



# The Oswaldtwistle School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 134127  
**Local Authority** Lancashire  
**Inspection number** 295702  
**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jim Bennetts HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit	<b>School address</b>	Union Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Oswaldtwistle, Accrington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Lancashire, BB5 3DA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01254 231553
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	31	<b>Fax number</b>	01254 879544
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pauline Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2006		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–16	21–22 November 2006	295702

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

This is a 40 place pupil referral (PRU) unit for boys and girls in Years 7–11. It opened three and a half years ago. There were 31 pupils on roll at the time of this inspection. Pupils have previously been excluded from other schools and generally come from the less affluent areas around Oswaldtwistle, Accrington and Rossendale. Most pupils are White British but there are a few of Asian heritage. A few of the older pupils receive their education at a college of further education (FE) or with an independent trainer. When Oswaldtwistle School was inspected in January 2006, it was found to be underachieving.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

This is a satisfactory school with many good features. The issues from the last inspection, in January 2006, have been dealt with well. Leadership and management of the school are strong. The curriculum and teaching provided are good. Pupils who may have special needs are now assessed more quickly. Where appropriate, their transfer to other schools is being put in hand with more urgency. The staffing difficulties apparent a few months ago have been resolved effectively for the time being, though some arrangements are necessarily temporary. Pupils' weak attendance is a significant shortcoming, but is being tackled by the recent appointment of a pupil support officer.

There were reasonable results in the summer of 2006 for pupils aged 14 and 16. The distance learning arrangement for older pupils was a cause for concern with regard to pupils' progress at the last inspection. The position is now at least satisfactory, with pupils engaged productively on worthwhile courses. Work in books and on display often shows conscientious effort and is pitched at a level that enables pupils to consolidate their learning and break new ground. This effective progress is facilitated by lessons that are generally appropriately planned to meet pupils' needs and by a well conceived range of curricular and enrichment opportunities.

Most pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are at least satisfactory. In some sessions, attitudes and behaviour are good. Considering pupils' disrupted backgrounds, many pupils make good progress in developing their personal skills. Older pupils often display mature attitudes and can be very responsive when activities engage and stimulate them. The school and its off-site learning centres provide a safe environment. Pupils are encouraged in healthy living. They enjoy school life and have ample opportunity to contribute to the life of the school.

Teaching is good overall, with particularly strong contributions through some high quality off-site provision. The school has been imaginative and entrepreneurial in securing improvements to the curriculum for older pupils. Resources in school are generally good, but longstanding delays with the surfacing of the outdoor area are a significant problem for the school. There are effective assessment systems in place to track pupils' progress, so that teachers can plan lessons and tailor curriculum arrangements accordingly. Pupils who present themselves in such a way that a special needs assessment is called for are now being dealt with more quickly. Steps are taken to move them on to more appropriate provision. There is a continuing need for vigilance with this.

The school has made great strides forward over the last few months. The headteacher's vision and commitment have been central to this. She has been well supported by her senior colleagues and the local authority (LA) in securing this hard won improvement. The future of the short stay schools in this part of the county is under review, with the possibility of relocation of some pupils and staff to Oswaldtwistle. Every care must

be taken to ensure that the fragile success of Oswaldtwistle School in achieving recent improvement is not put at risk.

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

- Improve attendance.
- In settling future staffing appointments (with possible redeployment ahead), be mindful of the current fragile success of the school, which has just emerged from special measures.
- With the help of the LA, seek to ensure that those who may need a special school are dealt with speedily.
- With the LA, ensure that the playground is operational by the start of the spring term.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

In most lessons seen, pupils were making at least satisfactory and often good progress. In some sessions led by outside providers, progress was outstanding. Good progress was seen in numeracy and literacy. In mathematics, GCSE coursework underway is equivalent to standards in the range G to C. There are examples of writing of good quality from many pupils. Achievement is best in activities that involve practical work and participation. For a small minority of pupils, achievement is adversely affected by poor attendance.

The school seeks certification for pupils' achievements wherever possible. The majority of Year 9 pupils were awarded levels in national tests last summer. In mathematics and science, most had at least Level 4, there were some Level 5 awards, and one at Level 6; results in English were a little lower. The Year 11 pupils who left in the summer of 2006 were mostly engaged on a regime of 'distance learning'. Two thirds of them had reasonable success at GCSE and on other certificated courses; results were typically grades in the G to D range for English and mathematics, together with at least one similar pass in another subject. Most leavers are now in education, employment or training.

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

### **Grade: 3**

The centre is an orderly and calm learning environment. There is strong development of pupils' social, moral and cultural awareness, and some activities have a spiritual dimension – for example, when pupils ponder the anguish to others that irresponsible behaviour can cause, or in close encounters with reptiles and an owl. The newly available excellent lunches cooked on the premises have further enhanced the harmonious social occasion of the midday break. Pupils clearly enjoy practical activities and take part enthusiastically. Pupils placed at a FE college have blossomed over the last few months to become personable young men. The behaviour and attitudes of groups that went

to motor vehicle mechanics courses was excellent. However, the behaviour of a handful of pupils in the middle years can be persistently challenging. Following assessments and progress reviews, more suitable placements for some of these pupils are being sought.

Attendance is weak and for a few individuals it is poor. A pupils' support officer has recently been appointed and plans are underway to tackle stubborn attendance problems. The school makes every effort to provide a safe environment. There is a good programme for encouraging pupils to lead a healthy lifestyle. Most pupils enjoy what they do at the school and in off-site activities; they have good opportunity to have a say in the courses they take and the plans that are being made for them. There is an active school council.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching in sessions seen was at least satisfactory and generally good; on two occasions it was outstanding. Pupils respond well in courses which have accreditation, for instance through GCSE, and where the teaching is well targeted on that goal. Several teachers and teaching assistants are able to engage well with pupils and get the best from them. In the best lessons, staff judge well how much to encourage and how far to chivvy pupils in order to secure the most productive learning situation. Occasionally, activities go on too long and some pupils become bored. On other occasions, the pace of learning is too slow or the work provided is uninteresting. Behaviour management in the classroom is appropriately low key and generally effective. Painstaking marking in, for example, English and science, gives pupils a clear indication of what they are doing right and how to correct errors.

The curriculum for pupils aged 14–16 includes many opportunities to learn away from the main school site. These are good quality placements, often with high quality tuition or training. The school monitors the quality of these placements judiciously. In addition, visitors to the school are well selected; they engage creatively with pupils and get the best out of them.

At present the school is staffed by effective teachers and teaching assistants. The staffing difficulties evident and anticipated at the monitoring visit in July 2006 have largely been resolved, albeit on a temporary basis in some cases. The school is likely to become involved soon in reorganisation of short stay schools in the eastern part of the county. This will have implications for staffing. In view of the fluid staffing situation, the school is streamlining the administration of staff accreditation procedures.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

In the main, the school's procedures for assessing pupils' academic standards and behavioural needs on entry are rigorous. New pupils are helped to settle in quickly.

They receive appropriate teaching and are placed in a suitable class group. Some excluding schools continue to be dilatory in making available pupils' records; however, liaison with local schools is improving. There are several recent instances of successful re-integration into mainstream schools, the fruit of much careful planning and nurturing by this short stay school and the receiving schools.

With the assistance of LA advice, the school identified a range of possible progression routes for pupils moving into Year 10 or 11. These include a variety of stimulating forms of education or training or work based learning – though in some cases at fairly high cost. The willingness of some employers and trainers to take on difficult pupils is commendable. In many cases, the adults involved are accomplished in youth work skills and know how to get the best out of the pupils. A few Year 11 pupils are educated entirely at one of the FE colleges and are responding well to that opportunity. Two are placed with an independent trainer and have very good provision. In Year 10, new arrangements will allow pupils to take GCSE core science before starting college based work in Year 11. The curriculum for pupils aged 14–16 is strong and greatly improved since the inspection of January 2006.

At the time of the Ofsted visit in July 2006, there was some small scale provision at a site in Rossendale; that unsatisfactory arrangement has now ceased and the pupils concerned are educated at the school. Most subjects taught at the school are reasonably resourced. Facilities for ICT are good, but there is a lack of suitable opportunities in school for some aspects of design and technology. There is a persisting lack of provision for outdoor play and physical education, because of delays in attending to the surfacing of the outdoor area. A football tournament, seen in July with other Lancashire short stay schools, was highly successful. It helped to expand pupils' social experience and gave focus to their enthusiasm for football and the associated skill development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils has improved since the January 2006 inspection. It is now satisfactory and in many respects good. The former distance learning provision has been replaced by a good curriculum for older pupils at the school or elsewhere. In addition, the school has improved its procedures for monitoring attendance when pupils are at college or on work experience. The school is in a much more secure position to know where pupils are at any given time. A permanent pupil support officer was appointed three weeks ago and this strengthens the school's capacity to tackle non-attendance and other issues. Following close scrutiny of pupils' track records, home visits were already underway at the time of this inspection. Senior staff have a profound understanding of the needs of all the pupils as individuals. All are painstakingly cared for, no matter how frustrating that might be.

The school has revised its procedures to track pupils' academic and personal progress from the time when they join the school. These are helping the school monitor pupils' progress more effectively and involve pupils more in setting learning targets. Since the Ofsted monitoring visit in July 2006, certain pupils whose behaviour patterns gave

reasonable cause for concern with regard to possible special needs have been assessed, or are in the process of seeking assessment. This is a step forward. However, it is important that the school receives prompt support in assessment and processing for any such individuals in the future. For example, a wait of more than four weeks between a provisional statement and a final statement is too long. Where a case is established for the education of pupils in a special school or for them to receive other specialist attention, the LA's children's services should ensure that requirements are put in hand speedily. For instance, where pupils are sent for interview at a prospective special school, there should be reasonable prospect of them being placed there. With the possible reorganisation ahead, and the possible transfer of substantial numbers of pupils with diverse needs into the school, it is imperative that possible special needs are attended to adroitly.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Since the inspection of January 2006, the senior leadership team (SLT) has been strengthened very effectively; there is a full complement of senior staff. The SLT is now well placed to tackle robustly the challenges facing the school. Some personnel issues have been resolved. The staffing difficulties apparent in the summer of 2006 have now been settled satisfactorily, though in some cases on a temporary basis. The forward staffing position may depend on possible reorganisation of the three short stay schools in this part of Lancashire. The school is interested in exploring with the LA the possibility of longer term arrangements that might at the same time secure staffing and foster professional links with the secondary schools for which it provides a service. There has been a positive response from some secondary schools to the mooting of such possibilities.

Despite set-backs, senior staff with the help of LA colleagues have made good headway in monitoring the school's work and planning ahead. There has been a major improvement in the curriculum for older pupils. This is facilitating good teaching and learning. In turn, it is improving achievement.

The school enjoys well appointed classrooms and a generally welcoming and attractively decorated building. However, there has been a protracted and unacceptable delay of many months, involving firms contracted to the LA, in sorting out small difficulties with the surfacing of land behind the school for outdoor play and physical education. The LA is aware of the shortcomings in this matter and has facilitated the progress that was starting to get under way at the time of this inspection.

This school is under the direction of the LA, with an advisory management committee. The chair of the committee has had a good appreciation of the challenges that the school has faced. However, the committee is small and in the past attendance was uneven. There has been good progress in bolstering the committee by increasing senior representation from the secondary schools that the unit serves.

Senior staff and the LA have worked together well in coming to a thorough self-evaluation of urgent and on-going priorities for improvement. The school has had

good support from the LA throughout the period since the January 2006 inspection. The action plan and related documentation were of high quality. LA personnel know the school well and have given perceptive and purposeful advice and encouragement. Good headway has been made and the school now provides satisfactory value for money. There is good capacity for further improvement.

In taking the school through a difficult time, and in securing rapid improvement, the headteacher's leadership has been outstanding. The headteacher and her senior staff are unstinting and tireless in the thoughtful consideration that they give to the rapidly changing needs and welfare of individual pupils.

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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>	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	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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

The Oswaldtwistle School

Union Road

Oswaldtwistle

Accrington

Lancashire

BB5 3DA

23 November 2006

Dear Pupils

When I visited the school in November, I was impressed by the improvements since my visit in July and since the last full inspection in January. The headteacher and staff have worked really hard.

For those of you who are older, there is now a wide range of good quality courses. Many of you are doing well at the college, or with trainers in Nelson, Burnley or Blackburn, and there are people coming into school to do interesting things – like the poet and the man with the snakes. Though some staff have left, the school has been able to get good teachers and support staff for you. All considered, you get good teaching. So you enjoy school. It was really good to be with you in the dining room at lunch times with the pool tables busy and excellent food now cooked on the premises. In the main, you get on well together, work well for your teachers and try your best with your courses. You appreciate all that Mrs Smith and her staff do for you.

The secondary schools in the area are now working more closely with your school, and some of you have gone back into the big schools or are planning to do so. The school is also looking at how best to help those who might do better at a different kind of school.

The school and the council have been doing their best to get things moving with laying tarmac on the area for football; we hope it will be all ready for next term. From the tournament in July where you did really well, we know that you enjoy football.

The main problem is that some of you do not come to school as often as you should, and some of you arrive too late. The new Support Officer will be helping you and your parents with attendance. But really, if you want to do well at school and into jobs, you need to get yourselves sorted out with this. This is a school that has a lot of good things going on; always try your best to get there and be part of it.

Very best wishes to all of you for the future!

Jim Bennetts, Her Majesty's Inspector