

Inspection of Oakbank

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

Inspection dates:	13 and 14 November 2024
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Danielle Finlay. The school is part of Anthem Schools Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Mohsen Ojja, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jay Bhutani. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Turbulence in leadership, and high staff turnover, have destabilised this school community. As a result, lots of changes have been introduced. Many systems and procedures are new and not applied consistently well. The school does not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most pupils do not benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that is delivered well. As a result, they are not prepared well for their future employment, training or education.

Pupils report that disruptive, aggressive behaviour and swearing are common. In lessons and around the school, many pupils do not behave well or show respect to other pupils or to adults. This means that their learning is disrupted. Many pupils have concerns about the number of lessons taught by supply teachers. A considerable number of pupils do not enjoy coming to school. They are reluctant to attend the clubs on offer.

Most pupils reported that they have adults to talk with if they have worries or concerns. Even so, others said they would be reluctant to report issues, such as bullying. Pupils perceive that staff are too busy to act. Typically, pupils feel safe in school. Staff have received training to identify and report safeguarding concerns. However, the school is not consistent in following procedures to ensure the safety of all pupils. This includes making timely referrals to external agencies when there are significant safeguarding concerns.

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

The board of trustees has failed in their statutory duty to keep pupils safe. The school and those responsible for governance have not done enough to ensure that pupils behave well and receive an acceptable standard of education. The school's capacity to improve is weak. Recent instability in leadership and the high numbers of staff leaving the school have made this situation even worse. Many staff feel that they have too much to do in too little time. This negatively affects their well-being and workload.

The school has introduced a new approach to behaviour this year. This sets out clear expectations and procedures. However, these are not realised in practice. Staff do not follow the new systems consistently well. Many pupils ignore teachers' instructions. These pupils cause significant disruption to the learning of others. Pupils swear often and, on occasion, they are physically aggressive towards each other.

The curriculum in all subjects is well designed to build pupils' knowledge. However, it lacks breadth. Some pupils do not study computer science. Unless they choose it as a GCSE option, religious education (RE) is taught to older pupils through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. This means that all pupils do not receive their statutory entitlement to study a suitable RE curriculum.

The curriculum is not implemented well in many subjects. Staff continue to deliver lessons while pupils' poor behaviour is disrupting learning. Teachers move through the content of lessons without routinely checking pupils' understanding. They do not pick up on common misconceptions during lessons or in pupils' work. On occasion, the tasks that teachers set are aimed at occupying pupils rather than consolidating their learning. This means that large numbers of pupils do not develop strong subject knowledge. As a result, their success in examinations at the end of Year 11 is limited.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. However, staff make few helpful adaptations to support these pupils in lessons. As a result, pupils with SEND do not achieve well. The school also identifies pupils who need further support with reading. Even so, the school is in the early stages of implementing suitable strategies to build pupils' reading confidence and fluency. The same is true of the school's work to develop a culture of reading for pleasure.

Many pupils are disgruntled with school. This impacts on their willingness to attend. In recent weeks, the school has tightened its procedures regarding attendance. It has started to analyse patterns and to remove some of the barriers that prevent pupils from attending school regularly. This work is starting to take effect, but it is early days. Consequently, absence levels remain high.

The PSHE programme is well thought out. It covers important topics such as staying safe and maintaining healthy relationships. However, due to pupils' poor behaviour, some teachers do not get started on the lesson content. Consequently, pupils miss out on many aspects of this essential learning. Their knowledge is patchy at best and, in some cases, non-existent. Staff have had limited training to deliver the topics in the PSHE programme. When pupils do succeed in learning the content of a unit of work, their experiences vary considerably. Pupils have limited awareness of the differences between people. The school's ability to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremist views is weak.

There are limited opportunities for pupils' development beyond the academic curriculum. The school has rebranded the house system to foster a sense of pride in the school.

Pupils benefit from a comprehensive careers programme that follows statutory guidance. This includes external visitors who speak to pupils about a range of careers options. Pupils receive impartial careers advice and guidance. They gain experience of the world of work. Pupils are well supported in making applications to post-16 provisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There have been some recent improvements to the culture of safeguarding. For example, staff have received training in how to log safeguarding concerns appropriately. However, the school does not consistently follow its own procedures to ensure that all pupils are safeguarded appropriately. This includes making appropriate and timely referrals to

relevant agencies when there are significant safeguarding concerns and pupils may be at serious risk of harm or radicalisation. Staff have received training in how to record their concerns, but a small number have no awareness of their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.

The poorly implemented PSHE curriculum means that pupils are not taught enough about how to keep themselves safe. Pupils lack an age-appropriate understanding of risks to their welfare.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The trust has not been successful in mitigating the negative impact of turbulence in staff. They have been too slow to identify and rectify weaknesses in pupils' education, behaviour, personal development and safeguarding. This means that pupils continue to receive an unacceptable standard of education and they are not suitably safeguarded. The trust must ensure that they take effective action to tackle the shortcomings at the school.
- The school does not consistently follow its own procedures to keep pupils safe from harm. This includes making timely referrals to relevant agencies when there are significant safeguarding concerns. The school must ensure that everyone understands, and follows, the agreed safeguarding processes consistently so that pupils are protected from harm.
- The school does not ensure that the expectations of pupils' behaviour are consistently high. In many lessons, disruption leads to disorderly classrooms. This negatively affects pupils' learning. Pupils do not apply themselves fully or show the same levels of respect to all pupils or all of their teachers. The school must ensure that staff are suitably equipped to follow the behaviour systems consistently well so that incidents of poor behaviour reduce, and pupils have the chance to learn.
- Teaching is not adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND effectively enough. This means that pupils with SEND are not supported to build their knowledge and skills consistently well. This accounts for their poor achievement. The school should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and expertise that they need to help them meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- The curriculum does not include RE and computer science for all pupils. As a result, many pupils do not develop their understanding of different beliefs and values. They do not develop the computational thinking skills required for the digital age. The school must ensure that it develops and teaches a suitable curriculum in RE and computer science to all pupils.
- The curriculum is poorly implemented. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding or address misconceptions. As a result, many pupils have gaps in their knowledge. They do not achieve as well as they should. The school must ensure that teachers have suitable expertise to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.

- The PHSE curriculum is not delivered well. Staff have varying levels of confidence and expertise to teach some topics in the programme. Pupils' poor behaviour often means that they do not learn essential knowledge. As a result, they are ill-prepared for life in modern Britain. The school must ensure that the PHSE programme is taught consistently well so that pupils learn all that they need to know in readiness for their next steps.
- Turbulence in staffing, including in leadership and management, have impacted on the workload and well-being of senior leaders, teaching and support staff. It also means that the capacity to improve the school is weak. The trust must ensure that it builds capacity so that weaknesses are tackled firmly. It should also take timely action to consider the workload and well-being of leaders and staff.

HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspections we carry out.

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	138367
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10372990
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	426
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jay Bhutani
CEO of the trust	Mohsen Ojja
Headteacher	Danielle Finlay
Website	www.oakbank.anthemtrust.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 November 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up post in January 2024.
- There have been other changes to the senior leadership team since the previous inspection.
- The current headteacher is on maternity leave. The trust has appointed an interim headteacher in her absence.
- The school has its own on-site alternative provision.
- The school uses two additional unregistered and one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with leaders and staff in the school, including those responsible for the quality of education, behaviour, attendance, personal development and safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the board of trustees, the CEO and the director of education.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, mathematics, geography and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leader, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and inclusive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors looked at responses to Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys. They also considered the responses made by parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text response.
- The inspection was carried out following a number of complaints made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. His Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors initially sought to establish the suitability of the school's arrangements for behaviour, safeguarding and leadership and management.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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