

# Oakmeeds Community College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126084
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	315424
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacqueline White HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1061
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Hoyles
<b>Headteacher</b>	Colin Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Station Road Burgess Hill RH15 9EA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01444 241691
<b>Fax number</b>	01444 235261

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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Oakmeeds Community College is larger than average. Most students are of White British heritage and a very small minority speak a language other than English as their first language. Students come from backgrounds across the social spectrum. The number of students taking up free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and of these, twice the number found nationally have a statement of special educational needs.

The school has been a specialist business and enterprise college since 2005 and has achieved Healthy School status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Oakmeeds College provides a satisfactory education for its students. Standards are broadly average when students enter the college and remain so when they leave. This confirms satisfactory rates of progress overall. However, the situation is not quite as straightforward as that because progress is slower in some subjects than others. This is partly because students' progress is not monitored systematically within all subjects or across subjects, nor is it reviewed regularly enough. The large majority of students enjoy learning, especially when teaching is well matched to their individual needs and requires them to make an active contribution and think for themselves. This is not always the case. Teaching is satisfactory overall but there is wide variation across the college, with some good and outstanding practice not sufficiently shared.

Generally, the ethos of the college is characterised by warm and positive relationships. Students feel well cared for and most parents are supportive of the college. Some are worried about disruptive behaviour in some lessons and, while behaviour is satisfactory overall, a small minority of students do not respond appropriately to the college's expectations. Satisfactory personal development ensures that most students mature as responsible citizens with a commitment to the well-being of the wider community.

The satisfactory curriculum offers three pathways to meet the different needs of students in Years 10 and 11, including well-planned vocational courses delivered in conjunction with other schools and the tertiary college. Older students benefit from the well-established links with the tertiary college and good careers advice. Care and support are strengths of the college. However, assessment procedures are not consistent or effective enough in helping students to understand how to improve their work in subjects.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior leaders are strongly committed to continuous improvement. Self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas for development but is not linked to students' achievement and attitudes tightly enough; consequently, judgements about the college's performance have been overly generous.

There is successful leadership of some subjects and aspects of the school's work, as evidenced by the improvement in achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) and English and the enhanced, comprehensive provision for citizenship in Years 10 and 11. However, the unevenness in students' performance reflects inconsistencies in the quality of leadership across the school. Addressing this issue is central to increasing the school's capacity for further improvement from satisfactory to good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and the rate of students' progress by:
- lifting the performance of subject teams, especially mathematics and science, to that of the most successful
- monitoring and reviewing students' progress regularly in all areas of the curriculum and using the information to plan for individuals
- extending students' understanding of how to improve their work in subjects
- ensuring self-evaluation is based on regular, rigorous monitoring sharply focused on students' achievement and attitudes.

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.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Students enter the school with broadly average attainment and make satisfactory progress to reach broadly average standards at the end of each key stage. However, in 2006 at the end of Year 9, students made significantly slower progress in English and mathematics than they did in science. At the end of Year 11, while students caught up to make expected progress in mathematics, they did not make satisfactory progress in English and standards were below the national average.

Unvalidated results for 2007 show a downward trend in the proportion of students achieving five higher-grade GCSEs as a consequence of a dip in students' performance in science. Standards improved significantly in English at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 but remain more or less stuck in mathematics.

Progress towards individual student targets is not monitored consistently in all subjects. Consequently, underachievement is not tackled quickly enough and the college has not always met its challenging targets.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress where they receive additional support from specialist staff. In lessons, they make satisfactory progress, as do those with English as an additional language.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Many parents agree their children much enjoy being at school. One commented that, 'it takes him to be really poorly not to want to go to school'. Students' attendance is improving and is satisfactory. Punctuality to lessons suffers given the size of the site but some students use this as an excuse for lateness. The extensive range of cultural opportunities has a good impact on students' development but there is insufficient focus on celebrating cultural diversity. Students develop their spiritual, moral and social skills appropriately.

Not all students meet the college's expectations for positive, responsible attitudes. Fixed-term exclusion rates are too high, with some students excluded on a number of occasions. However, where staff have high expectations, where behaviour management skills are exercised effectively and where there is a good match between individual needs and learning objectives, students respond well and demonstrate good attitudes.

Students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and most pursue them well in terms of healthy eating and taking on physical activities. Students make a good contribution to the community through the college council and house committees; they feel their views are valued and acted upon, for example, over the replacement of shirts and ties with polo shirts. There are good opportunities for students to acquire workplace skills and their development is satisfactory, given their progress in literacy and numeracy. A high number of students make a commitment to continuing their education or training after 16.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The school recognises it has been overgenerous in its evaluation of teaching and learning, which is satisfactory overall rather than good. Improvements have been made in English and there are many examples of good practice across the school. However, the monitoring of lessons is not focused consistently on students' learning and the progress of individuals towards targets. As a result, teachers are unable to match work to the varying needs of students, and this inhibits achievement. While support for less able students and those with additional learning needs is satisfactory, in too many lessons there is insufficient challenge to enable more able students to reach higher levels.

Where the quality of teaching is good, students are actively engaged in the lesson, apply their skills independently and make good progress. These lessons are planned well and lead the students in a sequence of increasingly challenging tasks to an appropriately pitched learning objective. Good use is made of visual resources such as the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate skills. Probing questions extend students' understanding and the students are encouraged to evaluate their own learning. In lessons where students make insufficient progress, work lacks challenge and there are few opportunities for the students to apply their new skills independently. All too frequently, this leads to low-level disruption, and the time spent on behaviour management slows the pace of learning further.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The college provides a broad and balanced curriculum which helps students to make satisfactory progress. Since the previous inspection, provision for ICT and citizenship has improved and now meets requirements. Specialist school status in business and enterprise has expanded the range of courses available to students, especially in vocational subjects. It has also helped to raise standards in ICT. In Years 7 to 9, all students follow ICT courses, which have a business education focus. In Years 10 and 11, all students complete a GCSE course in business and communication systems. The use of their ICT skills in subjects is improving but the level of skills required is sometimes too low.

In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum does not always engage students because it is not sufficiently tailored to their needs and interests; the response of different groups of learners to the curriculum in this age group is not reviewed systematically.

Significant changes have been introduced to enhance the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and enable students to gain skills that will help them in the future. A good range of vocational courses is offered in conjunction with local schools and colleges. Throughout the year the college provides good opportunities for students to gain leadership skills and take responsibility through a series of 'Flexidays'. Provision for careers education and work-related learning is good.

High numbers of students benefit from a wide range of out-of-college activities and visits that enhance students' learning, especially in music, the arts and sport.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

The college provides good care and support for students. The house system ensures students are well known as individuals. Students say they feel very safe and any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively. Parents are appreciative of the strong pastoral care shown by staff. Arrangements to ensure the safeguarding of students meet expectations.

Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve as well as their peers, but the college knows that there is a need to monitor their progress more effectively.

Students receive good advice on future courses, work and training through individual interviews and guidance. However, as students move through the college, their progress in some subjects is hampered because they do not know the level they are working at, or how to improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The college judged leadership and management to be good but gave insufficient weight to students' achievement, which is no more than satisfactory. The unevenness of students' performance across subjects reflects variation in the quality of leadership across the college.

The restructuring of staff into four learning teams has been a success and is increasing the focus on developing teaching and learning. There is still work to do in establishing common approaches to improving learning and sharing good practice. Whole-school systems for monitoring and evaluation are strengthening but there is too much inconsistency in the implementation of policies and procedures. Clearer procedures for performance management are being introduced which make teachers more accountable for students' progress. Teamwork is strong and staff welcome opportunities to take responsibility. There are good opportunities for professional development, but not all staff are confident in their analysis and interpretation of assessment information.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are committed to the school, know it well and support its work; they are involved in improvement planning but have not given a sharp enough focus to challenging the school to raise achievement.

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## Annex A

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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

### The quality of provision

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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
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

9 November 2007

Dear Students,

Inspection of Oakmeeds School, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 9EA

My colleagues and I really enjoyed meeting you during the inspection this week. Thank you for talking to us so honestly about the college and the progress you are making. This letter summarises the findings of our inspection. Your parents or carers will have a copy of the full report should you wish to read it.

We found that the college provides a satisfactory education. Most of you enjoy college life and appreciate the wide range of extra activities available to you. Relationships are generally positive. You get on well with each other and with staff most of the time. However, some of you find it difficult to stay focused on work in lessons and you waste time and disturb others.

You take the work of the college council seriously and make a positive contribution to decision making. You also contribute to the well-being of others in the wider community through your fund-raising activities and care for the environment.

The progress made by you as you move through the college is satisfactory overall. You make good progress in lessons where the work is closely matched to your needs, but where it is not your progress slows down. Leaders of the college know that standards in some subjects need to be raised. We have asked them to do the following things:

- share what the most effective subject leaders do to get good results so that you make good progress in all lessons and subjects
- make sure that your progress is monitored and regularly reviewed in all subjects and the information is used to plan work for you
- develop your understanding of how you can improve your work
- base judgements about how well the college is doing on how well you are achieving and how positive your attitudes to learning are.

Thank you for your help with the inspection and for welcoming us to your college.

With very best wishes for the future,

Jacqueline White Her Majesty's Inspector

**Annex B**

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Her Majesty's Inspector