

Oakfield House School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	888/6037
Unique Reference Number	131666
Inspection number	330039
Inspection dates	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focussed principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Oakfield House makes provision for primary aged pupils who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is also developing provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and communication difficulties. There are 17 boys and 2 girls on roll aged between 6 and 11 years. They all have statements of special educational needs and are placed and funded at the school by their local authorities. They have all experienced disrupted schooling prior to starting at Oakfield House School. The school opened in 1998 and was last inspected in 2004. Since that time it has undergone changes to ownership, senior leadership and staffing. Since July 2005 the school has been owned by the Acorn Care and Education group. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2007. The school aims to promote pupils' self esteem and develop their social and communication skills so that they are able wherever possible to return to mainstream schools.

Evaluation of the school

Oakfield House School provides a good standard of education and care. As a result the pupils enjoy coming to school, attend regularly and have a positive attitude to learning. The teaching is good and pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning and good progress in their personal development. Rigorous arrangements are in place for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety. The school benefits from good support and challenge provided by Acorn Care and Education. The recent changes to ownership and staffing have been well managed to minimise disruption to pupils' schooling and to maintain the quality of provision since the last inspection. The school continues to meet all independent school regulations. However, its Accessibility Plan does not fully meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The good curriculum is firmly rooted in the National Curriculum and this ensures that there is appropriate breadth, depth and

challenge in pupils' studies. A strength of the curriculum is its flexibility and responsiveness to meet pupils' needs. The school successfully adapts the curriculum to suit pupils' interests and abilities, for example in relation to the balance of time given to different aspects of the curriculum and the use of 'Super Learning Days' to maximise opportunities for cross curricular activities. The newly completed information communication technology (ICT) room is of a high standard and provides a good specialist facility which the pupils enjoy using.

The quality of teaching is good. Careful consideration has been given to class groupings taking account of pupils' personalities, learning styles, ages and needs. This has enabled teachers to focus on pupils' needs effectively, for example in addressing their communication and social difficulties. Teachers and key workers make clear their high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour and this promotes a positive attitude to learning. The pupils are motivated by the praise and encouragement which they receive for their efforts. Humour reduces tension and helps to allay pupils' fears of failure. Key workers provide good support for pupils' behaviour and concentration. There is a wide range of ability in each class group and usually teachers tailor their expectations of individuals to reflect this. However, pupils with learning difficulties do not always have enough time to complete the tasks set for the group. Many pupils have poor literacy skills; some are reluctant to carry out writing tasks. Whilst teachers instinctively seek to promote literacy skills in lessons, opportunities for doing so in different subjects are not specifically identified in their planning.

There is a generally calm atmosphere in classrooms and incidents of challenging behaviour are managed quietly, consistently and effectively allowing lessons to continue with minimal disruption. In the best lessons teachers make good use of visual resources and practical activities to capture and maintain pupils' interest and to reinforce learning. The school has a good range of resources to support teaching and learning, including recently installed interactive whiteboards in classrooms. Displays of pupils' work enhance the bright welcoming classrooms.

During lessons there is a clear focus on improving learning and teachers routinely check pupils' understanding and offer further clarification where it is needed. Most pupils' attainment is below that expected for their age. For many this is due to gaps in their previous learning resulting from exclusions or non attendance. For other pupils it is due mainly to their learning and communication difficulties. During their time at school the pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning and good progress in their personal development. Some make real strides, for example in their reading where, having settled at school they become more confident in their abilities and catch up on lost ground. A small number successfully return to mainstream school. Pupils in Year 6 are achieving well in ICT and some are reaching standards expected for their age. Assessment is satisfactory and improving, although data on pupils' attainment on entry and progress over time is patchy and as yet unreliable.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; it is particularly strong in developing pupils' social and moral skills. Through ongoing reinforcement of high expectations of behaviour, pupils learn to distinguish right from wrong and to respect other people within the rules of the school. There is a clear sanctions and rewards system in place, which engages the pupils and provides clear incentives for them to improve their behaviour. Although many of the pupils have had interrupted schooling in the past, due to their behaviour, they have improved to such an extent that behaviour in Oakfield House is judged as good. Some pupils have behaviour management plans which describe clearly how their difficulties are to be addressed. When unacceptable behaviour does occur, it is dealt with effectively and consistently by all staff, so that pupils feel that they have been sanctioned fairly. Classes also have targets for the development of their social skills which are skilfully reinforced by all staff who come in to contact with them.

Through positive encouragement and a well planned programme of personal, social and health education and school assemblies, pupils also develop their self-esteem and grow in self-confidence, leading to them being able to express their concerns and frustrations in new and more appropriate ways. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to it, and this is further shown through the excellent relationships between staff and pupils throughout the school. They also enjoy the regular educational visits, including to theatres and cinemas, and a residential outdoor activities centre which the school organises. Pupils feel that they have a voice in the development of the school through the school council which has representatives from each class group.

The school runs a number of special days where the learning centres on a specific theme such as the Rainforest or Africa. During these days the pupils learn about other ways of life and these help to promote their awareness of other cultures. Pupils also learn about other religions through their religious education lessons and these are followed up with visits, the most recent being to a local church. Last year, the school organised a Christmas concert in the presence of the local vicar amongst others and this was a great success, involving many of the school's pupils performing in public for the first time. Pupils should now be given opportunities to meet people from other cultures and backgrounds to their own, to ensure that they become prepared for life in multi-cultural Britain.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. All staff and proprietors have undergone the necessary checks with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. The pupils are well supervised at all times and are well cared for. The staff show a genuine commitment to the well-being of each pupil and this is evident in the care given from the minute pupils arrive at school in the morning to the time they leave on the transport home. Appropriate policies, procedures and risk assessments are in place to safeguard pupils and staff

are generally well trained for their roles and responsibilities. Although the school shows a strong commitment to staff professional development it does not have an agreed induction programme or training plan in place to support managers in planning and monitoring staff training. The proprietors ensure that the necessary checks on health and safety and fire prevention are carried out and that there are named officers who have received appropriate training. However, they have yet to arrange for all staff to receive training in fire prevention. The role of senior key worker is particularly effective in coordinating arrangements for child protection and managing challenging behaviours. Detailed recording of incidents and physical restraints enables senior managers to closely monitor the welfare of individual pupils. There is regular contact with parents and carers. The school's Accessibility Plan does not fully meet requirements because it does not give sufficient detail about plans for access to information and it does not cover a three year period in sufficient detail.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

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:

- Improve assessment, recording and tracking of pupils' progress
- extend opportunities for pupils to meet people from different backgrounds so that they can further develop their understanding and tolerance of other beliefs and cultures
- establish a staff induction programme and suitable training plans.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning			√	

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of pupils		√		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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School details

Name of school	Oakfield House School		
DCSF number	888/6037		
Unique reference number	131666		
Type of school	Independent special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1998		
Age range of pupils	5-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 17	Girls: 2	Total: 19
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 17	Girls: 2	Total: 19
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,175		
Address of school	Station Road Salwick Preston Lancashire PR4 0YH		
Telephone number	01772 672630		
Fax number	01772 672631		
Email address	office@oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs June Redhead		
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education		
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI		
Dates of inspection	17 September 2008		