

Inspection of Oak View School

Whitehills Road, Loughton, Essex IG10 1TS

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are so proud of their school. They learn a curriculum that equips them with important life skills. Pupils enjoy their studies. Most focus hard on each activity, even when it demands a lot of them. From early years through to the sixth form, pupils grow in confidence and become more assured communicators.

Adults care for pupils with dignity and respect. Staff are tuned into pupils' capabilities and needs. Pupils get support to become more independent in their decision-making. They learn to socialise and enjoy each other's company. Pupils celebrate each other's successes.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils learn to manage their emotions due to the help from skilled staff. As a result, pupils increasingly make positive decisions about their feelings, behaviour and movement. Pupils and staff contribute to the school's happy, productive atmosphere.

Pupils are safe. They indicate that they feel safe, including from bullying. Pupils say that, if they were anxious or worried, they would turn to staff for help.

Pupils gain important experience of life beyond the school gates. They like to represent their school. They enjoy the 'special jobs' they have to do, such as recycling, shopping or helping out on the local allotments.

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

Leaders want pupils to be the best, fullest version of themselves. Leaders have made bold changes so that this vision becomes reality. Three years ago, leaders carried out a root-and-branch review of the curriculum. They plotted a course of action to place 'learners at the centre of learning'. Leaders have designed a curriculum matched to pupils' needs and capabilities. This helps many pupils to achieve well.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Leaders identify and assess pupils' needs in considerable detail. Leaders work alongside external professionals so that pupils get the support that they require. Leaders support teachers to adapt the curriculum to meet these needs.

Leaders view communication as key to pupils' preparation for adulthood. Many pupils have little or no verbal communication when they join the school. Staff have strong knowledge of different forms of communication. They apply this effectively to adapt their teaching to pupils' communication needs.

Leaders have put in place a new phonics programme. Teachers teach this increasingly well. Pupils learn important knowledge that helps them to become better readers.

Leaders recognise the impact of skilful storytelling. From the start of early years, teachers read and sing enthusiastically to children. Pupils like this. They become interested in, and learn to handle, books. Pupils are keen to follow storylines.

Leaders have identified that aspects of the communication learning pathway could be better. For example, some pupils need more precise support once they have become more accomplished readers.

Across the rest of the curriculum, pupils, including students in the sixth form, follow learning pathways that are carefully crafted to meet their needs. Teachers design learning activities that interest pupils. Teachers break learning down into manageable pieces. Support staff play their part in helping pupils learn. Staff know pupils well. Adults spot the steps of progress that pupils make, no matter how small. Pupils' achievements are enthusiastically celebrated.

Leaders' work to develop the curriculum is ongoing. For example, they continue to develop aspects of the physical/sensory learning pathway so that pupils receive a more structured physical education (PE) offer.

From the start of early years, children learn to follow routines. This structured approach gives pupils a sense of security. They learn to behave well. Their behaviour improves over time. Staff know the signs that indicate that a pupil may need additional support, such as a sensory break. Pupils respond well to this support. They often return to learning quickly. Many pupils engage fully with their learning. At times, staff are slow to spot when some pupils are not focused on the activity in hand. This means that some pupils are not refocused as swiftly as they could be.

Leaders provide ample opportunities for pupils' personal development. Pupils learn the importance of routines, rules and consideration for others. Staff give pupils plenty of chances to make their own choices too. Pupils learn important messages about relationships, personal hygiene and making safe choices. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, get suitable careers advice. This helps them to set realistic personal goals in preparation for the next steps in their lives. Sixth-form students gain useful experience of the world of work.

The trust and local governing body provide leaders with appropriate scrutiny. They, like school leaders, know the importance of having motivated, well-trained staff. Leaders ensure that staff have the training they need to provide well for pupils. Staff enjoy their work and consider that leaders are considerate of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a robust safeguarding culture. The trust and governors are diligent in making sure that this is the case.

Leaders make sure that staff receive appropriate training. They understand the importance of being on the lookout for signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff use school processes to report any concerns about a pupil they have. Leaders take appropriate steps to ensure that pupils get the help that they need.

Pupils are taught appropriate knowledge and strategies to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made considerable alterations to the curriculum that pupils learn. Leaders' work is bearing fruit in many areas. Leaders need to continue this work so that more accomplished readers get the precise support they need to make stronger progress in reading, and pupils who are ready to develop their PE skills and knowledge further access a more structured PE curriculum.
- Occasionally, staff are too slow to notice when some pupils lose focus on their learning. This leads to some pupils not engaging in their learning for too long in some classes. Leaders need to make sure that staff are swift to spot this and take appropriate steps when a pupil's attention drifts away from learning.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	145987
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10254249
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	133
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Tidmarsh
Headteacher	Tina Kearney
Website	www.oakviewschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Oak View School is a small special school.
- All pupils attending the school have an EHC plan. Many have severe learning difficulties. Some have profound, multiple learning difficulties.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with four groups of pupils. Inspectors also observed pupils at break- and lunchtimes.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the local governing body (LGB), including the chair of the LGB.
- The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer of Epping Forest Schools Partnership Trust.
- The lead inspector spoke via telephone to a representative of Essex local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these learning pathways: communication, creative, independence and physical/sensory. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke with school leaders and teachers, looked at curriculum documentation, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at safeguarding documentation, spoke with staff and governors, and spoke with a representative from Essex local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the 29 responses to Ofsted Parent View and in two emails received over the course of the inspection.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Wilson

His Majesty's Inspector

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