

Inspection of an outstanding school: Oak Field School

Wigman Road, Bilborough, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG8 3HW

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 July 2024

Outcome

Oak Field School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for at this welcoming and supportive school. They communicate that they are safe and happy. Staff know the pupils incredibly well. Their detailed knowledge of each child's health needs and special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) enables them to provide precise support so that pupils flourish at the school.

All the staff at the school are highly trained. They are very skilled in meeting the children's complex needs. Relationships are very positive. Pupils know staff will support them to learn and to keep safe.

Pupils engage very well with their learning. They have positive attitudes to their education; they are always trying their hardest. Those pupils who have the most profound disabilities are carefully supported to engage with a wide range of sensory activities. They are helped to communicate if they want these activities to stop or continue. Staff's detailed understanding of how these pupils communicate means that they can respond accurately to how pupils are feeling. This ensures that these pupils do not become anxious or frustrated.

The personal development of all pupils is excellent. School leaders have high ambitions for all pupils and want the very best outcomes for them.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum to meet the varied and complex needs of pupils. Each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan is carefully considered and pupils' needs are fully assessed. This allows staff to place pupils in groups that best support their learning. Pupils are regularly assessed against their small-step targets so staff know how each pupil is progressing through the curriculum. Staff use these assessments to plan the next steps that challenge pupils to learn and develop further. In

this way, all pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to reach the ambitious outcomes set for them.

The curriculum delivery enables pupils to build on from their very early learning experiences. The school's three to seven phase prepares younger pupils exceptionally well for their next steps. Meticulous plans detail for each child what progress through the curriculum looks like. Staff adapt the learning environment to suit pupils' needs, paying careful attention to any sensory needs. Pupils enjoy well-planned therapeutic and physical development activities. These provide excellent opportunities to develop pupils' interaction, communication and physical health.

The school has prioritised developing pupils' communication and language skills. All staff focus on communication 'everywhere, all the time, with everybody'. Staff know the individual communication preferences of all pupils and what level of sensory input they will tolerate. They expose pupils to environmental sounds, such as the noise of a vacuum cleaner, to help them make connections to what they might hear at home. Parents and carers have commented on the positive impact this work has had on their children's ability to communicate with them.

There has been careful thought given to how best to develop pupils' ability to read. There is a stepped pre-phonics approach to help pupils understand sounds and link them to letters. This then builds to developing early reading using a suitable phonics scheme. The pupils who can read do so with increasing confidence. Staff build enjoyment for reading by skilfully using sensory stories to capture pupils' attention.

Pupils are helped to develop resilience to manage changes to their routines or to staff. The staff support pupils with this by anticipating these transitions and providing pupils with appropriate cues to help them adapt. The 'circle of adults' meetings help staff unpack what might be causing some unsettled or negative behaviour. Clear support plans are then put in place for pupils that guide staff as to the best ways to help pupils manage their emotions. Because pupils are understood and have been helped to communicate their needs, they are less frustrated and so remain calm and focused on their learning.

Pupils' learning is not limited to the classroom. The extensive outdoor education opportunities and the many different trips and visits pupils experience broaden their cultural capital. The school is determined that no-one misses out on these valuable experiences. For example, for pupils who cannot go to the theatre, the theatre comes to them in the school's own purpose-built facility. Pupils are involved in local charitable activities. Some play in the orchestra or sing in the choir at venues around the city. Older pupils are provided with access to high-quality careers education, information and guidance, and visit local colleges and engage in meaningful and valuable work experience. There are a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs available for pupils. These clubs broaden pupils' learning and support their physical development. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles, relationships, making choices, and about different types of families. They are taught about how to keep themselves safe. They learn about different religions and cultures and visit places of worship. Some pupils are also involved in the 'primary parliament'. All of these rich experiences develop pupils as individuals and prepare them well for their next steps.

Governors have an ambitious vision for what they want pupils to achieve. They have ensured that there is a clear strategy to achieve this vision. The school is very well led. Staff say that leaders care about their well-being as well as that of the pupils. They value the support leaders give them. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in March 2014.

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

Unique reference number	135573
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10269119
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
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	159
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Bustard
Headteacher	Patricia Lewis
Website	www.oakfieldschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides education to pupils aged three to 19 with profound and multiple learning difficulties, multi-sensory impairment, severe learning difficulties, including some with complex health needs, some with multi-sensory impairment, and one class of pupils with a diagnosis of autism.
- The current headteacher took up their post in September 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 held meetings with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair, and spoke to a school improvement adviser from the Nottingham Schools Trust, which the school is affiliated with.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and reading, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons designed to support pupils' physical development and movement.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school development plan.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff 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 took note of parents' responses on Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's survey of school staff. Inspectors met with some pupils to discuss different aspects of the school's provision.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Clive Lawrence

Ofsted Inspector

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