



Oakgrove College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126161
Local Authority West Sussex
Inspection number 293479
Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Ann Berger HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	The Boulevard
School category	Community special		Worthing
Age range of pupils	11–19		BN13 1JX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01903 708870
Number on roll (school)	200	Fax number	01903 705439
Number on roll (6th form)	37		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Tracie Griffiths
		Headteacher	Graham Elliker
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001		

Age group 11–19	Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007	Inspection number 293479
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Oak Grove College opened in October 2005 as a result of the reorganisation of special provision in this part of West Sussex. There are 31 classes and 112 staff, which is much larger than the average special school. It is housed in a brand new building designed specifically for these students. The students all reach standards below national expectations because they have learning difficulties and complex needs. The school is co-located on a campus site together with a mainstream high school, youth centre and residential provision. The school has provision for 35 students up to the age of 19 for those with the most complex needs who are not ready to transfer to a local college at age 16. Most students came from the secondary departments of three local special schools. About two thirds of the staff transferred from these schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school has overcome significant challenges. As one teacher explained, 'Eighteen months ago this was an empty shell.' In a short time the staff have established a very positive ethos and a satisfactory quality of education. The senior team, through their energy, enthusiasm and vision, have established a cohesive school where students care for and support each other well. Many students started with apprehension about changing school. These concerns have been overcome through the determined efforts of staff. The students feel very safe and secure, although arrangements for risk assessments are insecure and inconsistently applied. Any bullying is addressed well and everyone is valued.

The students have made an outstanding contribution to the rapid developments. Of particular note is the work they have done to improve the environment. Many give up their own time to maintain and develop the gardens and play area to a very high standard. They enjoy school and are highly motivated by the innovative curriculum, which meets their needs and prepares them well for the future. The students regularly participate in active sports to support a healthy lifestyle. Many suitable policies and practices have been established and the drive to change and develop the school is good. Positive partnerships with a range of providers, for example the local college, work experience partners, the Church and youth service, enhance the opportunities for students. The governing body provides good support and challenge and is holding the school to account for its work very effectively.

Despite these many strengths there is a long way to go to establish the systems and procedures which ensure continued improvement. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory but underdeveloped, as the school's view of its own performance is insufficiently well grounded in a rigorous evaluation of the progress the students make. This limits the school's capacity to improve, which is satisfactory overall. There is too little focus on drawing together all the evidence to inform developments and ensure practice across the school becomes more consistent. Key strategic partnerships with the local authority and mainstream schools are inadequate and too many students do not have the opportunities to mix with their mainstream peers.

The students' achievements are generally satisfactory. The progress they make varies considerably between the year groups and between subjects. They make good progress in Key Stage 5 and in the vocational aspects of the curriculum. The progress in literacy is variable.

The main reason for the uneven progress is insufficient focus on developing policies which ensure consistency in classroom practice. There are assessment systems within individual subjects which record achievements but they are not drawn together to enable staff to account for the students' performance.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The information about the students' learning is clearer than for the students in Key Stage 5 than in the rest of the school. There has been greater continuity for these students as nearly all came from one school. Most students achieve accreditation at ASDAN Bronze Award level with over half achieving ASDAN Silver Award. In all other respects the judgements for these pupils are reflected in the relevant sections of the report.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the good practice to establish coherent systems for assessing and tracking students' progress and use this information to develop better systems for self-review.
- Develop management policies to establish more consistent classroom practice.
- Improve the relationship with the local authority and find more ways of developing partnerships with local mainstream schools.
- Establish secure risk assessment practices for students going on trips out of school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The progress the students make varies between groups and subjects. In the lessons observed they made good progress in art and design, drama and technical studies. The progress was satisfactory in literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Students in the sixth form made good progress with their vocational skills developed through work experience, for example in horticulture. The senior leadership team has not yet collated the information about the progress the students make to reach a secure judgement on this. However, feedback from parents indicates that they are mainly happy with their children's progress. The inspectors have agreed with the school, in the light of the evidence available, that achievements are satisfactory overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They like their new school and think that students from the three original schools mix well and get on well together. Behaviour is good and students are tolerant and respectful towards one another. They can often be seen assisting each other, for example in the dining hall, at playtime, or when playing sports. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are proud of their school and are happy to take

responsibility for improving it. They have worked extremely hard to develop attractive areas such as the central playground and grounds from a previously barren environment.

Through the School Council, students raise issues that they want to see improved, such as litter and safety cameras. Students love the residential trips and several said how much they were looking forward to the next one. Many select healthy options at lunchtime and enjoy the range offered. The wide-ranging curriculum and good attention to students' personal and social skills mean the school is preparing students well for their future lives. Students' attendance is satisfactory though there are a few whose attendance is not as good as it should be.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is mainly satisfactory, although it varies from lesson to lesson and there are good features in most lessons. For example, teaching assistants are deployed well, activities are well planned to engage the students and there is a good emphasis on the students' enjoyment of their time in class. The relationships are very good and behaviour is very well managed.

The variability is caused in part by lack of a whole-school policy to ensure that the expectations of high achievement are consistent across the school. Weaknesses in teaching lie mainly in the core subjects of English, mathematics, ICT and science. Work has only recently begun to establish clear programmes of study for each of the core subjects. A good start has been made with English, though there is more to do to ensure the new policies are consistently applied. For example, despite advice and training on literacy materials, teachers in years 7 and 8 still use resources which are not suitable for students in secondary school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has introduced an innovative curriculum which allows students considerable flexibility and choice. This is much appreciated by the students. A suitable balance between core subjects and the rest of the curriculum has been achieved and progression routes are also developing well. The curriculum is particularly well matched to students' interests and needs.

In addition to the current qualifications available, plans to introduce NVQ level 1 qualifications and other accreditation are progressing at a good pace though no students have yet completed a full key stage, so their progress over time on these courses is yet to be evaluated.

The curriculum for the students in Key Stage 5 is suitable for their ages. For example, they run their own café and go across to the college for lunch. Good links with other workplace organisations make the learning relevant for the students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students receive good care, support and guidance and this is a major reason why students' personal development is good. All staff in the school are committed to this. There are good links with support agencies, including care workers and health professionals. The school has a successful system for managing students' behaviour. This has led to an overall reduction in incidents over the last year. Arrangements for safeguarding students meet requirements in most respects. However, the school does not fulfil the statutory requirements for carrying out risk assessments. This is in urgent need of improvement to ensure that no student's safety is compromised when out on visits, including residential stays.

The school's systems for tracking and evaluating students' performance are at a very early stage of development and are not yet sufficiently accurate to enable staff to have a clear view as to the academic progress students have made and whether students are doing as well as they should.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The leadership has been focused on establishing an orderly community and this it has done well. The team has won the confidence of staff, though there is more to do to ensure that their performance is monitored and supported. Good efforts have been made to ensure that teaching is at least satisfactory but the leadership has not fully established the consistent policies required to ensure a higher proportion of good teaching. Governance is much improved and the school is held closely to account for its work. Middle leaders work hard and ensure they discharge their responsibilities.

They are well managed and the secure year team structure provides good support for individuals. However, information about the school's performance as a whole needs to be gathered and analysed with greater consistency and rigour.

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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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
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	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
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 welcoming us when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed talking to you and we were impressed by how much everyone looks after each other. The teachers do a good job making sure that your lessons are fun. While we were watching lessons, you did what you were asked to do and behaved very well. We were also very pleased with how much work you have all done to improve the play areas and garden.

The school is still very new and everyone is trying hard to make sure it runs smoothly and problems are sorted out quickly. We have suggested that:

- staff spend more time checking how much you are learning in your lessons so they can all help you improve
- more ways are found for you to mix with the students from the mainstream school.

The school has got off to a good start and everyone is keen to help you do better in your lessons.