



# Oaklands Park School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 113642  
**LEA** Devon  
**Inspection number** 279208  
**Inspection dates** 17 January 2006 to 18 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Charles Hackett AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	John Nash Drive
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Dawlish
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19		Devon EX7 9SF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01626 862363
<b>Number on roll</b>	51	<b>Fax number</b>	01626 888566
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Ms Margaret Ladbury
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Robert Pugh

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 17 January 2006 - 18 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279208
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Oaklands Park is a residential and day school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The school takes pupils from pre-school age (Foundation Stage) to the age of 19. Many of the pupils have previously attended other day special schools and have moved to the school because the severity of their needs has been deemed best addressed in residential provision. Of the current population, 26 pupils are resident, 13 as weekly boarders and 11 as termly boarders. During the financial year 2004/05 the school overspent its allocated budget and as a result has not been able to fill the post of deputy headteacher after the previous postholder left at the end of the summer term 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Oaklands Park's effectiveness as a school is satisfactory. Its strengths are the good care and support it offers to its pupils. It is because of this that pupils' personal development is good. When they leave they are well prepared to move on to either another form of education or into a residential care setting.

Pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching are both satisfactory. There is good teaching in the school but not consistently so throughout. The curriculum is satisfactory overall but insufficient attention is given to improving basic skills within the education programme for pupils aged 14 to 19. There are good facilities available for children who come to the school in the Foundation Stage but the unit for the few students who stay at the school post 16 is unsatisfactory. The unit needs a clear rationale for what it is seeking to achieve for its students. The boarding provision cares for pupils well but makes only a limited contribution to the quality of educational provision for pupils.

The school's leaders have played an important part in developing the positive atmosphere in the school and creating very positive relationships with parents. However, they have been less effective in the management of the curriculum and in ensuring that teaching is consistently good throughout the school. In addition there is not a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing and therefore no accurate information upon which to plan priorities for whole-school development. Financial planning has been unsatisfactory and led to a large overspend of the school's budget during the last year.

The school knows its strengths but does not have a full understanding of its weaknesses and as a result its own self-evaluation of its effectiveness is more generous than that of the inspector. However, the school does provide satisfactory value for money and it has, with the injection of increased money to the school, a satisfactory capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 4**

The quality of provision for post-16 students is unsatisfactory. The school has a very small post-16 unit; currently there are only three pupils of this age group. Improvements have been made in the quality of the provision over the last year following a review undertaken with the support of an external consultant. Students benefit from a relaxed nurturing atmosphere and enjoy the frequent trips that they have into the local community. However, there are not individual programmes tailored to meet their unique needs. It is not clear from the planning of what students will do that each individual pupil is being sufficiently challenged to reach his or her true potential. The unit needs a much clearer rationale for what it is seeking to achieve and more effective leadership and management.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 9**

The quality of the provision in the boarding establishment is satisfactory. The school is the subject of care standards' inspections and the most recent stated that the school was providing a satisfactory level of care with a number of strong features. The high quality of care offered by staff ensures that pupils are safe and their special needs are well attended to. Recent work has improved the quality of the accommodation. This has meant that pupils now have much better facilities for their recreation and for time to be on their own. There is not, however, on the part of the care team an understanding that pupils are resident because of their educational needs and as such the structure of evenings and weekends lacks an educational purpose. For example, there are frequent trips either in the school minibus or in the school car, but little attention is given to the educational value of these experiences.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve pupils' achievements by ensuring that teaching is of a consistently high standard and the curriculum gives sufficient attention to improving the achievements of all pupils in basic skills.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that there is a greater consistency of good practice throughout the school and the money allocated to the school is managed effectively.
- Develop a clear policy and rationale for the post-16 unit in order that staff, governors and parents fully understand what it is seeking to achieve for its students.
- Ensure that the boarding provision puts a greater emphasis on how it can contribute to the educational benefits of pupils being in residence.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 4**

Understandably, because of their special educational needs, the standards pupils reach are well below those normally expected for pupils of their age. However, their achievements are satisfactory overall and there is no difference in the rate of progress of the different groups of special educational needs within the school. Pupils who are in the care of the local authority make similar progress to other pupils and those pupils who previously experienced difficulties accessing education in other special schools now make satisfactory progress. The best progress is made by pupils in the classes for Years 1 to 9. Here, pupils respond well to the challenges set and the tight individual targets within their education plans. Progress of pupils aged 14 to 19 is less evident because the records of their achievements are not in sufficient detail to show the small steps in learning they may be making. However, these older pupils successfully achieve modules within the accreditation for life and living (ALL) programmes. The school sets appropriate targets for pupils' achievements but because of the very small numbers in each year group the benefits of doing this are reduced by pupils leaving or joining the school at different times of the year.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils develop good work habits and show a positive attitude to lessons. It is clear from their reactions to staff that they enjoy being in the school and this is demonstrated by their good rates of attendance. Most pupils relate very well to each other, being very tolerant of other pupils' particular special needs. This means, for example, that pupils with severe autistic disorders can integrate well with other pupils. Incidents of difficult behaviour do occur but these are often as a consequence of pupils' particular individual conditions. Pupils show they understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and enjoy participating in the regular physical activities such as swimming and walks. Pupils are safe in the school, benefiting from close supervision, and those that are capable of doing so understand the potential dangers around them when they go out of school.

Pupils' views are valued and every effort is made through a range of communication systems to ensure that they are listened to and that they can undertake independent tasks, for example taking the register back to the office. Minutes of the school council meetings show that pupils of all abilities have the opportunity to make comments on aspects of the school. Pupils' economic well-being is well supported in Years 1 to 9 through the regular teaching of basic skills and for older pupils by the 'preparation for life' programmes they follow.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 4**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There are examples of good practice within the school, such as in the class for Foundation Stage children and Years 1 and 2. Here the teacher and her support staff provide interesting and challenging practical tasks that encourage these pupils to explore and extend what they can do independently. A key strength of lessons where teaching is good is the clear expectations teachers have for pupils to focus on what they are doing. For example, in a class for Years 8 and 9 pupils, the teacher very effectively encouraged pupils to stop and think before deciding what the object they had picked out of a bag was made from.

ASD pupils' learning is well supported by the effective way in which most teachers combine specialist teaching techniques with good opportunities for pupils to work together and learn to relate to each other.

However, despite these positive features, teaching across the school is not ensuring that pupils make better than satisfactory progress. Weaknesses include the lack of availability and use of information and communication technology. For example, pupils only have limited opportunities to have access to a computer and work independently.

Teaching strategies are not always as interesting as they could be; in a few classes there is an overuse of cutting and sticking activities. In addition, although teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to managing pupils' behaviour and care needs, they are not always used to the best advantage in supporting pupils' learning. Systems to check how well pupils are achieving are best in the classes for younger pupils; in the two classes for older pupils, teachers have an insufficient understanding of the small steps of progress pupils make and the planning of their lessons, whilst covering relevant topics, does not always effectively seek to build on these achievements, particularly in relation to pupils' basic skills.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 4**

The curriculum is satisfactory and has been improved since the previous inspection. It now covers all aspects of the National Curriculum. For the few children who join in the Foundation Stage, it is good and provides them with a good start to school with a wide range of interesting activities. For pupils in Years 1 to 9, opportunities to develop their basic skills are mixed well with a range of interesting activities. For older pupils, elements of the programmes they follow prepare them well for life after school. However, insufficient attention is given to the literacy and numeracy difficulties of these pupils and there is the need for a structured approach designed to maximise their potential. The post-16 unit's curriculum has been recognised by the school as being in need of development because it is not personalised sufficiently for the small number of pupils who stay on at school to join this group.

All pupils gain from additional experiences such as visits out of school, and activities, including a recent trip to the ballet, which prove beneficial for their personal and social development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The overall quality of care, guidance and support that pupils receive is good. Staff care very well for the physical needs of pupils and have very positive relationships with them. The measures they take to safeguard them are of a very high quality. For example, detailed risk assessments are undertaken of the activities they do and safety within the environment is given a high priority. Child protection measures are up to date and staff have received appropriate training.

There are very good behaviour management plans for each individual pupil that show clearly what steps should be taken to support pupils in any difficult situations that occur. Additionally, staff are trained in the use of the local authority's approved system for the physical restraint of pupils, if this becomes necessary. Pupils in Years 1 to 9 are well supported by individual education plans that have clear agreed targets. These are often used well by teachers in planning work. These plans and targets are less

effective for pupils in the upper part of the school. These pupils, however, are given good guidance from links with the Connexion service which contribute to the very effective transition arrangements for pupils as they prepare to leave school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 4**

The overall quality of leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The headteacher is very popular with staff and parents and has a very positive relationship with pupils. He has ensured that staff work effectively together as a team and that careful attention is given to the care of pupils. He has been less effective at managing the budget and ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. The overspend in the school's budget is of concern; however, the school's insistence that this occurred largely because of the need to safeguard the pupils is partly vindicated by the local authority's decision to increase the financial allocation to the school by £60,000 for the next financial year. Nevertheless, this overspend has had a negative impact and weakened the overall management of the school. It has also limited the school's scope for further developments, for example to make up for the limited resources it has for information and communication technology.

The school development plan has appropriately identified key aspects for improvement but there has been insufficient analysis of the achievements of pupils and subsequently the use of information gained from this to establish the priorities for development. The school has sought to listen and act on the views of pupils and parents. For example, parents have recommended changes to the sex and relationship policy within the school and the school has responded by revamping its policy. The governors are very supportive of the school and have campaigned for increased funding; however, they have relied heavily on information from the headteacher and have limited other ways of ensuring that they fully understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, governors need to ensure that they have a clear understanding of how the school is organised by regularly reviewing and agreeing its policies.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so nice to me when I visited. I think you work hard at school and enjoy being there. The staff look after you very well and make sure you are safe.

I have written a report that your parents and carers will be able to read. It tells them a few things the school should do to be even better.