

Oakfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118140
Local Authority	Kingston-upon-Hull
Inspection number	326770
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Noreen Buckingham

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin Downes
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Davies
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Inglemire Lane Hull HU6 8JH
Telephone number	01482 854588
Fax number	01482 855496

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Oakfield School is a day community special school in Hull for pupils who have behaviour, social and emotional difficulties. The school was opened in September 2007 after reorganisation from a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Currently there are 42 pupils on roll and 18 of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. There are a very small number of girls on roll. There are no Key Stage 1 pupils in the school. A small number of Key Stage 2 pupils are educated in a nearby primary school. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. A higher than average number of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school has a small number of pupils who are in the care of the local authority and who are Traveller pupils. The school operates on three sites within the city.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oakfield is a satisfactory school. It has some good features. Over the last 18 months, the school's changed role and a series of acting headteachers has had an unsettling effect on staff and pupils. However, the recently appointed headteacher has already had a positive impact because of the changes she has made to the overall organisation within the school. Her drive and enthusiasm, together with supportive staff and governors, mean that the school's capacity to improve further is good. Her appointment has given the school stability and she has high aspirations for both staff and pupils. Although the school was recently re-designated, pupils have a wide range of needs and abilities, reflecting the school's previous role. This will remain the case until the last cohort of pupils from the previous school has left. Nonetheless, there is much still to accomplish. The staffing structure has not yet been reviewed to give the school a clear understanding of how it can use existing staff skills to meet the needs of pupils with behaviour, social and emotional difficulties more effectively. In addition, the current admissions policy remains unclear.

Pupils' achievement at each key stage is satisfactory, given their low starting points on entry, although overall standards are well below average. There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils. Pupils have opportunities to gain a range of externally accredited courses. They also take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The school has increased the range of external accreditation for 2009 to provide pupils with more opportunities to succeed and pave the way to further training. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress. The best lessons are well planned and the range of tasks maintains pupils' interest. Most teachers have sound subject knowledge, but the pace of some lessons is too variable and learning opportunities are missed. There are times when lessons are interrupted by inappropriate behaviour, although these are generally well managed by the teachers. There are examples of good practice throughout the school, but it is not routinely shared to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The curriculum is developing well and meets National Curriculum requirements. The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are given good emphasis. Information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, health and social education (PSHE) contribute well to pupils' personal development. Older pupils are offered a range of work-related opportunities and access courses at local colleges. Lunchtime clubs and after school activities enable pupils to develop social and leisure skills. The curriculum also supports pupils' personal development through the wide range of physical activities and its focus on healthy living. Pupils' behaviour during the inspection was satisfactory. Many pupils also improve their behaviour and attendance over the time they are in school, which gives them more chances to succeed. The school records all incidents of disruptive behaviour meticulously; but that data is analysed insufficiently regularly. This means that staff are not well placed to develop effective behaviour management strategies.

The care, guidance and support available to pupils is satisfactory and all safeguarding procedures are established. A range of support services means that pupils and their families receive helpful support when needed. The school has a number of systems in place for tracking pupils' academic progress. Subject tracker booklets, individual education plans and annual reviews all set targets for pupils although these are not sufficiently streamlined to give a clear and accurate view of what they need to do to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve assessment and tracking procedures and check that targets clearly and accurately reflect the next steps in learning for pupils.
- Improve teaching and learning by sharing best practice throughout the school.
- Review the present staffing structure to ensure it is relevant and appropriate to current and future school needs.
- Analyse behaviour incidents more rigorously and use the information to help teachers manage pupils more effectively.
- As a matter of urgency, agree a clear admissions policy with the local authority.

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

Pupils' starting points on entry are lower than might be expected for their age because challenging behaviours and other social and emotional difficulties have interrupted their learning. Given those starting points, although standards by the time pupils leave the school are low, pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory. There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils including the small numbers of girls, looked after children or those from traveller backgrounds. The 18 pupils with moderate learning difficulties, which includes the whole of the Key Stage 2 group, make satisfactory progress although their standards remain low. Pupils benefit from individual support and this helps their confidence as well as their learning. Statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 3 show that some pupils achieved Level 5 in science and mathematics in 2008 but no pupils reached the appropriate level in English. The school has identified this and has put strategies in place to improve matters. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are able to gain a range of externally accredited awards and all pupils left with some accreditation. Currently a vastly increased range of accredited courses is being taught and the school has set challenging targets for improvement across all key stages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory with some positive aspects. Similarly, their spiritual moral, social and cultural development is also satisfactory but pupils' awareness of different cultures and social diversity within our society is not as well developed. The introduction of the 'Hub' sessions during the day gives pupils and staff opportunities for short discussions when good work and behaviour can be celebrated. These sessions also help to promote a community ethos in which all contributions are valued and give pupils the chance to share their opinions about the school. Pupils' behaviour is mainly satisfactory and the level of exclusions has decreased. Although there are occasional outbursts of inappropriate or disruptive behaviour, these are quickly dealt with and mostly well managed. These incidents are recorded appropriately but more detailed analysis of this information is not undertaken to help develop whole school strategies to improve behaviour management. Pupils understand the reward points system and like the range of activities or prizes they can earn. 'I like the Friday afternoon things.' A barrier to many pupils' learning has been poor attendance but this has improved overall and is now broadly average. Pupils' attendance tends to improve once

they feel comfortable in school and some pupils have achieved 100% attendance. This is testimony to how much they enjoy what the school offers. 'It's fine here' said one boy and a parent commented, 'He doesn't like missing school.' Attitudes towards work are variable but pupils generally complete tasks willingly. The school has the Healthy School Award and encourages pupils to have a healthy lifestyle by engaging them in a range of physical activities. Enterprise activities give older pupils experience of working with money and pupils have also raised funds for national charities giving them some understanding of local and national issues.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although the quality of some lessons is good. The small group of Key Stage 2 pupils, who are taught in a special classroom on the separate primary school site, are also included in additional activities such as assemblies and concerts with the other pupils. Effective monitoring of lessons and classroom practice means that the school has an accurate view of teaching and learning. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons to make good use of strategies that motivate pupils and keep their interest. Planning in the majority of lessons is good and often includes reference to pupils' targets. However, individual targets are not always referred to, so pupils are not always aware of the next steps in their learning. In the best lessons, pupils are engaged, behave well and make good progress. In satisfactory lessons pupils tend to be overly supported and this restricts opportunities for them to demonstrate what they know and can do. Expectations in these lessons are not high enough and pupils lose interest. Not all teachers have an awareness of the signs of impending disruption. When this occurs, lessons lose focus resulting in lost time and missed opportunities for learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed and successfully take the lead in some lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is making satisfactory progress in developing a curriculum which meets the needs of individual pupils in all key stages. It meets National Curriculum requirements and has an increasing emphasis on vocational pathways for some older pupils who continue to find it difficult to attend school regularly. Basic skills and personal, health and social education are given a clear focus and effectively prepare pupils for further education, training or employment. A small group of young vulnerable pupils are educated in a local primary school giving them some opportunities for integration into activities within the mainstream school. Another small group of older pupils with more challenging behavioural needs are educated in the 'Annexe' but have opportunities to participate in activities at the Oakfield site. In addition, those not attending school on a regular basis have support from the school in off-site provision which is monitored effectively by staff. Breakfast club, lunchtime clubs and after-school activities are part of the school's developing extended day programme of activities and support effectively pupils' personal development. Enterprise education is given high priority at Key Stage 4 and an exciting Halloween party was planned and executed extremely well with staff and parents joining in the fun. Parents said how happy their children were at the school and how their attendance had improved. Staff make every effort to arrange work placements for pupils and even when these may break down, they do not give up. Good links with local colleges means that pupils have a range of opportunities to choose options that interest them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Arrangements for safeguarding are in place and pupils are taught in a safe environment. A wide and increasing range of professional agencies support the school and its pupils. The school is keenly aware that some of the pupils are vulnerable and makes every effort to ensure that appropriate support is in place for them. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally positive and the school's approach to managing behaviour underpins a growing trust and respect. Opportunities for the group of pupils in Key Stage 2 to integrate with the primary school pupils at playtime contribute to the former group's well-being and helps them develop friendships. Individual education plans are key to tracking and supporting pupils' progress. The system for tracking and recording pupils' progress in every subject is good but it is not clear how this information is used or analysed. Currently, the assessment system is cumbersome and lacks sufficient clarity and precision to give staff a more accurate focus to guide their planning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and some aspects are good, notably the leadership of the headteacher. Although only in post for a short time, she is demonstrating strong leadership and is driving the school forward with energy and enthusiasm. She has a clear vision for the future development of the school and is well supported by the acting assistant headteacher and senior management team, along with a governing body who are keen to see the school on an even keel and moving forward. As a result of this effective leadership, the school is calmer and staff show enthusiasm for improving the school's provision. An assistant headteacher has been appointed to strengthen the senior management team but the role of middle managers is underdeveloped. The headteacher's evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and the school improvement plan (SIP) correctly identifies the most important priorities for development. Performance management for teachers and teaching assistants has also been established. The change in the school's role has been challenging for some staff and a training programme is in place to build confidence in meeting the changing needs of the pupils. A review of the whole staffing structure has not yet been undertaken to identify how the school can make best use of existing staff skills to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs. Governors fully support the school and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, and rightly agree the priorities outlined in the SIP. The success of recent actions, along with the high level of support from governors and staff, means that the capacity to improve is good.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

22 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakfield School, Kingston-upon-Hull, HU6 8JH

Thank you for making me welcome in your school. I would like to share my thoughts about the school with you.

The school has gone through some changes but throughout this the staff have been, and still are, committed to making Oakfield a good place for you and one in which you can enjoy your education. The headteacher and all the staff work hard to ensure you are safe in school and can learn. The school is giving you many opportunities to have your work accredited so that you will be well prepared for leaving school. Everyone in school wants you to do well and your parents appreciate what the school does for you. I did enjoy the Halloween party and the bacon sandwich was delicious!

To improve your school further, I have asked the governors, headteacher and staff to make the following changes:

- Ensure that your teachers help each other to make lessons even better.
- Make sure that the targets you are given help you to concentrate on getting the most important areas of your work right
- Ensure that the school understands why some pupils have challenging behaviour and that this information is used to help all teachers to manage this behaviour more effectively.
- Make sure that the school makes the best use if can of the staffs' skills.
- As a matter of urgency, agree with the local authority which pupils should attend your school.

I hope you will continue to work with all the staff to make your school the best it can be, and that your attendance will get even better so that you can take advantage of all the activities that the school offers. Finally, I wish you all a successful future.

Yours sincerely

Noreen Buckingham

Lead inspector