

Oak Heights Independent School

Independent School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| DCSF Registration Number | 313/6081 |
| Unique Reference Number | 135090 |
| Inspection number | 333855 |
| Inspection dates | 1–2 July 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Angela Corbett HMI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Oak Heights School was established in September 2003 in the London Borough of Hounslow and operates under a board of trustees with charitable status. The school was founded with the specific aim of preparing secondary age students for entry to university to study degrees leading to professional work in medicine, dentistry, accountancy, banking and law. Students are selected through a rigorous examination and interview process. Their education is seen as part of a contract with parents who are also interviewed. Class sizes are small. Very few students are over compulsory school age but they are taught to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level only. At the time of the inspection there were 25 students on roll and 9 Year 11 students had been taken off roll having completed their GCSE examinations. The school was last inspected in June 2006.

The school sees its aim as promoting an education that is more than academic, and one that encompasses dedicated sportsmanship and the acquisition of life skills. It aspires to produce students who will ultimately become leaders and pioneers in their chosen fields.

Evaluation of the school

Oak Heights School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its students and meets its stated aims. Provision for students' personal, social, spiritual and cultural development is good. Welfare, health and safety are also satisfactory. Progress is good for some students but satisfactory overall. Most students achieve good standards in their GCSE examinations. Parents are very positive about the school. The school has made satisfactory progress in most areas since the last inspection and meets the majority of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum which leads to GCSE is satisfactory. Whilst students have a few opportunities to be creative, they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the aesthetic and creative aspects of learning through subjects such as art, music or drama. The main curriculum consists of sciences, mathematics, English, French and history.

Students learn about the wider world through personal social and health education (PSHE) and religious studies as well as general studies, which has been introduced since the last inspection. The curriculum is enriched by sport and fitness training which takes place at a local sports facility with professional coaches. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught in Years 7 and 8 and beyond through subject teaching but this is not co-ordinated to ensure development of a full range of skills, for example, the use of spreadsheets. Students feel they learn about careers, particularly through visiting speakers; however, as for ICT, the overall provision is not co-ordinated. There are no opportunities for work experience although some students make their own arrangements. The school provides good advice and supports parents and students in choosing post-16 provision. A reasonable range of visits provide opportunities for students' personal development, for example through an adventure holiday. Other extra-curricular opportunities are limited, although the school does have a chess club and runs additional sessions to support learning, for example a mathematics club.

Subjects are now all supported by schemes of work that show progression in what needs to be taught in lessons. However, detail is missing from almost all schemes, for example, related to homework tasks, assessment or extension work. Also, there is little indication of the different teaching strategies to be used, of how the differing learning needs of students will be met, and of how learning can be customised when teaching mixed age groups and students of varying abilities.

The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory, although some teaching seen during the inspection was good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and excellent relationships with their students. In the best lessons, the teaching is lively and enthusiastic. Teachers plan lessons using the school's standard planning form which has been developed since the last inspection. This recognises that different teaching strategies, such as group work or written task, should be used in lessons, requires the learning objectives to be given and structures the lesson into several timed parts. However, it does not sufficiently focus on the differing needs and abilities of learners for which teaching needs to be tailored through a variety of teaching approaches. Too much of teaching requires students to listen or write. Consequently teachers do not adopt a sufficient range of visual or practical approaches to meet the differing learning styles of students. Resources are predominantly paper-based and often uninspiring. Since the last inspection additional books, a projector and some new computers have been purchased. However, ICT, the science laboratory and display are not sufficiently used to enhance teaching.

Students' class and homework is regularly marked. Students feel they know what they need to do to improve and much feedback is given verbally because of the small class sizes. However, when work is marked, the quality of written comments varies and does not consistently exemplify what is good about a piece of work or what is needed to improve. Students understand that they need to achieve well in the termly examinations and they have opportunities to reflect on their performance and set themselves targets for improvement in each subject.

However, these targets are very descriptive and there is no indication of how they will achieve them. Examination results are recorded carefully, and results from one term to the next are monitored, particularly to identify those students who are not making sufficient progress. However, there is no system in place to rigorously monitor the progress students make over time from their varied starting points in either internal or external examinations. Consequently, whilst there is evidence to show that almost all students make satisfactory progress, the school cannot demonstrate which students make good or better progress in their time at the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The quality of provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is good. Teachers ensure that students have good opportunities to reflect on their learning and the world around them. Developing respect and courtesy towards each other and staff is an ethos of the school and this shines through. Students value the small size of the school and say that school is like a big family. Almost all students enjoy school; they attend well and behaviour is good, particularly given the limited space for recreation. The high aspirations set for higher education and professional careers together with good support for the move to post-16 helps prepare students well for their future economic well-being. Opportunities to develop leadership skills are limited, although some students take on posts of responsibility, such as class leader. Within these roles, they are expected to represent the views of their fellow students. They all demonstrate a positive attitude to school and learning; of particular note was how well students cleared away litter at lunchtimes and tidied classrooms after furniture had been moved for an activity. However, students' contribution to the local or wider community is infrequent although they have participated in raising funds for charity. They develop an understanding of British institutions, different cultures and faiths through the curriculum, the celebration of each other's religious special days and visits of cultural interest such as to Westminster Abbey.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. However, whilst the school has in place the appropriate policies for safeguarding children, their implementation is not always sufficiently adhered to, principally in relation to educational visits and child protection training. The behaviour policy is implemented consistently, supported by excellent record keeping and both students and staff report that bullying does not occur. Students know how to keep themselves and others safe around the school. Supervision throughout the day is diligent including movement between the two buildings. Whilst the school pays high regard to the welfare and safety of students when organising and running educational visits, insufficient note is taken of the published guidance. Senior staff have received first aid training and accidents are recorded centrally. The school has appointed a designated teacher for child protection.

Although staff do understand the actions to take in respect of safeguarding students, neither they nor the designated person have received the appropriate level of training. The school's fire risk assessment does not meet current regulations. However, weekly alarm tests, regular fire drills and annual maintenance of fire fighting appliances are carried out. There is a lack of rigour in recording day to day health and safety issues in relation to the premises as they arise. Safety testing of portable electrical equipment has not taken place. Good maintenance of registers ensures careful monitoring of attendance. The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Students develop a good awareness of healthy lifestyles through the curriculum, although a small minority did not support this view. Students have access to water through the day and bring a daily healthy packed lunch because there is no catering provision

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school pays high attention to the safe recruitment of its staff. However, whilst the required checks are made, the approach is not sufficiently systematic to ensure that each stage of the procedure has been followed. A single central record is now in place to evidence these checks.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in two modern commercial units with the principal unit based on three floors and is in reasonable decorative order and is clean and tidy. Rooms for both teaching and recreation are small but generally of an appropriate size. There is no external play area and for this reason the school makes use of nearby leisure facilities and a local park regularly through the week. There are a number of health and safety issues related to the premises, which the inspector drew to the proprietor's attention.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a wealth of information through its prospectus, parents' handbook, handouts and website. It does publish some information on the performance of its students in an insert in the school prospectus and on postcards. However, these do not provide an accurate representation of students' overall performance in previous years. Parents are well informed of their child's progress in reports that follow the termly examinations and can meet with staff formally twice each year.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures meet all the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish a framework to assess students' work regularly and thoroughly and utilise information from such assessments to plan teaching so that students make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has closer regard to DCSF guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- maintain a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by its risk assessment under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and by any report from the Fire Authority (paragraph 3(5)).

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 academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- develop a framework for assessing students' performance over their time at the school so that the progress made from their starting points can be regularly monitored and used to inform teaching
- improve teaching by using a wider range of teaching styles and variety of approaches to meet the needs and abilities of all students
- co-ordinate the use of ICT to ensure that students have more opportunities to use computers across all subjects and develop a wider range of ICT skills
- provide a more balanced curriculum that includes discrete opportunities for the aesthetic and creative aspects of learning
- provide students with opportunities to develop their leadership skills so that they can all make a greater contribution to the school, local and wider community
- take a more systematic approach to the implementation of welfare, health and safety policies.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

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

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | ✓ | | |
| The behaviour of students | | ✓ | | |

Welfare, health and safety of students

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of students | | | ✓ | |
|--|--|--|---|--|

School details

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Name of school | Oak Heights Independent School | | |
| DCSF number | 313/6081 | | |
| Unique reference number | 135090 | | |
| Type of school | Secondary | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Date school opened | September 2003 | | |
| Age range of students | 11-18 | | |
| Gender of students | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time students) | Boys: 22 | Girls: 12 | Total: 34 |
| Annual fees (day students) | £6,000 | | |
| Telephone number | 0208 577 1827 | | |
| Fax number | 0208 577 1827 | | |
| Email address | enquiries@oakheights.co.uk | | |
| Headteacher | Mrs R Akinola | | |
| Proprietor | Mr Sukhvinder Dhillon | | |
| Reporting inspector | Angela Corbett HMI | | |
| Dates of inspection | 1–2 July 2009 | | |