



Oak Lodge School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116637
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 290573
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Kay Johnson

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Roman Road
School category	Community special		Dibden Purlieu
Age range of pupils	11–16		Southampton SO45 4RQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380847213
Number on roll (school)	125	Fax number	02380845112
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Liz Coveney
		Headteacher	Mrs Beverley Hawker
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	23–24 January 2007	290573

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Oak Lodge is a special, moderate learning difficulty, day school serving a predominantly rural area in South West Hampshire. The school caters for pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and additional complex needs. About three quarters of pupils are boys. About a third of pupils are diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The population of the school is predominantly White British.

The school is situated on the same campus as a mainstream technology college and recreation centre. There is an inclusion programme in operation with the college.

The school is subject to an area review of special school provision. Due to the nature of the needs of the pupils, standards are well below national averages. The school has achieved a range of awards and recognitions which have been reconfirmed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Our children are maturing into confident young adults with a positive sense of their abilities', said one parent of this good school with outstanding features. The self-evaluation processes have ensured that pupils' outcomes and future life chances are of the highest priority. At the heart of the school's success are the visionary continuing professional development and induction programmes for staff. These are driven most effectively by the comprehensive and detailed strategic school plan.

The senior leadership team have made it their business to support the development of subject leaders and clearly communicate corporate responsibility to the whole school community.

The school has an impressive list of updated awards including Investors in People, Investors in Careers and The Artsmark Silver Award and it has used them to drive up standards and develop better provision. Funding and donations have been put to excellent use in the development of an impressive Arts block with a drama studio and a sculpture room which enhance current provision.

Teaching and learning are at their best where there is effective breaking down of work into small steps and support staff work confidently with individual pupils and small groups. Teachers use good questioning to move pupils learning on. In these lessons pupils take responsibility for evaluating their learning. Teaching and learning are less secure where pupils have fewer opportunities to reflect on their progress and contribution to lessons.

Examples of the exciting and stimulating curriculum on offer are the wide range of work-related learning opportunities and off-site educational activities, which have enhanced pupils' experiences and they appreciate it. There is an ever increasing range of accredited courses available to suit individual pupil's abilities. The school has moved seamlessly from its previous curriculum to a model which exemplifies good practice in this personalised learning. Curriculum planning and the focused and impressive displays show a commitment to celebrating and learning about diverse cultures. Assemblies cover appropriate topics and reward pupils' achievements both academically and in their personal development. Pupils behave well and enjoy coming to school because the curriculum and guidance is flexible and responsive. The school is truly inclusive especially in the way that its community of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) have been able to access the curriculum and are respected and valued by their peers. Language and communication development are integral to the schools ethos, as is apparent in the use of picture symbols in all classes and through the school's commitment to the Arts. However, more explicit strategies to develop communication are needed and this has been identified by the school, who have employed their own speech and language therapist.

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce some different ways of communicating so that everyone can express what they think

- Provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to think carefully about what they learn in each lesson.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and progress of pupils is good. There are robust tracking systems in place which are internally and externally moderated. Analysis of data is incisive. It takes good account of different groups of pupils as well as closely monitoring individuals to enhance personalised learning plans. The school strategic plan identifies what is being done to make individual plans more focused and accessible. Pupils make good and better progress in lessons where teachers use the assessment analysis findings to move pupils on. Pupils benefit from the moderation and setting of subject targets by subject leaders.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well being are good with elements which are outstanding. Most impressive is the way in which all pupils are included and feel they belong to this community, notably, the ASD pupils who are integrated into classes. There is a tangible respect between pupils and an understanding of each other's differences. This is down to the staff team who set a fine example day-in and day -out of how to value differences and diversity thus endorsing the view that everyone is a worthy contributor.

The Chelsea flower show, where the pupils were successful in winning a silver medal, is a shining example of the very best practice at the school where pupils were able to take on adult responsibilities and develop their personal and social skills. This event fed directly into curriculum and accreditation planning where a very successful horticulture programme is now underway.

There is a range of lunchtime and after school clubs and residential school journeys which further enrich the pupils experiences and which the pupils say they enjoy very much.

Behaviour management is good but better in some areas than others. The reason why good behaviour is consistently sustained is because of the effective support systems in place and excellent continuing professional development. Within the school setting pupils are able to express themselves confidently and have a developing awareness of current issues for healthy living.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because of excellent induction and staff development programmes. These facilitate and nurture some outstanding and consistently good practice, as well as bolstering less effective practice[0]. This is coupled with an effective monitoring and evaluation programme which quickly identifies areas for support and improvement. Staff are enabled to meet pupils' needs through well-targeted training, for example in the application of approaches such as the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-handicapped Children (TEACCH) for ASD pupils, and inclusive performance management procedures.

The TEACCH approach has been seamlessly introduced to the daily programme and benefits all pupils because of the clarity of the tightly structured activities. Where it works best pupils are motivated and can see their achievements and receive immediate praise. There is evidence of much improved use of assessment in lessons to raise standards. However, in some lessons pupils have too few opportunities to reflect on their progress.

Classrooms are well organised and resourced and, when teaching is satisfactory, this helps to keep pupils progress on track. Looking at the successful outcomes for pupils, the positive impact of the investment in professional development and induction is crystal clear.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. There have been dramatic and exciting improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection. It is genuinely tailored to meet the needs of pupils and to ensure that pupils have the best possible opportunities of achieving economic well-being. Everywhere you look there are stimulating activities and creative approaches at play. For example mathematics work looking at train timetables with pupils planning their journeys and then trying out the route. The work related learning is inventive and meaningful with carefully planned visits and experiences on offer to develop pupils' confidence. There is a successful partnership with the mainstream school which shares a site to provide inclusion opportunities where pupils can follow additional GCSE courses in addition to the ones offered at Oak Lodge. The impressive range of accredited courses available for all pupils is a particular strength and the arts provision, rightly awarded the Silver Artsmark, leads the way in terms of developing exciting courses to improve the outcomes and enjoyment of learning for pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care guidance and support are good with some excellent features. Pupils say that 'Oak Lodge understands its pupils' and it does. The school knows its pupils well. The Careers guidance is a particular strength of the school as a result of the work which started with the Investors in Careers process which the school has been successful in achieving. This has led to successful partnerships with other organisations and ensures that pupils are supported in moving on to appropriate college placements when they leave.

Academic guidance is good with plans to smarten the pupils' individual education plan targets and make them more personalised. This was identified by the school. A speech and language therapist has been employed to develop the communication strategies.

Learning support assistants are well deployed and enhance the pupils' progress by providing a balance of support and encouragement and facilitating independence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher, is ably supported by the senior leadership team and an astute governing body. Together, they have driven the school forward with creativity and enthusiasm. They have successfully managed recruitment challenges and a widening remit of pupil needs in the context of the special educational needs review and reorganisation. The findings of the inspection mirrored the headteacher's assessment and it was clear that support is put where it is needed.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have remained focused at all times on attacking the challenge of recruitment. This has resulted in a member of the leadership team being devoted to the staff development programme which is very effective in supporting Newly Qualified Teachers. Support staff have been equally well served by the National Vocational Qualification assessment available through the school and the introduction of Higher Level Teacher Assistants.

The headteacher conducted an excellent assembly on body language and facial expression. When it was agreed that the head looked excited and she asked why that might be, a pupil answered 'and;hellip;.because you're excited to see all us wonderful kids, Miss'. The pupils know they are valued here, they are proud to belong. They are included in a community which strives to improve their opportunities now and in the future.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

Thank you for your help during the inspection. You were well behaved and polite. You told me that your school is good and I agree with you. I also found that your school does some things very well indeed. Your headteacher and her senior team and the governors do an excellent job and care deeply about you getting the best curriculum possible. You told me it is fun and that you like the activities you do outside school as well.

Your school gives you a very good choice of courses and because of this when pupils leave they are able to go to colleges to learn more. You respect each other and celebrate differences and I like the way you speak up sensibly in assemblies and lessons.

Your school agreed that it can do even better if there are more ways that people can communicate with each other and that you can make even more progress if you think carefully about what have learned in each lesson and try to remember it for the next time.

What the school should do to improve further:

- Introduce some different ways of communicating so that everyone can express what they think
- Plan for you to have more opportunities to think carefully about what you have learned in each lesson.

With best wishes for your future,

Kay Johnson Lead Inspector