

Oaklands School

Gresham Road, Hounslow TW3 4BX

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Exceptional leadership has established a culture in which staff have high expectations of what can be achieved. Oaklands School provides an outstanding standard of education.
- Pupils receive highly individualised teaching which takes very close account of their different needs. Teachers and support staff respond skilfully to the small steps of progress pupils make over time.
- Staff consider pupils' progress in great detail. This thorough approach contributes to pupils making consistently strong progress across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics.
- Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils and their peers are excellent. This makes a significant contribution to the progress that pupils make.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are promoted exceptionally well. Pupils develop confidence and independence as a result of a very carefully planned curriculum.
- There is no sense of complacency in leaders' and governors' work. Governors support and challenge leaders appropriately to ensure that the school continues to improve rapidly. This has helped the school to improve since its previous inspection.
- Children make an excellent start in the recently opened Reception and Year 1 classes. Children in the early years enjoy their learning, making quick progress as a result of focused teaching and support.
- Sixth-form provision is outstanding. Study programmes are tailored carefully to individuals' needs. They prepare students exceptionally well for their life beyond school.
- Parents speak highly of the communication between home and school and, in particular, of the opportunities provided to gain work experience.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the high quality of leadership and management, and that of teaching, learning and assessment, sustains the school's outstanding effectiveness as the number of pupils on roll increases.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher provides inspiring, clear and determined leadership. Senior leaders have established a culture of high expectations in which staff are supported and challenged to bring about the best possible outcomes for pupils. The over-riding focus is on promoting pupils' progress and ensuring that they have a personalised, high-quality education.
- Leaders are highly successful in ensuring that staff share and uphold the school's values and ethos. This leads to all staff taking a unified approach to school improvement in which everyone's views are valued.
- Leaders are highly reflective and proactive in refining their approach. They make the most of the information they collect through rigorous monitoring activities to improve both the curriculum and teaching.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of what is going well and what to address next. The school's development planning is thorough and detailed, a reflection of leaders' precision and of their reflective attitude. Leaders' plans for the school's expansion are comprehensive because they understand the importance of maintaining the high quality of the school's work.
- Leaders place pupils' needs firmly at the centre of their work. They adopt a relentless approach to finding ways to overcome or minimise pupils' barriers to learning. The curriculum is very well designed to meet the widely varying needs of pupils on roll. Key features of the school's curriculum include developing pupils' independence, and communication and social skills. This is fundamental to ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their lives beyond school.
- Middle leaders play a significant part in the development and refinement of the curriculum. They have acted reflectively and successfully on the area for improvement at the last inspection. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum links the quality of planning, and the quality of teaching, very closely to pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders are keen to understand all staff members' perspectives on the impact and effectiveness of the school's work. Leaders act 'there and then' to give advice and guidance in order to promote rapid professional development. Leaders hold staff to account through well organised and well-thought-through procedures which balance support and challenge well.
- A thorough induction and training programme for staff focuses on making sure that they understand the theory which underpins their practice. This supports staff to have a deep and shared understanding of how to support pupils with a very wide range of needs.
- Support staff value leaders' presence around the school and their work to support professional development. They value their routine engagement in professional dialogue. This results in staff reflecting regularly on their practice and in them continually exploring opportunities to improve the quality of their work through professional dialogue.

- Additional funding is spent very effectively. Spending is targeted specifically to address disadvantaged pupils' needs, following a thorough analysis of their barriers to learning and developmental needs. For example, pupil premium funding is used to purchase equipment, to fund attendance at clubs, or for therapy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is interwoven throughout all aspects of the school's work and is very effective. For example, during the inspection, pupils performed 'Alice in Wonderland' to parents and visitors. Pupils demonstrated their creativity, confidence and pleasure in taking part in an event involving a large cast. Their sense of enjoyment and sense of achievement was palpable.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who responded to the online questionnaire, were unanimous in their support for the school. They praise the communication between staff and parents. In common with leaders' focus, parents speak specifically about the progress their children have made. Parents particularly value the opportunities provided for pupils to gain work experience and life skills.
- Responses to the online staff questionnaire indicate that the vast majority of staff are proud to work at the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors balance their support and challenge of senior leaders well. They understand the need to see some practice first hand so that they can better contribute to strategic discussions during governing body meetings. Governors seek external scrutiny of their work. This, combined with their own self-evaluation, allows them to identify what is working well, and which areas of their work could be improved. They know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. They understand the importance of ensuring that the quality of education remains high as the school roll expands. Governors understand the importance of engaging with parents and gaining an understanding of how they view the school's effectiveness. The chair of the governing body has high expectations of governors' commitment and of the contribution they make. As a result, governors are expected to take a professional approach to their roles.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and staff have a very good understanding of the vulnerability of pupils on the school roll and promote vigilance accordingly.
- Leaders and governors make routine checks on the effectiveness of safeguarding. Safeguarding leaders give appropriate focus to keeping themselves updated.
- Leaders have considered the impact of the school's expansion and made plans to ensure that the capacity of safeguarding leadership increases accordingly.
- Staff have a thorough understanding of the procedures which the safeguarding leader has initiated to promote effective practice. They value the training they receive, which updates them regularly on safeguarding matters. Staff are well aware of the specific vulnerabilities presented by pupils' special educational needs. They know that all staff are responsible for taking steps to promote pupils' well-being and that it is their

individual responsibility to report any concerns. Staff recruitment checks comply with requirements.

- Maintaining a positive and open culture of safeguarding has a high priority. Safeguarding leaders have a good understanding of the prevailing local issues and ensure that staff are well prepared to address them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching is highly effective in prioritising the development of pupils' independence and communication skills. Staff resist any temptation to provide unnecessary support. They provide respectful challenge and encourage pupils to stretch themselves and to maximise their progress. This approach is consistent across subjects and year groups as a result of the training staff undertake. Staff have a thorough understanding of the way pupils learn and about the strategies used to support learning.
- Staff are exceptionally well trained. They know pupils' individual targets well and plan small steps of progress with precision. Pupils experience success because tasks are well planned, taking into account what they have learned previously. Praise for the achievement of these targets is precise, never superficial, but well-deserved.
- Communication, literacy and numeracy skills are taught exceptionally well. Teachers select appropriate and highly relevant content and are clear about the intended learning. For example, in an English lesson older pupils explored various methods of contacting a local leisure centre including by letter, email and phone. They referred to written text which required them to read and to elicit the relevant information.
- Teachers identify practical contexts to support pupils' learning. They do not lose sight of the drive to support pupils' independence and to ensure that they are well prepared for their lives beyond school. This includes an appropriate emphasis on ensuring that, for example, independent travel and the ability to prepare and cook meals have a suitable focus in the curriculum.
- Teachers' effective intervention and feedback encourage and support pupils to challenge themselves. For example, during a computing lesson the teacher challenged a pupil to reduce the size of their handwriting while using the touchscreen. Having demonstrated the use of the 'undo' icon to allow another attempt, the pupil repeatedly used a similar approach independently to successfully increase the precision of their work.
- Teachers' questioning is very well judged. It gives pupils opportunities to recall and apply what they have learned previously. Teaching uses assessment information expertly to determine when pupils need further support and reinforcement, and when they are ready to move on and be challenged further. Teaching responds skilfully to pupils' responses. As a result of their thorough training and detailed understanding of how pupils learn, teachers adapt tasks exceptionally well during lessons.
- Teaching assistants provide high-quality support, liaising well with teachers to ensure that time is used well during lessons and that they address the intended learning.
- Individual support enables teaching to make the most of available lesson time. For example, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 worked at their own pace to make and cook tortilla wraps, applying sauce, guacamole and grated cheese before clearing their work

areas.

- Parents spoken to during the inspection and responses from the school's own questionnaire indicate that parents are highly supportive of the school's approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils underpin pupils' strong progress. Adults' support is well judged to contribute to pupils' development without undermining their independence. A highly respectful culture permeates all aspects of the school's work, resulting in pupils being treated fairly and with dignity.
- Pupils are very polite. Those who are able to greet visitors in a friendly manner, either verbally or through their facial expressions.
- Pupils' attitudes are very positive. They apply themselves willingly and, often, enthusiastically to the tasks set during lessons. Teaching supports pupils to develop confidence in knowing when to ask for help and when to pursue their own solutions. Those who are more able make their desire to learn clear, seeking guidance and asking for advice confidently and independently.
- Pupils develop self-esteem through carefully planned opportunities, including, for example, the chance to contribute to the school show, or undertaking roles in the on-site cafe. Pupils danced, sang, acted and performed music during the school show. It was the culmination of a series of lessons, with pupils displaying confidence and self-esteem which represents significant progress from their starting points.
- Pupils are taught to use equipment safely and to minimise risk. For example, food technology lessons promote the safe and increasingly independent use of cooking utensils, including knives and graters.
- Pupils spoken to were unanimous in their view that they are happy at school. They each enjoy different aspect of the curriculum and are able to describe how they have made progress. This may be to make friends more easily or to have improved their writing and spelling skills. One pupil explained that he was nervous when starting at the school at the beginning of the academic year but that he has become more confident.
- One parent's free-text comment in response to the online questionnaire matched the views shared by parents spoken to, saying, 'My child loves going to school every day. You can tell the school is loved by the children as they are always smiling.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes were evident during visits to lessons during the inspection, with pupils applying themselves eagerly to the activities and learning

presented. Pupils enjoy school. Those who can express their feelings verbally can explain what they have learned. They also say that school makes them feel 'happy'.

- Pupils with the most effective communication skills demonstrate great respect for others through their supportive approach during lessons, for example helping their peers to reflect on, and refine, their approach to the task set.
- Very few incidents of challenging behaviour were seen during the inspection. Well-planned and agreed strategies ensured that adults' response was prompt and effective. This cohesive and well-organised approach results in pupils experiencing a consistent approach from all staff.
- Leaders provide appropriate training for staff in managing challenging behaviour. The vast majority of staff strongly agree that leaders support them well in managing pupils' behaviour. This means that pupils joining the school with a history of difficulties show significant improvement in their behaviour. They make good progress both academically and socially.
- The vast majority of staff who completed the online survey agreed that pupils behave well. Similarly, the majority of parents who responded to the school's own questionnaire strongly agreed that pupils behave well in school.
- Attendance has improved since last year. Some absence is unavoidable due to attendance at medical appointments or for treatment. Where possible, leaders ensure that pupils' learning progresses during their absence through the provision of work to be completed off-site. Leaders' monitoring of pupils' absence is thorough with appropriate action taken as a result. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance and consider the robustness of reasons given for absence carefully.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make significant and sustained progress across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics. Precise and meaningful target-setting supports pupils to achieve this through individualised programmes of learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Leaders, teachers, support staff and parents understand the importance of pupils' progress. It has a high profile in the school.
- The school's assessment information indicates that pupils make sustained and strong progress in a range of subjects and that pupils meet or exceed the relevant targets set for them.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as others. This is due to the highly individualised programmes that guide the teaching for each pupil. These take close account of their particular need and of their starting point.
- Pupils' social and emotional development is strong as a result of leaders' drive to ensure that they develop functional skills. Pupils make gains in their ability to regulate their own behaviour and develop resilience and strategies to manage the challenges they experience beyond school.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next steps in their education, training or employment. This is a key focus for school leaders. The significance and importance of developing pupils' independence is apparent throughout the school, and is supported highly

effectively by teaching and support staff.

- Pupils move seamlessly from year to year as they progress through the school. This is because staff understand their needs in detail and address them successfully. All pupils completing key stage 4 typically join the school's sixth-form.
- Pupils study for a range of qualifications, developing the necessary academic and social skills to allow them to approach their next steps with confidence and independence where this is possible.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of the early years is highly effective. Staff are well trained, supported and guided in their approach. Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of how children learn. Consequently, activities are chosen carefully to address children's current targets.
- Teachers promote children's acquisition of phonics, reading, writing and number skills very effectively and as a result, children make very strong progress from their starting points. Progress in these subjects is underpinned by highly effective provision to promote the development of communication and social skills. For example, staff challenge the most able children to remember and apply the vocabulary they have used previously, while playing card games involving photographs and icons.
- A large proportion of children communicate in ways other than speaking. Activities are well chosen to meet their communication and social needs as well as promoting their physical and cognitive development. Resources are carefully selected to support and facilitate children's learning. For example, Makaton signing and the use of symbol-based resources enable children to access tasks with increasing independence.
- The early years foundation stage curriculum is adapted well. Activities in each of the areas of learning allow children to make small steps of progress. Well-designed sequences of learning allow children to build on what they already know, developing their confidence and resilience. Staff judge their support well, for example observing for just long enough to make sure that a child can use the tricycle successfully before leaving them to develop their skills independently.
- Children are highly motivated and enjoy learning. They are learning to be calm, to share equipment and ask for help when they lose concentration. They are learning to self-regulate their behaviour, for example to understand when to choose a new activity when interest wanes.
- Children's safety and welfare is of high priority. Children learn in a safe, happy and calm environment. They thrive in the environment established by leaders and teachers. The emphasis on promoting children's personal development helps them to make friendships and get on with peers and adults alike.
- Liaison with parents is very strong. They are well supported to help their children through workshops and meetings.
- Leaders are reflective about the use and layout of the learning environment both indoors and outdoors. They know that too many distractions will prevent children from concentrating on the carefully chosen activities.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Leadership of the 16 to 19 study programmes is outstanding. Leaders plan, manage and evaluate the curriculum highly effectively to meet individual students' widely varying needs.
- In common with other phases of the school, teaching and the provision for students' personal development are of a very high quality. Staff understand students' needs exceptionally well and set challenging targets which are closely linked to those in education, health and care plans. Trusting and respectful relationships between students and staff have a significant impact on the progress students make.
- Students make strong and sustained progress from their starting points in the development of basic skills, independence and in their ability to form productive relationships.
- A high proportion of leavers achieve functional skills qualifications or accreditation in vocational units of the Laser Learning Awards. These prepare students very well for independent living, for example developing the ability to make a simple meal, carry out the household shopping and to use public transport confidently.
- Provision for careers guidance is very strong. 'Job coaches' oversee the process of finding suitable work experience placements, and accompany students during their visits. Leaders have considered students' likely employment opportunities, and have successfully engaged with a number of retail, hospitality and retail outlets to source worthwhile opportunities. The priority which leaders give this aspect of the school's work has led to them increasing the number and length of employer-based placements over recent years. Students' success and progress is monitored carefully during placements.
- Students are supported to write job applications, through mock interviews, and are provided with information about how to dress for work. Students make the most of work experience placements within the school, including working in the school's OK Cafe.

School details

Unique reference number	102555
Local authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	10088738

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	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neal Carrier
Headteacher	Anne Clinton
Telephone number	020 85603569
Website	www.oaklands.hounslow.sch.uk
Email address	office@oaklands.hounslow.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018

Information about this school

- Oaklands School caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound or multiple learning difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorders.
- A number of pupils also demonstrate challenging behaviour.
- The school has an expanding roll. Pupils were admitted to the Reception Year and to Year 1 in September 2018 for the first time. It is intended that pupils will be admitted in the Reception Year each September, so that there are pupils on roll in each year group from 2023.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The ethnic heritage of pupils is diverse.
- More than half of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made short visits, jointly with senior leaders, to classes in each key stage to observe teaching and learning in a wide variety of subjects. An inspector attended part of the school's show.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers, support staff, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including that relating to school improvement planning, governance, leaders' own evaluation of the school's performance, safeguarding and curriculum planning.
- There were no responses to the pupil survey but an inspector held a meeting with a group of pupils, facilitated by a member of the school staff. Inspectors observed pupils in classes, while moving about the school and during less structured time, including at lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the small number of responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, supplemented by the school's own survey of parental opinion.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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