

Oakhill College

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	888/6012
Unique Reference Number	119833
Inspection number	316419
Inspection dates	1-2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Bradley HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Oakhill College is a Roman Catholic day school which aims to provide a holistic education centred on a strong commitment to gospel values and ideals of justice, compassion, forgiveness, understanding and mutual tolerance and respect. To achieve these aims the school seeks to create a family community in which each member is valued and their contribution acknowledged and respected with a view to developing self-disciplined, confident and courteous young adults. The school has significantly increased in numbers in the last ten years as well as purchasing additional land and building new premises. The principal has been in post since the start of the present academic year and the two vice principals since spring 2007. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils with a statement of special educational need.

Evaluation of the school

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is pupils' behaviour. Since the appointment of a new headteacher in September 2006, the school has rightly identified that aspects of its work require review. It has begun to address these. Teaching is good overall, but is variable. Overall, pupils make good progress, and support for pupils with additional learning needs is good. However, especially in the senior school the most able are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve beyond their current good standards. Curriculum planning, assessment and reporting require updating and the school is beginning to monitor these more rigorously. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school meets nearly all of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good overall. The curriculum is satisfactory; policies for English, mathematics and music provide clear support for lesson planning and promote the pupils' learning from year to year as well as within each year group. The physical education curriculum is also being developed well. In many other cases, documentation is too reliant on published schemes, or is not closely matched to current teaching. The best lesson plans provide different activities to meet varying

pupil needs, but in several subjects planning does not address the range of pupils' capabilities. The school is aware of the need to review its curriculum documentation and lesson planning processes. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities including sports, chess and dance. Resources are satisfactory overall, but there is a need to consider priorities to extend provision in all age groups.

The quality of teaching is good overall. In two thirds of the lessons seen the teaching was good or outstanding. In the remainder it was satisfactory. The best lessons provide pupils with opportunities to develop and evaluate their own work. In a music lesson where senior school pupils working in two groups composed and performed using electronic or percussion instruments, they evaluated their own and each others' work as well as receiving clear assessments from the teacher of the standard achieved and ways of developing the work further. Staff in the senior school have responsibility for their own subject, but line management of this role is less evident. The recent appointment of vice-principals with responsibilities which include oversight of the preparatory and senior departments is a useful development. Planning, teaching and assessment in the preparatory department and Reception is more consistent than in the senior school, although monitoring of practices is limited. Curriculum links between the school's Acorns Nursery and the Reception class are good, although not fully reflected in the range of resources available for the Reception pupils. These links are reinforced by Nursery pupils visiting Reception prior to entry and also having the opportunity to join the older pupils in the playground. Records are also shared between the Nursery key workers and the Reception class teacher. The relatively small size of the school and the subject specialist teaching in the senior school helps to develop continuity in the pupils' learning, but it is not yet sufficiently monitored to ensure that it is always effective.

The headteacher has introduced monitoring of teaching and this is an appropriate development. The school has also begun to revise its assessment procedures, although this is at an early stage. Currently assessment does not generally provide pupils with comments to enable them to identify the standards which they have achieved and ways in which their work can be improved. The present approaches to planning, teaching and assessment enable many pupils to make good progress, especially where they have identified additional learning needs. However the more able do not always develop their own independent skills in ways which would enable them to achieve at levels higher than their current good standards. Parents rightly identified this as an issue particularly affecting older pupils in a questionnaire sent from the school in 2006 and also in the returns to the inspection questionnaire. The headteacher is reviewing the use and frequency of homework in response to parents' comments.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school rightly noted that this is a strength of the school and in the inspectors' view it is outstanding. Behaviour is generally outstanding, especially in lessons and whilst pupils move around the school. The Catholic ethos is being strengthened and

parents commented that this has become evident as the present school year has progressed. Links with Salford Diocese include residential trips as well as leadership and self esteem programmes for senior school pupils. Links with the local parish are also being developed. During the inspection Year 11 pupils led an assembly supported by a PowerPoint presentation. Most pupils take the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Year 10. The school is a significantly caring community and the recent development of the School Council for senior school pupils provides an opportunity to reinforce this. Recently the Council has organised fund raising days for the Third World. Cultural development is supported by a range of activities including drama performances in Clitheroe. An audit of work on citizenship has been conducted to identify where this is taught through different subjects: this is a useful start to developing this work more coherently. Pupils' future economic well being is promoted by work experience in Year 10 and an industry day in Year 11.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school is updating its policies on welfare, health and safety, although the practices observed during the inspection and scrutiny of documentation indicated that the legal requirements are being met and that provision is good. Useful risk assessments are made for trips outside school. The behaviour policy needs more detail, although good behaviour is well promoted. There were some concerns expressed about bullying, but parents noted that the new headteacher was dealing with this. The school lunches, which are taken by all pupils, are particularly good and are based on promoting healthy eating. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school's current policy ensures that all staff are appropriately checked prior to appointment. In a small number of cases, applications for Criminal Records Bureau checks made some time ago have not been followed up and confirmed.

School's premises and accommodation

During the inspection a sports hall and fitness suite was being built and this will significantly extend the school's facilities as well as being available for community use. The present library is to be relocated and developed into a learning resource centre. The school has developed its facilities over the last ten years and whilst all ages and subjects have satisfactory provision, the management is aware of the need to continue to review provision. Access is monitored so that traffic safety is maintained. At present the provision for pupils who are ill does not provide them with easy access to a toilet and washing facilities. The school is aware of this and the new building, due to open in September, will include appropriate provision.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The information provided to parents broadly meets the regulatory requirements, but some aspects which should be available to all are currently only provided on request. These include details of the company owning the school, particulars of the school's policies on discipline and exclusions, and details of the educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational need and those for whom English is an additional language. Reports are provided for parents but these do not clearly indicate pupils' progress, they more generally comment on what the pupil can do or has covered. The school is aware of this and is reviewing it as part of the overall assessment review.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints procedure has been updated during the present year and fully meets the regulatory requirements. Most parents were happy with the procedures, but a small number did not know about these.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- ensure that, prior to the confirmation of their appointment, all staff have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of the name, address and telephone number of the company which is the proprietor of the school (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- provide details of the school's policy on and arrangements for discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))

- provide particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of SEN and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

Systematically monitor and promote more consistent practices for:

- planning the curriculum to meet the full range of pupils' needs
- assessment to inform pupils on their progress and ways to improve their work
- recording pupils' progress and reporting this to parents
- identifying ways in which pupils can develop their own learning and take responsibility for this.

School details

Name of school	Oakhill College		
DfES number	888/6012		
Unique reference number	119833		
Type of school	Catholic, Co-educational		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1978		
Age range of pupils	2-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 124	Girls: 88	Total: 212
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 24	Girls: 28	Total: 52
Annual fees (day pupils) Pre-Prep (YR-2)	£4767		
Preparatory (Y3-6)	£5373		
Upper School (Y7-11)	£7389		
Address of school	Wiswell Lane Whalley Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 9AF		
Telephone number	01254823546		
Fax number	01254822662		
Email address	principal@oakhillcollege.co.uk		
Principal	Mr Michael Kennedy		
Proprietor	Oakhill College (Whalley) Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Martin Bradley HMI		
Dates of inspection	1-2 May 2007		