

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 January 2019

Mr Phillip Potter
Headteacher
Oak Grove College
The Boulevard
Worthing
West Sussex
BN13 1JX

Dear Mr Potter

Short inspection of Oak Grove College

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2019 with Sue Cox, 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 good in December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You lead a dedicated and talented team that places pupils' learning and personal development at the heart of all that the school does. Together, you, with your senior leaders and governors, successfully drive forward the vision that 'everyone matters, every day counts'. Pupils thrive within the school's caring ethos and they make good progress.

Warm and trusting relationships are evident between staff and pupils throughout the day. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school and like their teachers 'because they make learning fun'. During breaktimes, pupils play safely and cooperatively with each other, and they behave well in lessons. Teachers listen to pupils' ideas with interest, and pupils are considerate towards each other. Support staff are sensitive and skilful when meeting the needs of pupils with highly complex medical and personal care requirements.

You have built successfully on the many strengths that inspectors found when they previously inspected the school. Leaders have designed an innovative curriculum in each of your five different 'family groups' and in the sixth form. These groupings provide a tailored approach to meet the needs of the very wide range of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) for which the school caters. Family groups carefully take into account pupils' different abilities. During our visits to the groups, we observed pupils engaging positively with all of their learning activities.

Following the last inspection, inspectors asked you to make even better use of school-level information in order to plan further improvements. They also asked you to improve the accuracy and use of teachers' assessments for the most able pupils. You understand clearly the school's many strengths and the unique challenges that your pupils experience with their learning and development. Meeting their needs so that all make good progress is always at the top of the school improvement priority list. However, improvement actions are not defined sharply to help leaders and governors to evaluate the impact that specific actions have on pupils' outcomes.

In line with pupils' individual needs and abilities, teachers use their assessments of learning to support and adapt teaching. Leaders have implemented high-quality assessments that identify the detailed steps in progress made by pupils with complex learning difficulties. Assessment is not used as precisely to match teaching and learning for some of the school's most able pupils. Pupils' workbooks show that, at times, they could be challenged to make even more progress. This is because teachers sometimes do not use assessment to plan work that is sufficiently demanding for this group of pupils.

Parents appreciate that their children are supervised well and are encouraged to develop independence in the safe and supportive environment that the school provides. One parent summed up the views of most parents by saying, 'All staff are passionate, enthusiastic and focused on our children's needs to prepare them for independent living later in life.' Parents say that their children come home happy from school.

Governors are committed and experienced, and they fully understand their responsibilities. They have a visible presence in the school and know it well. In recent years, governors have made effective use of informative reports about pupils' outcomes. Governors' checks support the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and the use of additional funding. They welcome the strong teamwork and high standards that you consistently promote, and they know how to hold you to account by asking probing questions about the school's work.

Safeguarding is effective.

School staff are vigilant about keeping pupils safe from harm. Together, you recognise the ways in which pupils with SEND are particularly vulnerable. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Everyone is trained for all aspects of safeguarding, including the duty to protect children from radicalisation, in line with their level of responsibility. The designated leader for safeguarding ensures that all staff have weekly updates so that they know what signs to look for and how to raise concerns. Teachers and other adults know each pupil as an individual and they are alert to the smallest changes in behaviour that might indicate a concern.

Pupils told inspectors that there is no bullying. They say that they can go to any

member of staff if they have any concern. Well-planned lessons, appropriate to pupils' individual abilities, help them to learn how to keep safe in different situations, and they learn how to use the internet safely.

Staff maintain productive relationships with parents and the many other professionals involved in pupils' social and care needs. Rigorous checks take place to follow up any absence from school, with a particular focus on ensuring that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' rigorous analysis of pupils' key stage assessments shows that all groups of pupils make good progress. Inspectors confirmed this by looking at pupils' work and teachers' records of learning. Older pupils study successfully for a wide range of accreditations.
- Leaders have designed the curriculum so that it offers exciting and practical opportunities. Teaching staff go to great lengths to help all pupils to participate, irrespective of the complexity of their care needs. Pupils enjoy adventure through sports and outdoor pursuits, including residential visits. They engage in drama and music productions that are highly regarded, some of which take place in professional theatres. These experiences, along with skilfully delivered lessons that focus on the arts and food technology, help to develop individual talents and interests.
- In the sixth form, teachers respond quickly to students' learning and progress. This helps students to develop and use the key skills that they and their teachers agree to be important. Close links with employers, along with college placements, help students to gain employment wherever such an option is practical.
- Teachers know individual pupils' needs extremely well and take care to ensure that lessons are personalised to meet them. Pupils respond enthusiastically to interesting and well-planned learning activities. The most able pupils have lessons that are subject-specific, while pupils with significantly low starting points have learning that is organised around their wider development needs. On occasion, teachers are not sharp enough in using what they know about the most able pupils' prior learning to support their next steps.
- Your leaders have liaised effectively with other professionals to implement a wide range of therapies that benefit pupils' highly complex needs. These therapies give pupils valuable sensory experiences and develop their communication skills.
- The school has a very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils, including children looked after. The school's own assessment information shows that, in 2018, and in a number of learning areas, disadvantaged pupils made stronger progress than other pupils in the school with similar starting points. Teaching staff know their pupils very well, which helps them to identify and provide meaningful additional provision, such as further therapy or a device to assist communication. Leaders use additional funding well to make a positive

difference to disadvantaged pupils' learning and progress.

- Teachers have introduced daily lessons that explicitly develop pupils' communication and/or literacy skills. Pupils develop strong reading and writing skills as a result of the school's dedicated approach. The school's use of phonics has helped key stage 3 pupils who were previously struggling to learn to read. Inspectors saw enthusiastic Year 10 pupils who ably used the internet to research about a chosen pet. They were planning to write their own care leaflets and showed a keen interest in their topic.
- Multi-sensory approaches enable pupils with the most complex needs to communicate choices and feelings. Non-verbal pupils successfully use a range of communication aids to help them answer questions and make their needs known to an adult. Parents appreciate the support that teaching staff give to help same communication aids to be used at home.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they sharpen school development planning to help them identify more clearly the impact of their improvement actions on pupils' outcomes
- teachers develop their use of assessment, particularly for the school's most-able pupils, so that teaching and learning more precisely meet individual needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Jacobs

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, the deputy headteacher, your assistant headteachers and three members of the governing body. We also met with a range of other leaders to learn about different aspects of the school's work. We talked to a number of parents at the start and end of the school day. We met with a representative of the local authority and a mixed group of staff. We spoke to pupils during an arranged meeting. We visited classes in each of the college's family groups along with a senior leader, taking in a variety of different areas of learning across all key stages.

We looked at a range of school documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, policies and other information on the

school's website, the single central record of recruitment checks, and pupils' attendance and performance information. We took account of 18 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, with accompanying free-text responses, and the results of your very recent survey of 96 parents' views. We considered 52 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.