

Oak View School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115460
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326201
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	63
Sixth form	11
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	3
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Gould
Headteacher	Mrs Sandra Winter
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Whitehills Road Loughton Essex IG10 1TS
Telephone number	0208 5084293
Fax number	0208 5021864

Age group	3–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a special school for pupils with moderate, severe and profound learning difficulties. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the number of pupils with complex needs and those with autistic spectrum disorders. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, and boys far outnumber girls. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, though there are none at early stages of learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that has made significant improvement since the last inspection. The vast majority of parents are highly satisfied with the school's work and one captured the views of many by saying, 'My daughter absolutely loves coming to school and is making good progress.'

Pupils' personal development is good, and parents and pupils alike feel that 'this is a lovely school' where every child is valued and nurtured. Pupils are 'proud to be here' and say they are 'like one big happy family' who help each other. Care, guidance and support are good and the staff are very focused on helping pupils to become more aware of their own needs and those of others, including how to behave and socialise in the wider community.

The school is led and managed well and the headteacher provides very good direction to its work. Rigorous monitoring and clear action planning have given rise to good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further. Over the last two years the school has used a range of strategies to raise achievement and it has been particularly successful in improving the quality of teaching, which is now good. Improvements in teaching mean that throughout the school pupils make good progress in developing basic skills and they are given good opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in practical situations. Although standards are well below those found in schools nationally, as a result of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achievement is good overall. Senior leaders have improved the way assessment information is gathered and analysed in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). This has had a positive effect on pupils' achievement and the school has, rightly, identified the need to extend this approach to other subject areas.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and has been reviewed to identify how it might be improved and a good range of learning opportunities is provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stages 1 to 3. There are some opportunities to gain accreditation at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form but these do not fully meet the needs of all pupils. Learning is supplemented well by links with local mainstream settings at Key Stage 4 and satisfactorily through college links at post-16. Numbers in the sixth form fluctuate and the complexity of students' needs has increased significantly since the last inspection. To some extent the school is still adjusting to these changes. Opportunities for students at post-16 to gain vocational skills and take part in work experience are at an early stage of development. The school has experimented with the organisation of its sixth form provision and students are currently based in three separate classes according to their needs, so that they work with younger pupils. Although they make good progress in acquiring basic skills, this arrangement does not give them a sense of belonging to a cohesive group or provide a significantly different experience from that provided lower down the school. Furthermore, the current arrangements mean that achievement is satisfactory at post-16, whereas it is good in the rest of the school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The drive to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school has had a positive effect on teaching at post-16, which is now good overall. Previous underachievement in ICT has been successfully tackled and students make good progress in speaking, listening, reading and numeracy. There are satisfactory opportunities to develop their writing skills and students meet

most of the targets in their individual education plans. The local community is used well to enable students to practise their basic skills and increase their confidence. Students are well cared for and their personal development is good overall. Opportunities to develop as a distinctive group within school are not yet plentiful enough. Their achievement is satisfactory because of limitations in the curriculum. In 2008, students had no opportunities to gain accreditation. Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses have been introduced this year and the school is working to improve its college links to extend these opportunities. Students gain a satisfactory knowledge of work-related learning through doing jobs around the school but there are limited opportunities to take part in external work experience or for more able students to acquire vocational skills. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children achieve well in response to good teaching and a curriculum that is matched very carefully to their individual needs. They make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in developing communication skills, and benefit from a great deal of one-to-one support. Sessions are planned in exceptional detail and resources are used well to stimulate learning. Assessment is good and children's progress is tracked effectively. Attention to children's welfare is outstanding and staff liaise very closely with parents about their children's care. Partnership with parents is good overall, although parents are not yet fully involved as partners in their children's assessment and learning. Provision is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation and provide more opportunities for students at post-16 to spend time together as a distinct group, to gain vocational skills and take part in work experience.
- Extend the good practice evident in tracking and reviewing pupils' progress in the core subjects to other subject areas to refine school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

At the time of the last inspection, the school was at an early stage in analysing data and in using assessment information to set targets. Since then, there has been good improvement in the way assessment information is used to raise achievement. Thorough analysis of data in 2008 led to the clear identification of strengths and weaknesses and enabled senior leaders to pinpoint pupils who were making less progress than their peers. Clear action has been taken to remedy this, for example, to increase the rate of progress of pupils with moderate learning difficulties and to raise achievement in literacy and ICT. Inspection findings and the school's own data show that initiatives to raise achievement have already had a positive impact on the progress pupils make in English and ICT. Their progress in science and personal, social, health and emotional education (PSHE) is good. There are no significant differences between the achievement of girls and boys or of pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils with complex needs achieve well and those with autistic spectrum disorders frequently make very good progress; in the best lessons their progress is outstanding. Pupils are making good progress in their ASDAN courses but some are capable of gaining a wider range of accreditation.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's focus on meeting individual needs does much to raise pupils' self-esteem. Very good relationships create an atmosphere of calm, respect and harmony which helps to promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is good and behaviour is outstanding given the challenges that some pupils experience in this area. The PSHE programme encourages personal responsibility and pupils have a good understanding of their place in society. They develop a strong sense of right and wrong and close links with the local community help to prepare pupils well for life in a diverse society. Pupils contribute well to the community and are rightly proud of the things they do to help others through fundraising and assisting with recycling. They have a good understanding of what they need to do and eat to be healthy. They feel safe and cared for in school and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are prepared well for the future. They make good progress in basic skills and in developing a range of personal qualities to help them succeed in the wider community, though their understanding of work related learning is not as well developed as it should be.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection, regular monitoring of teaching and learning, together with an emphasis on increasing teachers' awareness of what constitutes good teaching, has increased the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good. There has been a significant improvement in the way teachers use assessment information to plan their lessons, so that activities are matched well to the needs of individual pupils. Throughout the school, teachers work effectively with therapists to support pupils with complex needs. The teaching of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is consistently at least good with some exemplary practice. In all lessons, teachers manage behaviour very skilfully and provide praise and encouragement. There is some variation in the level of teachers' expectations about how much work pupils are capable of, however, and where teaching is less successful, lessons sometimes lack pace and do not engage all of the pupils all of the time. The school has a number of very skilled teaching assistants. These are used exceptionally well in some lessons, so that they work as seamless members of a team with the teacher, but their role is not fully developed in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. The school has revised its curriculum so that pupils not only gain new literacy, numeracy, life and self-help skills but have the opportunity to apply them in everyday situations. Pupils benefit from a range of visits and visitors that make learning lively and enable them to extend their social skills. The curriculum covers all the subjects it should and is enriched by additional creative arts experiences, including a strong emphasis on music. Careers education, the work-related learning programme and enterprise arrangements are satisfactory. The school's PSHE programme strengthens this element and means that students are supported appropriately towards the next stage of life. The range of awards and courses available to the oldest students, though satisfactory, is rightly recognised by the school as in need of development. Plans are in place to take this further, both within the school and by working in partnership with other educational establishments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff are extremely skilled in managing behaviour and there are rigorous procedures for safeguarding and recruitment, risk assessments and health and safety. Pupils are encouraged to think carefully about how well they are doing and to contribute to the targets in their individual education plans. Most know their targets, and particularly those relating to their behaviour. Strong partnerships with therapists and other agencies help everyone to be clear about the next steps for each pupil. The school has developed excellent 'communication passports' which ensure that each pupil's progress and well-being are effectively supported. Partnership with parents is good and improving. The ways in which the school monitors pupils' progress has improved considerably in the core subjects since the last inspection, though not yet in other subject areas. Clear messages about how they are doing and what they need to do next means that by the time students leave, they are much better prepared for lifelong learning and many know how to manage their learning difficulties.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is resolute and determined in her efforts to make the school as good as possible. Establishing a new school vision has involved all stakeholders and developments show clear strategic thinking. Systematic development since the last inspection has enabled the school to turn the corner from being satisfactory to becoming a good school. Senior leaders have made very good use of the partnership with a group of other local special schools to raise achievement and improve teaching and learning. Monitoring is thorough and the newly structured senior leadership team supports school improvement well. Development planning is clear and objectives are regularly reviewed. Tracking of pupils' progress feeds into school development in the core subjects and subject leaders are increasingly involved in monitoring and data analysis. The school has recently become accredited for its provision for autistic spectrum disorders and leadership in this area is outstanding. Community cohesion is good. The school takes an active role in the local community and instils in pupils a sense of tolerance and consideration for the diverse needs of others. Governance is satisfactory. Governors provide good support to the school but have yet to develop fully their role in monitoring the school's work.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	2	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

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	1	
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oak View School, Loughton, IG10 1TS

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school and thank you especially to those of you who told us what it is like to be a pupil at Oak View School. A number of your parents wrote to say how pleased they are with the school and we agree with them that you go to a good school.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- You are happy at school and told us you are proud to be a pupil there.
- You enjoy learning and attend regularly.
- You are making good progress in gaining skills such as speaking, listening, reading and finding out about numbers.
- You get on very well together and the staff help you to behave exceptionally well.
- You have good opportunities to go out on trips, for instance, to the shops.

The headteacher and other staff want to make the school as good as possible and we have asked them to:

- provide more opportunities for older pupils to gain qualifications, attend college, spend time together as a group and find out about having a job.
- check your progress in all subjects as well as they already do in English, mathematics, science and ICT.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your time at Oak View School and keep working hard.

Yours faithfully

Ms M J Goodchild

Lead inspector