to curriculum development and improved pupils' outcomes
- staff use appropriate signing support in order that all pupils can understand and take part in activities as fully as possible
- the school website meets the publication requirements from the Department for Education.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

George Gilmore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you; the deputy headteacher; the two assistant headteachers; four governors, including the chair of the governing body; and eight parents. An inspector had a telephone conversation with the school's improvement adviser.

Inspectors observed pupils arriving at school, at lunchtime and as they moved around the school. Inspectors visited lessons, accompanied by leaders, spoke to several pupils, looked at their work and spoke to teachers and support staff about lesson planning, assessments and record-keeping. Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks, curriculum plans, schemes of work and assessment records. An inspector met members of the school council.

Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan and discussed these with you and senior leaders, governors and the local authority school improvement adviser. Inspectors looked at a range of information, including: pupil files, education health and care plans, the minutes of meetings of the governing body, the peer review report and school policies. Inspectors discussed the curriculum, pupils' progress and assessment information with you and senior leaders. An inspector had meetings with the leaders responsible for safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, and the use of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding.

Inspectors considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including eight responses to the free-text service for parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire or to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

