

Inspection of Oakbank

Hyde End Lane, Ryeish Green, Reading, Berkshire RG7 1ER

Inspection dates: 28–29 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils come to school regularly because they enjoy school and appreciate the strong relationships that they have with staff. Many pupils like the fact that the school is smaller than most secondary schools. They say that it means they get to know their teachers and other pupils well. Bullying does not happen often and disagreements between pupils are resolved quickly.

Teachers increasingly encourage pupils to do their best. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they could because they have significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This is because, in the past, the curriculum has not been organised or planned well enough. Pupils believe that teaching and the curriculum are improving since the arrival of the new principal. Nevertheless, pupils still have a lot of catching up to do, particularly in key stage 4.

Around school, pupils behave sensibly. They feel safe and get on well with each other. Pupils' behaviour has improved over the past year. In lessons, pupils generally behave well. There are a small minority of pupils who disrupt the learning of others. Pupils say that new behaviour systems are helping to reduce disruption.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Over the past three years, the school has faced significant challenges in staffing and leadership. This contributed to weaknesses in the way the curriculum was planned and taught. Consequently, in 2017 and 2019, pupils leaving Year 11 did not do well across a range of subjects. The new principal, with the support of the Anthem trust, has put in place a range of procedures and strategies to enable the school to improve. Leaders have correctly identified the things that need to change and made sure that there are more permanent, well-trained teachers. Leaders have a clear vision for the school.

Pupils do not yet study a wide enough range of subjects in key stage 4. Too few pupils study all the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. Leaders are committed to making changes in this area. They have begun to tell Year 9 pupils about the benefits of studying a broad range of subjects. This has not yet led to a significant increase in the popularity of EBacc subjects. As a result, the curriculum is not as broad and ambitious as it could be.

Curriculum leaders have thought about where and when topics should be taught. The curriculum is now organised well. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to answer pupils' questions in lessons. However, teachers do not use assessment consistently well. This means that pupils do not always understand how to improve their work. Furthermore, pupils do not consistently produce good-quality work. For example, in science, pupils enjoy organising experiments. However, they do not always understand the underlying knowledge behind what they are doing.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their lessons. Their behaviour ensures that teachers can teach what they have planned. Leaders' improvement of the behaviour system is reducing incidents of poor behaviour and reducing fixed-term exclusions. Leaders have focused on addressing poor behaviour in school and strengthening relationships between staff and students. In the past, too many pupils were excluded from school for a fixed term. However, in the current school year, far fewer pupils have received fixed-term exclusions compared to last year.

Leaders ensure that pastoral support for pupils is good, particularly for pupils who have difficulty concentrating in lessons. The '5 Oak' centre provides expert care and guidance for these pupils. Pupils, and particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn how to become more successful in their lessons. Pupils have varied opportunities to consider their own personal development. For example, the citizenship programme in Year 11 has encouraged pupils to think about real-world issues.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding procedures and records are well organised. Staff carry out checks on the suitability of staff accurately and appropriately. Leaders thoroughly monitor safeguarding practices so that they are assured that timely action is taken if staff are worried about a pupil's safety.

Pupils get the right support when they need it. Leaders work well with external agencies so that expert help is on hand for pupils who are at risk of harm. Leaders react promptly when safeguarding issues in the school are raised.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Difficulties in recruitment and unstable leadership in the past have meant that the curriculum has not been implemented well. Consequently, pupils have significant gaps in their learning and find it difficult to remember previous knowledge so that they deepen their understanding of new concepts and knowledge. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is implemented well across all subjects so that pupils' achievement improves.
- The curriculum is not ambitious enough. Not enough pupils study the full range of EBacc subjects at GCSE. Pupils are not ready for the next stages of their education because not enough pupils secure good enough examination results, particularly in EBacc subjects. Leaders should improve the ambition of the curriculum so that higher proportions of pupils achieve well.
- The use of assessment is variable across the curriculum. In some subjects, assessment help pupils to improve their understanding of how they can improve. However, within other subjects and across subjects, assessment is not

consistently used well. Leaders should ensure that assessment is used well so that pupils are able to remember and understand more over time.

- The quality of work across subjects is inconsistent. This means that some pupils do not deepen their understanding and build up their knowledge sufficiently while progressing through the curriculum. Teachers should ensure that work given to pupils is consistently demanding so that pupils produce high-quality work in all subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138367
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10133175
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	502
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Heather Dawson
Principal	Robin Bertrand
Website	www.oakbank.education
Date of previous inspection	21–22 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal joined the school in September 2019.
- The school is part of the Anthem multi-academy trust. Prior to July 2018, the Anthem trust was named the CfBT Schools Trust.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held meetings with the principal, senior and curriculum leaders, governors and trustees.
- On the first day of the inspection, we did deep dives in these subjects: science, mathematics, modern foreign languages, and history. This meant that in each subject, we met with curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' work.
- We considered the views of staff from two meetings with groups of staff and from the 44 staff who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire.

- We reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- We considered the views of 76 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire and 74 parents who provided free-text responses.
- We considered the views of 72 pupils who responded to Ofsted’s confidential pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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