

Oakbank School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107441
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	287819
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Vincent Ashworth HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1809
6th form	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Janice Firth
Headteacher	Mr Chris Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001
School address	Oakworth Road Keighley West Yorkshire BD22 7DU
Telephone number	01535 210111
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Oakbank School is a large school that serves the Worth Valley and surrounding areas. Most students are White British, with a below average number from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority of students come from rural farming backgrounds and around 10% come from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also high. The school has specialist status in sport and design and technology. Awards achieved by the school include SportsMark Gold, Healthy School and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school which brings to life its mission 'to work together to provide the best possible education' for all students. After a 2 year period of decline, standards have started to improve, students in the main school are making better progress although a small minority are still failing to attend regularly. For those students who choose to attend regularly, the school provides a strong starting point for adult life. Students' achievements in mathematics and science have been disappointing. The current picture is that underachievement is being addressed and more students are making better progress in these subjects.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the main school. This judgement is lower than the school's own view of teaching and learning. A small number of parents have concerns about disruptive behaviour. Although there is a small minority of students who do not act as considerately or as responsibly as they could, instances of boisterous behaviour are tackled well by most teachers. There are pockets of excellent teaching, but the quality of teaching remains patchy. Not all teachers are equally skilled in using assessment to find out how students are getting on and to figure out how best to help them improve.

The school supports students well as they move from one stage of education to the next. Strong links with primary schools help students settle in. A good range of advice about choices and careers assists students in deciding on future pathways. The school has been very successful in ensuring that all students move on to further study, training or an appropriate career when they leave compulsory education.

The school has arrangements for joint-sixth form provision with five other local schools and the local college of further education. This collaboration works well. It ensures that all students have access to a curriculum that offers seamless progression between different phases of their education and prepares them well for adult working life. The school takes care to develop students as rounded individuals. They can equally demonstrate their achievements in extra-curricular activities such as sport, arts and technology as in their normal academic and vocational subjects.

The headteacher provides strong leadership. He has fostered a climate which empowers and inspires managers to give of their best. This has been hampered in recent years by recruitment difficulties in mathematics and science, but things are now looking up in these departments. The English department is the jewel in the school's crown and provides a blueprint for all other departments that aspire to good management, good teaching and learning and good outcomes for students.

The school's specialist status in sport and design and technology has had a considerable positive impact on the whole school's performance. Results in physical education (PE) are above the national figures and the trend is rising. Pupils enjoy their PE lessons and the opportunities they have for taking part in extra-curricular sport. Standards in design and technology are improving and are excellent in the sixth form. The school is distinctive in being the lead partner in the PE consortium in the Keighley area.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. This is because the head of sixth form has clear vision and direction and is well supported by her team. She has implemented effective

strategies which have contributed to a considerable improvement in standards and students' achievements. The sixth form is very inclusive and offers a successful course for students who are not ready to progress to advanced level study. Students demonstrate high levels of confidence and good communication skills. They also make a significant contribution to life in the main school, acting as peer mentors, lunchtime supervisors and sports and club leaders. Students appreciate the facilities for study and relaxation and make good use of technology to research and present their work. Attendance is good.

What the school should do to improve further

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that students are challenged to do their best in all lessons and understand how to improve their work.
- Raise standards in mathematics and science.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enter the school with expected levels of attainment; relatively few are high achievers. Students' overall progress by Year 9 has been slower than expected and their results in national tests were below average in 2006. The school has recognised this and has taken a number of steps to ensure students achieve better results, particularly in mathematics and science. In 2006, at the end of Year 9, students made good progress in English and their attainment was broadly average. Inspectors noted from the quality of younger students' work and their participation in lessons that they are now making steady progress overall. Data provided by the school also indicate that students currently in Year 9 are attaining higher standards than in previous years.

As a result of a stimulating curriculum and staff who provide good care, students make satisfactory progress by the time they complete their compulsory education. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as others. Standards at Key Stage 4 are below average and improving. Students' achievements in mathematics and science also improved but results are still not as high as they should be. The school recognises that a minority of students find it hard to maintain a consistent pace of learning and is starting to address this through targeted support. Students achieve good results in sport, design and technology, drama and modern languages.

In the sixth form, pass rates on A level and advanced vocational courses are high. On vocational courses, students produce a high standard of coursework and make good use of the school's information and communication technology resources to research and present their assignments. Because of good teaching and strong support, the majority of students make good progress. Students' achievements in art, product design and health and social care are a credit to the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most students enjoy school because staff are friendly and supportive. In the sixth form, students are mature and take ownership for their own learning. In the main school, students generally relate well to teachers and to each other. There is some disruptive behaviour by a small minority of students in lessons and around the school. Attendance is satisfactory and improving, but it is still below the average for schools nationally. Students generally feel safe and say that bullying sometimes happens, but is dealt with effectively by the school. Students benefit enormously from the very good specialist sports facilities and many take advantage of the wide range of sporting and enrichment activities. They also appreciate the healthy meals on offer. Students demonstrate a good understanding of social, moral and cultural issues but their spiritual awareness is less well developed. The school council is effective in voicing students' views and has effected changes. Older students take on responsibilities by working with younger ones as buddies and help with supervision at lunchtimes. Some students are taking leadership awards and this boosts their confidence. Residential visits are popular, giving students new experiences and helping them develop confidence and new skills. The excellent range of work-related and enterprise opportunities prepare students well for life after school. Although standards in numeracy have started to improve, too many students do not achieve as well as they could in mathematics. This does not augur well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. There are some common strengths in the quality of teaching. For example, teachers' subject knowledge is good, lessons are well organised and teachers provide good explanations of the work to be done. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support students who need extra help. In many lessons good relationships promote effective learning. When teaching is at its best, students are thoroughly engaged, inspired and challenged. However, too much of the teaching is satisfactory. In particular, in some lessons, students are not sufficiently challenged to do their best. There are also some weaknesses in the assessment of pupils' work. For example, there are inconsistencies in the feedback pupils receive in lessons and in the quality of marking of their books. This means that they do not always have a clear enough understanding of how to improve the standard of their work. A few lessons are not successful in holding the attention of all students, or behaviour is not managed effectively. As a result the pace of learning is impaired. In the sixth form learning objectives are clear, expectations are high and teachers generate a lively pace. Students' attitudes to learning are positive and they enjoy the intellectual challenges that teachers provide through well-considered questioning and opportunities for discussion and debate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good, with a number of strong features. At Key Stage 3 it is broad and balanced and caters well for a small group of students who enter the school at well below nationally expected levels. There is a successful initiative to fast track students in modern foreign languages, which allows them to attain GCSE qualifications at the end of Year 9. Similar schemes are being piloted in English and mathematics, in the latter case preparing students for national tests by the end of Year 8. Work-related learning is a very strong feature of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Students of all abilities are able to opt for vocational courses provided both on and off site. Work placements are successful in increasing students' self-esteem and motivation. A very successful integrated humanities course has inspired students to continue studying these subjects in the sixth form. The school has identified the need to develop courses that are better-suited to the needs of students who are at risk of not passing any GCSEs.

The sixth form curriculum is good and offers students a wide choice of academic and vocational courses through the local confederation of schools. The school's status as a sport and technology college has promoted not only increases in curriculum time for PE, but a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities which involve a considerable number of students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Staff provide very good personal support for students and are highly focused on meeting the needs of all students. Tutors offer additional review sessions to support students' personal development, particularly in relation to improving their behaviour and attendance. The majority of students respond well to this and feel encouraged to work harder. Although students are aware of their individual targets in different subjects, they do not always get enough specific guidance to help them catch up or do even better.

Child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place. The 'Inclusion Team' supports vulnerable students well. The learning support centre provides a calm and supportive environment for students to work individually or in small groups. Staff work well with parents and a large number of external agencies to help students overcome a range of difficulties. Gifted and talented students are well catered for with enrichment activities. Students feel very well informed about courses when making GCSE choices. They receive good careers advice and guidance, which helps to increase the numbers of students who stay on after GCSE. Arrangements to help students make a smooth transition from primary to secondary school are very effective because of the strong links with local primary schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some strong features. In the sixth form leadership and management are good. An unquestionable commitment to improving the school drives the work of the recently strengthened senior leadership team. A range of initiatives has helped the school to improve in a number of areas over the last three years. This is most obvious in the steep rise in standards in modern foreign languages, the improving progress seen in English and the implementation of a strong policy to develop literacy across all subjects. Improvement since the previous inspection is good and the school has good capacity for further rapid improvement.

The school's systems for monitoring the quality of provision provide a realistic view of its strengths and areas for development. However, these systems are not applied consistently enough to be fully effective in improving achievement as quickly as possible. Middle managers are becoming more adept at monitoring and evaluating their departments. Nevertheless, the overall quality of their work is not equally effective. The ways in which staff use data to monitor students' progress are strengthening. However, managers need to cultivate greater refinement in the ways in which teachers use assessment information to pin-point students' precise learning needs and follow these through with the most appropriate interventions.

Governors are hardworking, have a growing understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are starting to hold the school to greater account. Governors have shrewd judgement and are not afraid to take decisive action when the need arises. The recruitment and induction of good new teachers has added to the improving ethos of the school. Financial management is strong and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

In the sixth form, leadership combines a high level of monitoring of students' progress, with intervention when necessary to boost motivation and provide support. This enables the majority of students to reach high standards and gain admission to the next stage of their education.

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Annex A

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?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	3	2

The quality of provision

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

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?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. I thank those of you who helped the inspection by talking to us about your work and your life at school. A number of your parents also returned a questionnaire which was very helpful. Most parents said that they were very pleased with the school and value all the school and its teachers do for you.

We found that Oakbank is a satisfactory and improving school, with good potential to make further progress. We judged your sixth form to be good. Your teachers are very caring and supportive. The school offers you good opportunities to get the skills and qualifications that will help you succeed in life. We were particularly pleased to see how so many of you make good use of the specialist sport and physical education facilities. We were also impressed by your projects in design and technology, your skills in foreign languages, the wonderful artwork displayed around the school as well as your accomplishments in music and drama. Although the majority of you are doing really well in English, many of you are not doing as well in mathematics and science as you could. It is a pity that a small minority of you do not always behave as well as you could or avoid attending school regularly. This lets your teachers and fellow pupils down and means you miss out on so much your school has to offer.

The headteacher, senior staff and governors know what has to be done to help you improve. In particular we have asked them to:

- ensure that more of you attend school regularly
- make improvements in mathematics and science so that you are all able to progress as well as you possibly can
- make sure that you are all inspired to give of your best by making it very clear what you need to do in order to improve and achieve the highest grades.

The majority of you made a good impression on inspectors who found you polite and helpful. I have every confidence that you will support your school in achieving these objectives and wish you every success in the future.