

Inspection of a good school: Oakdale School

Cheetham Hill Road, Dukinfield, Cheshire SK16 5LD

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 September 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school cares well for its pupils. Warm and friendly relationships permeate the school community. Pupils are happy, and they arrive at school with smiles on their faces. They feel safe with the adults who look after them.

Pupils behave well. They enjoy their social times, with adults and with other pupils. With support from staff, pupils play safely outside using the equipment provided. Pupils are kind towards one another.

The school has high expectations for pupils' personal development. Leaders and teachers expect pupils to be ready for the next stages in their education or training. They strive to enable pupils to develop the knowledge and skills that will help them to be independent as they go into adulthood.

Staff also expect pupils to achieve well academically. In some curriculum pathways, pupils learn well. However, in several other curriculum pathways, the school has not thought through what pupils will learn and by when. In addition, the school has not set out a phonics programme for pupils who are ready to learn to read. This limits what pupils can and should achieve.

Pupils have many opportunities to visit places of interest in their local area. This includes visiting the local care home, where pupils enjoy gardening with the residents.

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

The school is responding to the changing needs of its pupils. Staff are in the process of adapting the school's curriculum to reflect pupils' special educational needs and/or

disabilities. The school is establishing new curriculum pathways. However, some of these curriculum pathways are more developed than others.

Where curriculum pathways are further developed, teachers ensure that pupils access appropriate learning. This is because the school has clearly identified the knowledge and skills that pupils should learn. Teachers check on pupils' learning with increased accuracy in these curriculum pathways. This information helps staff to successfully shape future learning. Typically, pupils are achieving increasingly well in these areas.

In several other curriculum pathways, however, the school has not clarified what pupils should be learning and when this content should be taught. This hampers how well teachers design activities to promote pupils' learning and development. In these areas, some pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should.

In spite of some weaknesses with the design of the curriculum pathways, the school ensures that developing pupils' language and communication skills is at the centre of its work. For example, the school ensures that pupils have plentiful opportunities to listen to stories, songs, rhymes and poems. Pupils enjoy listening to, and interacting with, the adults who read or sing to them.

For pupils who are ready to learn to read, the school has not ensured that a suitable phonics programme is in place. This prevents these pupils from developing an appropriate understanding of the sounds that letters make. This hinders how well they learn in other areas of the curriculum.

Pupils learn in an orderly and calm environment because behaviour is managed consistently well by all adults in school. Pupils' behaviour in lessons does not interrupt learning. Adults skilfully use a range of communication strategies to model and exemplify how pupils should behave. These strategies are effective.

Pupils' wider personal development is a priority for the school and is an integral part of the new curriculum pathways. The enrichment opportunities that pupils receive are carefully thought out. The school considers how these activities enhance and promote pupils' communication skills. For example, the school ensures that pupils, irrespective of their ability to communicate, are given choices about what they want to do at lunchtime or what they want to eat for lunch.

Pupils socialise together well. They learn how to build healthy relationships with each other. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to learn how to look after their physical and mental health. For example, pupils access swimming and hydrotherapy sessions. They enjoy taking part in 'feel good Friday'. Pupils learn to celebrate the differences between families or religions through the books and stories that adults share with them.

Governors are not as effective as they should be in holding the school to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. This is because governors' roles and responsibilities are not defined as clearly as they should be.

Staff's well-being is at the forefront of governors' and leaders' thinking. For example, leaders and governors consider the impact of new policies and improvements to the curriculum on staff's workload. Staff report that they feel supported by the school.

Through different open mornings and events, the school assists parents and carers in supporting their children to learn. This is particularly helpful to parents, as many pupils who attend the school travel in by minibuses. This engagement allows parents to participate more fully in school life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governors are not holding leaders to account sufficiently well for the quality of education that pupils receive. This means that governors do not have a clear oversight of pupils' learning and achievement. Governors should ensure that they clarify their roles and responsibilities so that they can hold the school to account more effectively.
- In some curriculum pathways, the school has not identified what pupils should learn and in which order. This means that teachers are sometimes unclear as to the essential knowledge and skills that pupils should know. In these curriculum pathways, the school should ensure that it establishes exactly what pupils must learn and in which order this content should be delivered.
- The school has not established an appropriate phonics programme. This hinders pupils who are at the stage of learning to read. The school should ensure that it establishes an appropriate phonics programme for these pupils to enable them to learn letters and sounds.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 106281 |
| Local authority | Tameside |
| Inspection number | 10256223 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Maintained special |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 151 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Sara Rodway |
| Headteacher | Tina Tray |
| Website | www.oakdale.tameside.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 3 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with profound multiple learning needs, severe learning difficulties or autism.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- New governors have joined the governing body since the previous inspection. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body have changed.
- Some new staff have joined the school since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language; computing; and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors

met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked with pupils and staff and looked at examples of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with other curriculum leaders.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders to discuss the personal development programme, as well as pupils' rates of attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and during their snack time. They scrutinised leaders' records of behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors also reviewed the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation document.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' arrival at the school in the morning.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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