



# Oakgrove School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 134630  
**Local Authority** Milton Keynes  
**Inspection number** 294139  
**Inspection dates** 13–14 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Janet Mercer HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Venturer Gate
<b>School category</b>	Community		Middleton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Milton Keynes MK10 9JQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 236217
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	450	<b>Fax number</b>	01908 236218
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Megan Crawford
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Barnes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	13–14 September 2006	294139

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Oakgrove School is designated as an 11–18 mixed comprehensive school. It opened in September 2005 with an intake of Year 7 and 8 students. Approximately 60 students joined the school at various times during its first year. At the time of inspection there were 450 students on roll in Years 7, 8 and 9. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than average. The proportion of students who have English as an additional language or who are entitled to free school meals is lower than average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Oakgrove is a good school with many outstanding features. The outstanding leadership of the head teacher and the senior leadership team has enabled the school to make an excellent start and achieve a great deal since it opened a year ago. The head teacher, senior leaders and governors share a clear vision for the development of the school. The school motto 'excellence, innovation and respect' is at the heart of all the school does. In the first year, rigorous evaluation and review have already brought about improvements in standards, teaching and curriculum and the leadership team demonstrates outstanding capacity for future improvement.

Most students say they really enjoy coming to school where they feel very safe and well cared for. Several told inspectors that it was the best school they had been to. The school has a strong ethos of respect, which leads to outstanding behaviour in all aspects of school life. The school ethos is well understood by both students and staff and is supported by a structured system of rewards and sanctions. Attendance is good and the school continues to use well thought out strategies to deal with students who are regularly absent. The school is already very popular with parents and is oversubscribed.

In its first year, the school has established an exemplary assessment and tracking system which has enabled very close monitoring of all students' progress in all subjects. The 'Targets for Learning' system is used to set realistic and challenging targets for all students and assessment data is very well used to monitor progress towards achieving those targets. Additional support is put in place quickly for those students identified at risk of underachieving, and to ensure that more able students are stretched to achieve as much as they can. Consequently, achievement is good and standards are in line with expectations. All groups of students are making good progress and the school is on track to achieve the appropriate targets set for achievement in the national tests in Year 9.

Assessment data is very well used by teachers in planning their lessons to meet the different needs of individual students and to target additional support where needed. Learning co-ordinators regularly observe teaching to monitor the progress of different groups of students, for example, those identified with behavioural issues, or those considered to be at risk of underachieving, and higher attaining students. They monitor how effectively subject teachers respond to the different needs of learners in their classes and enable them to share good practice. However, the school does not yet do enough to develop students' personal skills and create opportunities for them to develop independent learning skills.

The school curriculum is outstanding and very responsive to the needs and interests of students. The school has developed a highly effective alternative curriculum for Year 9 students. Some less academically able students are developing skills and achieving through ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) qualifications. Alternative curriculum sessions observed by inspectors were highly

effective in engaging some previously disaffected students and enabling them to produce work of a very high quality.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. The overwhelming majority of parents are quick to praise the school in this respect. Students expressed confidence in feeling safe at school and are clear about whom they would talk to if they wanted to discuss a personal problem. The school liaises closely with an increasing range of service providers to ensure that all students have appropriate care and guidance.

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

- Increase opportunities for independent learning, to raise standards further
- Ensure that teachers develop students' personal skills through the values and ethics programmes.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The achievement of students from all social and ethnic backgrounds, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, is good.

The school opened with students joining both Year 7 and Year 8 in 2005. Those students who joined at the beginning of Year 8 had remained in their primary schools for the first year of their secondary education. Although the attainment of these students, at the end of Year 6, was well above average, their progress during Year 7 was not as good as expected. As a result, it was necessary for the school to 'catch up' during Year 8. Although measures to help improve achievement were successful, a further group of students joined the school during Year 8 which resulted in it having to change its teaching timetable and grouping arrangements. This again had a negative impact upon students' progress. Nevertheless, overall progress for these students has been good, particularly in mathematics. Appropriate intervention in information and communication technology (ICT) led to significant improvement in standards.

The attainment of students who joined the school at the beginning of Year 7 was well below average. They too have made good progress.

At the beginning of Year 9, standards in English, mathematics and science are average. The performance of girls is better than that of boys but both are close to national averages. The school is implementing a variety of strategies to raise achievement and there are clear indications that subject leaders are having a positive impact.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students talk enthusiastically about how they enjoy their lessons and other activities and their behaviour in class and around the school is excellent. Students say that they are not aware of any bullying

and they are clear that there are good systems of support if bullying did occur. They appreciate the 'student ambassadors', who provide them with excellent peer support and with whom they feel comfortable to report incidents. The school seeks and responds to the views of its students through the effective school council.

Students' social, moral and cultural development is good. However, the school misses some opportunities to enhance their spiritual development. Many students take part in extra-curricular clubs, and accept responsibilities as school ambassadors and members of the school council. Students make a positive contribution to the wider community, for example through their involvement in supporting local and national charities. However, students do not yet have enough opportunities to develop their work place and other skills.

A good values and ethics programme equips students with the knowledge and understanding to take responsibility for their own decisions. The school is improving provision to encourage a healthier lifestyle. While the majority of students walk or cycle to school and many participate in sports activities, students themselves felt that there is more they can do towards adopting a healthy lifestyle.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall and inspectors observed some outstanding lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed.

Rigorous assessment and tracking of students' progress means that teachers have detailed information about the different abilities and interests of students in their classes. They plan lessons well to meet individual needs and set clear objectives at the start of lessons. Teachers quickly establish very good working relationships with students. Good classroom management and consistent implementation of the reward system ensure high standards of behaviour in lessons. In a small minority of lessons, where work was too much led by the teacher, students' level of participation was less, and some lost concentration. The school acknowledges that it needs to create more opportunities for students to develop their independent learning.

Many teachers make good use of varied learning resources and activities which engage students' interests and encourage their participation in lessons. For example, in an English lesson the teacher successfully used both music and paintings to stimulate discussion about an unseen poem. Students contributed their ideas enthusiastically and were eager to see the actual poem in the next lesson.

The school has effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and judgments made are accurate. Feedback to teachers clearly identifies areas for further development and any support required. The school has a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and has developed action plans for individual teachers to improve satisfactory teaching and make it good or better. However the monitoring and evaluation of the

values and ethics programme does not yet place sufficient emphasis on how well teachers develop students' personal skills.

Learning support assistants work effectively in classes providing targeted support for students with additional learning needs. Effective liaison between teachers and support staff enables close monitoring of students' progress.

Homework is set and marked regularly and many teachers give detailed feedback to students on how to improve their work. A whole school marking policy has been implemented this year to ensure consistency of approach across subjects.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum provision is outstanding. The school teaches more hours than average to ensure sufficient time is given to physical education, ICT and the values and ethics programme. This embraces personal, social and health education, citizenship, learning to learn, and careers education, and is given a significant amount of time each week.

The development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is well integrated into all subjects. The school has identified opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects and how each subject can contribute to the five outcomes related to Every Child Matters. This year the school is placing a particular focus on developing literacy skills to raise standards further.

The curriculum review carried out during the first year identified particular learning needs for specific groups of students and the school has adapted its curriculum to meet these needs. New subjects have been introduced for the school's second year, including German and Italian, to support the school's bid for specialist language status, and music, which is extremely popular with students.

A high proportion of students participate in one or more of the many extra-curricular activities available. Sports, arts, dance, music sessions and homework clubs are all well attended.

The school makes excellent provision for gifted and talented students, involving them in setting appropriate targets and reviewing progress. Feedback from teachers, students and parents on the first year's work was very positive.

There have been some restrictions in provision for design and technology, PE and art due to a lack of specialist facilities in the first year. As yet the school has no drama provision but this is planned for next year, when the next phase of building will provide appropriate accommodation.

The school has extended its curriculum to the local community, offering courses in modern foreign languages and learning to learn through its family learning programme.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support for students is outstanding. The school is welcoming and has a harmonious atmosphere. One student said that they were nervous about coming to the school but that 'the brilliant preparation I had before coming to Oakgrove School meant that I was not nervous on my first day'. There is an outstanding, systematic approach made to the identification of, and provision for, students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Excellent health and safety routines are in place. Child protection procedures are clear and widely understood.

Students are involved in setting their own learning targets. The vast majority of students are able to confidently discuss the standard of their work and know what they need to do to improve. 'Target for learning' days provide regular opportunities for students and parents to take part in target setting interviews with tutors and other members of the school staff. Targets are reviewed throughout the year. Attendance by parents on target for learning days is very high and they receive termly progress reports.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. In the school's first year the leadership team has already brought about major improvements in students' achievement, quality of teaching and the curriculum and capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

The excellent headteacher has guided the school through a very difficult period during which he has managed not only the development of a new school, but has been heavily involved in overseeing the building programme. Senior leaders and governors have a very clear sense of direction and high expectations for the school's future development. All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the school. The leadership and management of middle managers is good overall and they know what is required for it to become outstanding. Comprehensive departmental reviews contribute well to the school's evaluation of the quality of provision, which is rigorous and accurate. Staff development is valued and used effectively to improve the quality of leadership and of teaching. Equal opportunities are promoted strongly through all aspects of school life.

School governance is outstanding. Governors are strong 'critical friends' and they set a strategic direction which has standards and achievement and the welfare of students at its core. All statutory requirements in relating to safeguarding children are met.

Governors have worked particularly well with the headteacher and senior leaders in managing the development of the new school. Financial planning is exemplary and is securely based upon the plans for further development of the school and on the outstanding day-to-day management of resources.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	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	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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**

My colleagues and I greatly enjoyed our visit to your school. We'd like to thank you for making us very welcome and helping us with the inspection. We have taken your views and those of your parents and carers into account as well, in making our judgements. Many of you told us how much you liked the school and enjoyed your lessons and other activities. Several of you told us it was the best school you had been to. We think your school is already a very good one, and in some respects, it is outstanding.

The main strengths are:

- most of you have already made good progress in school
- your attendance is good and behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent
- your teachers are enthusiastic and committed and plan your lessons well
- teachers use a lot of different and interesting activities in lessons so that you can participate well in class and enjoy learning
- relationships between you and your teachers are very good
- many of you attend a good range of after school activities
- new subjects and courses have been introduced this year, which many of you enjoy, especially music
- outstanding personal and academic support, with excellent assessment tracking systems, which closely monitor your progress and help you all to achieve well
- outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher, senior staff and governors, who have made a fantastic start to the new school.

We have made a few recommendations, to make a good school even better. The school should:

- raise standards further to ensure all of you achieve as much as you can
- help you to develop your personal skills further so that you can take more responsibility for your own learning.

With very best wishes for the future

Janet Mercer HMI