

Oaklands Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113642
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325850
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Romana Young

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	48
Sixth form	7
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	1
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Ladbury
Headteacher	Bob Pugh

Age group	3–19
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
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Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2009
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	John Nash Drive Dawlish EX7 9SF
Telephone number	01626 862363
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Age group	3-19
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Introduction

The inspection was an integrated inspection of social care and education and was carried out by two Additional Inspectors and two Social Care Inspectors.

Description of the school

Oaklands Park is a residential and day school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. There are 25 boarding places. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children from the age of 3 and sixth form provision for students from the age of 16.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oaklands Park is a satisfactory school. It is improving. Its key strength lies in the very strong relationships across both the school and the boarding provision, enabling pupils to feel safe, make good progress in their personal development and enjoy coming to school. They value the many exciting activities that are offered to them as part of the good curriculum provision. Pupils behave well. They are polite and helpful and most work successfully together. The quality of boarding provision is satisfactory.

Teaching varies across the school but is satisfactory overall. It is most effective where there are clear learning objectives for each pupil and where they use their independence skills to solve problems and complete tasks. In a few lessons, too much is done for pupils and they do not have to think about their actions. Achievement is satisfactory. Most pupils achieve well in mathematics and those with autistic spectrum disorders achieve particularly well in the subject. Achievement in English and science is satisfactory.

The good curriculum provides some exciting activities for all age groups and differing abilities. A particular strength is the high quality provision for sport and physical activities, which has a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of school and on their good progress in sports. Opportunities to undertake accredited qualifications in Years 10 and 11 are too limited. The care, guidance and support for all students is satisfactory. The school has improved the way it gathers and measures pupils' progress and, as a result, there is a clear picture of how well each pupil is doing. Procedures to keep pupils safe are satisfactory. Teaching assistants play an effective role in the care and support of students.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Appropriate activities are provided to help children enjoy school, although at times they do not have sufficient opportunity to explore and investigate resources.

Provision for students in the sixth form has improved in all aspects since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. A good start has been made on introducing an appropriate new curriculum for sixth form students, enabling them to improve their understanding of the world of work. It provides a good structured approach. More indirect activities in the sixth form, however, such as taking care of themselves and taking on simple tasks, are less well defined and do not sufficiently reflect the importance of choice and responsibility for these senior students.

The headteacher is committed to improvement. He has strengthened the leadership team since the last inspection and, as a result, some good new procedures have been introduced. These have not yet had time to have a full impact on the work of the school and on the outcomes for pupils. Governors are supportive and helpful but do not always challenge the school about its decisions. Parents are pleased with the school. 'Oaklands is a happy school,' wrote one parent. Links with the boarding provision are good. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students in the sixth form have their own private accommodation, enabling them to feel that they are growing up. They are settled and happy in their environment. They behave well and are respectful to adults. Relationships are strong and the atmosphere in the department is

age-appropriate. The school has improved sixth form provision in the past two years so that it is now satisfactory. The head of department has introduced a successful accredited programme of work for all students. It is regularly moderated. As a result, students are just beginning to develop an understanding of what is expected in the world of work. Several students undertake simple school-based responsibilities such as looking after the environment. However, they do not always have enough opportunity to take responsibility for their own belongings, to answer questions and to be independent in their learning. This is because adults often do too much for them, giving too many clues so that they do not have to think for themselves. As a result, they sometimes do not try as hard as they need to succeed. Leadership and management of the sixth form have improved and are satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children share their education with older pupils in Years 1 to 6. They have good levels of care and support to help them achieve. Induction into school is good and children are happy. Links with parents are effective and there are good systems to ensure daily contact. Older pupils are helpful and kind to them and they are fully included in all the activities on offer in the classroom. Resources are exciting and plentiful. There are times when activities are most appropriate to the age and abilities of the children but occasionally they spend too long sitting and listening around the table and not enough time playing and investigating resources for themselves. As a result, children's achievement is satisfactory overall. Teachers and support staff make effective use of the good outdoor area to extend learning and regularly record children's successes. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 3

The school has addressed the action points from the last inspection by undertaking structural repairs.

The promotion of pupils' healthy development is good with a strong focus on encouraging pupils to eat healthily, be physically active and lead a healthy lifestyle. Good arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils' primary health care needs are met. Staff are well trained in the skills required to safely and appropriately meet pupils' health and intimate care needs. Specialist community nurses, such as diabetic and epilepsy nurses, provide specific training when necessary. Pupils benefit from speech and language therapy provided at the school, although the availability of this is limited. The school is strongly seeking increased therapeutic provision as it recognises that this is an area of unmet need. Policies and procedures for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication are in place and are adhered to by staff. Medication recording is good.

Mealtimes are well managed, orderly, social occasions. Specific dietary needs are well catered for. Pupils have a choice of main course at each main meal and can serve themselves. Pupils enjoy their meals at the school. Some pupils plan, shop for and prepare some of their meals. Staff are trained in safe food hygiene procedures. However, these are not always being followed when food is being served. The school follows Devon County Council guidance for lunchtime menus to ensure that pupils are being provided with a healthy, balanced diet. The school's extensive, well laid-out grounds and on-site swimming pool are put to good use, so that pupils have plenty of opportunities for physical exercise.

Appropriate systems safeguard pupils' welfare. Pupils' privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. All staff are trained in, and aware of, safeguarding procedures and the need to actively advocate for young people in their care. Pupils are provided with specific advice and guidance on how to keep safe. There is very good liaison between home and school. This has been strengthened by the appointment of the pastoral support worker, who also chairs student council meetings, where pupils' views and ideas are sought about life at the school. There is a strong ethos of being kind and caring to one another, which is reflected in relationships. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Effective emphasis is put on promoting positive behaviour. Individual behaviour and support plans are used to ensure that pupils' behavioural needs are met in a consistent and positive way. Staff are trained in the use of 'Team Teach' method of physical intervention, which is accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD). Incidents of physical intervention are recorded in a bound book. There is careful selection and vetting of all staff at the school. Criminal Record Bureau checks on all staff employed at the school are renewed as required. However, not all of the elements of National Minimum Standard 27 are being met when any member of staff, or other person, commences employment, or duties, at the school.

Positive steps are taken to keep pupils, staff and visitors safe from risk of fire and other hazards. Premises risk assessments are currently being updated. Pupils are closely supervised, according to need, to ensure their safety.

Residential provision and activities actively contribute to pupils' individual progress. Information about pupils' needs and progress is shared between care and teaching staff. Support for boarding pupils to enjoy and achieve in their leisure time is outstanding. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of leisure activities both on and off-site, which they enjoy.

Pupils and parents value the level of care shown by the school, especially for those who are boarders or who have just joined and are settling in. Staff are child-centred in their approach and build very good, positive relationships with pupils. Residential accommodation is of a good standard, very clean and well maintained. Some areas are scheduled for improvement, which will improve the overall standard of accommodation.

Information is available about what the school sets out to do for children and how care is provided for pupils and parents in a variety of formats, depending on need. Appropriate levels of staffing are maintained in boarding houses. Staff teams are stable. Care staff cover for one another, so that continuity of care is very good. Staff clearly know about, and understand, the needs of the pupils they are caring for. There is a strong commitment to staff development and staff are well trained. Members of the leadership team each have clear areas of responsibility within the school and are responsible for management and oversight of these areas and reporting on progress. Governors play an appropriate part in monitoring the quality of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of all pupils in English and science so that it matches that in mathematics.
- Improve teaching and support to ensure that pupils of all ages, and particularly those in the sixth form, do more for themselves in lessons and around the school.
- Develop more opportunities particularly for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to achieve accredited qualifications. National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care
- Ensure that recruitment practice and procedures always comply with all the components of National Minimum Standard 27 (National Minimum Standard 27).

- Ensure that written procedural guidance for staff on safeguarding includes guidance on recording (National Minimum Standard 5).
- Ensure that food hygiene procedures are always followed when food is being served (National Minimum Standard 15).

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as 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

Although standards are low in comparison to the national average, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in English and science, and good in mathematics. Achievement in English varies from class to class because the best use is not always made of signs and symbols to promote communication. Achievement in science is limited by a lack of appropriate accommodation for the subject. The school's own data show that pupils' progress over time is slowly improving because of recent rigorous monitoring. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is variable. A minority of pupils transfer from other schools, including a few from mainstream schools. Because of good support for these pupils, most achieve well and many are eventually re-integrated successfully. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders often make good progress in communication because of the very structured way that they use their communication aids. Pupils' achievement is limited in some classes because they do not have enough opportunities to be independent in their learning or have a go at doing things for themselves. This restricts their overall progress. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is limited by the lack of appropriate accredited courses. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. It has improved because of the recent introduction of a good curriculum. Pupils achieve well in sports activities because of the rich and varied curriculum provision.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The strong focus on social and emotional aspects of behaviour, encourages pupils to behave well in and around the school and show high levels of enthusiasm for all that the school has to offer. As a result, they enjoy school and attend regularly. Individual behavioural plans are effective in enabling pupils to join in as much as possible. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Most pupils work amicably together, taking turns and sharing activities well. Pupils lead healthy lives. They take plenty of exercise and are encouraged to make healthy choices at lunch and snack times. Adults regularly encourage them to try new tastes. Pupils have many opportunities to develop links with the local community. They take part in local festivals, join in with local expeditions and raise funds for a range of charities. As a result, their cultural development is satisfactory. The school council is active and fully involved in the school's work. Older pupils develop satisfactory economic awareness and work-related skills by undertaking mini-enterprise activities. For example, they make and sell bookmarks and put together and sell hanging baskets. Pupils' satisfactory achievement and positive behaviour shows that they are being soundly prepared for their futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Staff know pupils very well because of the small numbers in each class, resulting in positive relationships in lessons. Effective teamwork between professionals ensures that pupils have access to many additional experiences. For example, specialist staff for swimming, trampolining and outdoor activities ensures that pupils look forward to coming to school and that they achieve well in sports. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan activities for each group or individual pupil that closely matches their own specific learning objectives. In a minority of lessons, pupils are not encouraged to do enough for themselves because too much is done for them. There is sometimes too much waiting time and too much turn-taking. This means that pupils do not always have to solve simple problems like finding their own resources, thinking about how to do their tasks or finding ways of completing their work. Use of signing and symbols is not sufficiently evident in classrooms except for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders who use their specialist communication strategies well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been improved because of a recent focus on developing pupils' basic skills along with the belief that pupils have a right to take part in similar activities to those of their age group in mainstream schools. As a result, the curriculum is now broad, balanced and varied, providing some exciting additional experiences as well as improved provision to develop literacy and numeracy skills. This is helping achievement in both subjects to slowly improve. The provision of well matched specialist techniques to improve behaviour and social skills ensures that classrooms are harmonious. Pupils value the many residential experiences offered. These significantly enhance their personal development and well-being. The curriculum ensures that pupils understand how to lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils learn the importance of looking after their bodies and keeping fit. Provision for sport is particularly good. For example, pupils swim two or three times weekly, gaining good levels of confidence in the water. They also enjoy taking part in the annual Ten Tors expedition on Dartmoor. Regular use of the extensive school grounds ensures that pupils develop a thorough awareness of the environment in which they live. Pupils often work on their own small allotments for example. Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well known to the whole-school community, resulting in their needs being met quickly and efficiently. Good systems are in place for the distribution of medicines and for supporting personal needs. Although there are reservations with regard to some aspects of boarding provision, risk assessments are rigorous and there are clear systems to promote the health and welfare of pupils. Child protection and safety procedures are satisfactory. Good systems have been introduced to track individual pupils' achievements. There are positive signs of improvement, but some systems have yet to have full effect. Transition plans are carefully structured and there is clear guidance and individual provision for induction into school and for reintegration. Links with the boarding provision are good and handover procedures are meaningful, focusing on individual pupils' needs well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership has been reorganised since the previous inspection. The headteacher knows his school well and has appointed a team to help him lead the school forward. Together with the headteacher, senior managers have made a good start in promoting improvement. For example, the new system for gathering information about pupils' achievements is helping staff and pupils to identify appropriate targets for improvement. New approaches in the sixth form are leading to improved provision and more age-appropriate tasks that are helping older pupils to develop confidence and gain qualifications. Although self-evaluation remains satisfactory, good systems are developing to improve monitoring so that there is a clearer picture of the work of the school. Governors support the school well, providing friendship and support. They understand the challenges faced by the school in terms of achievement and financial constraints. They have worked diligently to manage the budget but do not always offer sufficient challenge to leadership about its decisions. The school has begun to develop its strategy for community cohesion by linking closely with other local schools, businesses and providers. The strategy is still in the early stages and is not yet as effective as it could be in promoting understanding and links with the wider community in Britain.

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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3	

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/or disabilities make progress	3	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
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?	3	3

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	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oaklands Park School, Dawlish EX7 9SF

Thank you for your help during our recent inspection of your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your school. I particularly enjoyed watching your swimming lesson in the pool. You really enjoyed yourselves and had a lot of fun. This letter is to tell you some of important the things we found out about your school.

- Oaklands is a satisfactory school. It is getting better.
- You really like your school.
- You make satisfactory progress in your lessons.
- You do really well in sports.
- You behave well and enjoy school and those of you who board really enjoy it.
- Your teachers give you some exciting things to do.
- Your headteacher and other leaders take satisfactory care of you.

We are asking the staff and governors to focus on four things to make your school even better.

- Improve your achievement in English and science.
- Make sure you all do more for yourselves in lessons.
- Develop more opportunities for you to gain accredited qualifications in Years 10 and 11.
- Meet the Minimum Standards in the Boarding House.

Thank you again for your help and good luck for your futures.

Yours faithfully

Denise Morris

Lead Inspector