

Oaklands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102555
Local Authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	286420
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	63
6th form	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Pett
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Felstead
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2003
School address	Woodlands Road Isleworth TW7 6JZ
Telephone number	020 8560 3569
Fax number	020 8568 8805

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector

Description of the school

Oaklands School provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD), as well as pupils with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and other pupils with profound and multiple difficulties (PMLD), many of whom have associated medical needs. Over half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the majority of these pupils are at the earliest stages of learning English. Almost half of the pupils are between the ages of 16 and 19 years. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average for similar schools. The school is currently applying for specialist college status in sensory and physical development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Oaklands is an outstanding school which continually strives to improve the provision for all the learners. Because of their learning difficulties the standards reached by pupils are exceptionally low, but all pupils do well in their studies and many make outstanding progress. The pupils love coming to school and parents are very happy for their children to attend, knowing they will be safe, that they enjoy their lessons and that the school has high expectations of their progress. One parent commented, and;quot;Great staff, great school!and;quot; All the pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. The school's monitoring and tracking of the pupils' overall achievement is outstanding. The quality of teaching is excellent, particularly for pupils with profound and multiple difficulties and those with autistic spectrum conditions. Teaching in the post 16 department is outstanding and most pupils achieve very well. The pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. Lessons are well planned but the school is aware that there are slight inconsistencies in the recording of each small step in the pupils' learning. The curriculum is outstanding because it is so well tailored to the pupils' needs. It is enriched by the excellent use of off-site visits to extend the pupils' cultural understanding and by the exemplary procedures to enable pupils to learn and mix socially with pupils at a number of mainstream secondary schools.

The pupils thrive within the caring and supportive ethos of the school. Children who are underachieving because of personal difficulties are very quickly identified and supported. A strong emphasis is placed on personal, health and social education (PHSE). This promotes the pupils' emotional and behavioural development and they learn to remain healthy, to keep safe and to behave well. The pupils are involved wherever possible in decisions about themselves. Pupils in the post 16 part of the school make excellent gains in their level of maturity and self confidence, helped by an outstanding programme of work experience. The pupils value the school. This is evident through the good relationships they have with staff, their excellent attendance and the way they all proudly wear their uniforms.

All this occurs because of outstanding leadership and management. The head teacher is highly regarded by staff and her work is outstanding, particularly in ensuring that staff work as a close knit team and share a common vision for the school. She is supported by a very able deputy. The school evaluates its work very well. It seeks and acts on the views of all connected with the school, not least the pupils themselves. The governing body is very supportive and monitors aspects of the school's work robustly. The school has a very good track record over many years and has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development because of excellent procedures to develop their experiences of adult life. The school has developed an ambitious work experience programme to which the pupils respond enthusiastically. The pupils are encouraged to take as many opportunities as possible to make their own choices and to seek independence. The staff effectively promote an adult ethos and mature behaviour. Because of this excellent support pupils are able to reach their potential through a range of nationally accredited courses. Very good teaching results in most pupils making outstanding progress. Some higher ability pupils make exceptional progress in attaining GCSE in art and food technology. The department is a strength of the school and the leadership and management is of a very high quality.

What the school should do to improve further

Ensure there is consistent recording of the small steps in pupils' learning

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Although standards when compared to national averages are exceptionally low, all the pupils achieve highly and many make excellent progress in meeting challenging individual targets. The pupils with English as an additional language are well supported and make very good progress. There is slight inconsistency in the way teachers record each small step in progress which pupils make. However, the tracking of pupils' progress over time in their acquisition of basic skills, bearing in mind their learning difficulties, is exceptional and this has a significant impact on their achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The pupils' excellent progress in personal development reflects the school's strong management of behaviour and emphasis on moral and social values. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Many examples were observed during the inspection of pupils helping others. The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. For instance, pupils were observed in assembly singing a song with a shared joy and feeling of togetherness that inspired all those present. Pupils' cultural understanding is very good.

The school is calm because pupils feel safe and confident and know what is expected from them. Older pupils develop their understanding of sex and relationships through very good provision in PHSE. The pupils gradually gain knowledge of healthy lifestyles and healthy eating and they have many opportunities to take part in physical activity during the day. The pupils are also able to join in sporting activities at lunchtime and at after school clubs. They develop their social skills through the many communal activities. Older pupils in post 16 provision learn valuable work related skills through work experience. Attendance is outstanding because pupils' enjoy school so much and love to be there. Those pupils who were spoken to were emphatic that there was no bullying or unpleasantness and that they found this school better than any other they had attended.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teachers know their pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting well paced lessons. There are occasional inconsistencies in the recording of the small steps in pupils' learning. There are very good relationships between classroom teams and the teaching assistants support pupils effectively. The pupils like their teachers and enjoy their lessons. In one outstanding lesson, pupils with PMLD were fascinated by the beating of a drum and an echo effect on a microphone as the teacher enabled them to gain sensory experience of the rhythm

in a poem. The teaching of pupils with autism and those with English as an additional language is outstandingly well organised and this enables these pupils to make very good progress. Teaching in the post 16 department is well planned to create many opportunities for the pupils to develop independence and self confidence.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils enjoy a carefully constructed curriculum which is very well adapted to their needs. The curriculum is rigorously monitored for its effectiveness. There are a range of very good programmes for post 16 pupils and particularly good provision for work related learning. Programmes in PHSE underpin much of the school's work and these have a significant impact on the pupils' achievement in personal skills, their knowledge about the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and about their own safety. There is a wide range of activities to take pupils out of the classroom, teaching them to behave appropriately in the community and showing them that new things can be learned in all sorts of situations. The school provides an exemplary range of opportunities for pupils to experience mainstream school provision and to socialise and work with mainstream 'buddies'. This adds substantially to the pupils' social skills, their self confidence and their interest in learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides a high standard of care and support for pupils. Child protection procedures are effective. There are excellent procedures for risk assessments and the necessary checks on staff are in place. Governors regularly monitor health and safety policy. The learning mentor has a specific role in supporting vulnerable pupils. The generous staffing means pupils have many opportunities to talk to adults and there are very supportive relationships. Many pupils, especially in the post 16 provision, contribute where possible to the assessment of their own work. The pupils have a very good understanding of their personal development targets. Every pupil's achievements are discussed and celebrated by the class at the end of each day. The information which is given to parents for Annual Review meetings is of a very high standard and superbly presented. Parents are fully involved in target setting and they report a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their child's education. Pupils receive very good advice and support as they are about to leave school. There are outstanding links with other schools and local colleges.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The head teacher shows outstanding leadership through her commitment to her staff and pupils and her determination to maintain the highest standards of teaching and care. She is supported by a strong senior team. A strength of the school lies in the effective way the managers monitor, evaluate and improve on every aspect of the school's performance. For instance the senior

team is aware of the occasional inconsistency of recording pupils' progress and has recently developed strategies to improve this aspect.

Communication within the school is excellent. Staff are fully consulted and feel involved and valued. The quality of professional training for staff is outstanding. This has a significant beneficial effect on pupils' achievements. Governors provide effective support to the school and they closely monitor the school's budget and standards of health and safety. They are developing a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for further development.

Relationships with parents are extremely good because communication from school is very well organised and parents are actively encouraged to be involved with their child's education. The school has maintained consistent improvement since the previous inspection and has an excellent capacity to improve further.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Not long ago I came to the school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classroom and while we were eating our lunch. Thank you and well done.

I was with you for two days. That was long enough for me to realise that Oaklands is an outstandingly good school. One of the reasons is that you all enjoy school so much. There were lots of other things that I liked. Here are a few:

- You work hard and make excellent progress.
- The many different people at the school do their very best to look after you
- You are helped to be as independent as possible and to make as many choices for yourselves as you can.
- You get many opportunities to mix with other pupils from different schools
- Those of you in the post 16 department are able to go out on interesting work experience placements

There is one thing which I think would make the school better and which all your teachers are already working towards. Teachers should continue to develop an improved way of writing down each little bit of progress you make in your learning. That would help you to do even better!

Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes and good luck, Yours sincerely,

Melvyn Blackband Lead inspector