

Oaklands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102555
Local Authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	335923
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Pett
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Felstead
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation such as the school improvement plan, curriculum planning, annual reviews, assessment information, and school policies. Inspectors received and analysed the responses from 19 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which teaching ensures that all students achieve their best, with a focus on those with the most complex needs and in the light of the higher-than-usual turnover of staff
- how the school uses its specialist status to help students achieve all of which they are capable
- the success of the school in ensuring improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance
- the effectiveness of leadership at different levels, particularly the governing body, in sustaining improvement.

Information about the school

Oaklands is a special school catering for students with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties; many are on the autistic spectrum. An increasing number of students entering the school have complex needs and all have a statement of special educational needs. Most come from the Hounslow area. They are from a range of ethnic backgrounds, with just under half being of White British heritage. Around a third speak English as an additional language. The school gained specialist status in physical and sensory development in September 2008 and through this has specific links with two local secondary schools, two primary schools and a nearby Further Education college. It has a number of awards, including Healthy School, Sportsmark and Investors in People. Staffing has generally been very stable but in the recent past there has been a higher-than-usual turnover. There are plans for the school to move into a new building in 2014.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Oaklands is an outstanding school, which continues to provide excellent education for its students, as was also evident at the last inspection. This is a result of extremely high quality teaching and learning which enables students, including those with the most complex needs, to make excellent progress in both their personal and academic development. Standards are well below levels in mainstream schools but given the students' extremely low starting points, this represents outstanding achievement. Parents and carers are immensely pleased with the provision and, as one said, 'It is an inspiration.' Students' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. A key factor in this success is the respect that all members of the community show to students. Students' behaviour, confidence and independence improve dramatically. A calm working atmosphere is the order of the day.

Support and guidance, as well as work in lessons, are very carefully tailored to meet the needs of each individual. This ensures that all have equal opportunities to succeed. Across the school, the vibrant curriculum is extremely well adapted to meet the needs and aspirations of students. The school provides a very well-balanced range of academic, vocational and work-related opportunities. Innovative work with other schools ensures that nearly all students have a weekly opportunity to work in lessons alongside their mainstream 'buddies'. The school's specialist status is used to great advantage. Students are enthusiastic about their new fitness suite and the very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. All, whatever their needs, take a full and active part in all of the activities available to them. The outcomes for students are greatly enhanced by the outstanding partnerships with others.

The headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has extremely high expectations of staff and pupils and sets ambitious targets, based on rigorous and honest self-evaluation. Their relentless pursuit of excellence is an outstanding feature of the school. As a result, the school goes from strength to strength and has embraced its specialist status in a way that is making a difference not only to students' physical and sensory development but, also, to their overall achievements. Governance is excellent and improved since the last inspection. Leaders are able to demonstrate very clearly how well most of its students are achieving from their starting points. They have however, recognised that they do not make detailed enough comparisons of their progress compared with students of similar abilities in other schools. This is especially so for the increasing numbers of students with complex needs. Leaders are working to fine tune this aspect of their evaluations, and show an outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Refine the ways in which leaders compare the progress of students, especially those with complex needs, with that of students of similar abilities in other schools.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students thoroughly enjoy school. They work hard so that virtually all meet their challenging targets, and many exceed them. By the time they leave, all attain nationally recognised qualifications such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. In an outstanding English lesson seen, staff tailored learning so well to students' needs, using a wide range of communication strategies, such as dance and drama. As a result, students appreciated the feelings of characters in the story very well indeed and fully empathised with the giraffe who felt sad because he had been bullied. Learning of this quality was seen in many lessons and this leads to students making extremely good progress. Students of different backgrounds and abilities, including those who speak English as an additional language, make equally very good progress. All develop communication, literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills very well; these support learning in all subjects. Students appreciate each other's feelings and use moments of reflection, such as prayer time in assembly, very well. They say that 'we all belong to one world', whatever our differences, and that it is only through 'teamwork' that they have been so successful in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Students feel safe in school and readily ask adults for help. Their understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle is exceptional and reflects the school's specialist status. All students go sailing and cycling, and show a keen determination to keep fit. They make an excellent contribution to school and community life. This was especially evident when they enjoyed helping in the kitchen at a nearby home for senior citizens. They are extremely well prepared for life after school, as all move successfully on to employment or further education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Excellent teaching and learning, such as in English, art, food technology, physical education, intensive interaction, and personal and social education lessons, are the norm. This excellent practice is underpinned by outstanding relationships and a seamless approach to behaviour management. A noticeable feature of the teaching is the way staff give students 'thinking time' so that students feel confident to respond fully when answering questions or sharing their ideas and opinions. Support staff are very effective and contribute skilfully to teaching and learning. All staff know individual students very well. They set work that closely matches students' needs and this is assessed regularly, with very discerning feedback to students. Students' progress is tracked and checked rigorously. This ensures that all students improve their work and attitudes to learning as they move through the school.

Students benefit greatly from the outstanding curriculum, which makes highly effective use of the school's specialist status. Learning activities are always interesting, for example those undertaken during the 'Get Moving Week' and on days that focus on different cultures. Very good use is made of the school's much-improved ICT resources. Programmes in personal, health and social education have a dramatic effect on outcomes for students. Extensive work experience plays a vital part in students' development. Rigorous evaluation ensures that the curricular changes are quickly implemented. For example, the school has increased its range of therapeutic approaches to take account of the changing needs of its population.

Pastoral care is central to the school's work and it very effectively develops students' self-esteem and helps them stay safe and healthy. Vulnerable students are carefully

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monitored and given excellent support, which is much appreciated by carers. Students are closely supported when leaving or joining the school, and are given excellent guidance for the next steps in their lives. The school does its utmost to provide consistency of approach from all staff working with individuals and the 'person-centred plans' and 'communication passports' play an important part in this. They are particularly useful when students move on to the next phase of their lives.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The driving force behind the school's success is the outstanding quality of leadership. The highest quality of care and safeguarding procedures ensure that students thrive. Leaders at all levels are very effective in promoting equality of opportunity for all students. Strategic use of staffing and a highly effective programme of professional development ensure that all staff, including those who are new to the school, are able to give of their best. The headteacher embeds ambition and drives improvement. Along with very good senior and middle leaders, she has ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has not only been sustained but improved since the last inspection. This is because of rigorous and discerning monitoring of provision which is based on a belief that 'our students deserve the best'. The governors make very good use of their skills and experience when monitoring the school's effectiveness. They are now effective in challenging information about students' progress, for example in information and communication technology. However, they are finding it difficult to understand how well students, especially those with the most complex needs, are doing compared with the attainment of similar students in other schools; this is an area for improvement, which the school has already identified.

Leaders and staff show a clear commitment to promoting cohesion. There is excellent work at a local level based on the school's extremely strong links with others. Students act as very effective ambassadors for those with special educational needs nationally, for instance by contributing to events such as a conference about what it takes to be an effective officer for the National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children. Links have been established with others further afield, including with schools in Norway, Italy, Australia and China. Students very effectively widen their understanding of others during regular residential visits to Lourdes.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

As a result of the outstanding provision, sixth-form students make excellent progress and move on successfully to further education or employment. Exemplary care and guidance supports the decisions students make about life beyond school. Students appreciate the advice and support that they receive from staff, which inspire confidence through their positive approach. As a result, students' behaviour is excellent, and their learning is enthusiastic and well focused.

A very clear emphasis is placed on the development of life skills as well as on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. As in other parts of the school, physical education is outstanding and students very successfully participate in a range of sporting activities. They are especially impressed with activities in the fitness suite, boccia, football and the 'hip hop' dancing sessions. Learning about the world of work is extremely well organised and highly popular. Clubs and visits enhance the provision very effectively.

The leadership of the sixth form is excellent and it gives a very clear focus to ensuring students contribute to both the school and the wider community. As result, students make noticeable gains in their maturity. They act very effectively as role models for younger students, for instance when working as sports leaders. Another very good example seen was the way in which the news spread about the head boy, who had just had an offer of employment. Their contribution to a wide range of activities, such as the school forum, is much appreciated by all. They also contribute very well to wider community, for instance by working in local shops and businesses.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Nineteen parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Their responses are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. Parents indicate that their children are very happy at school. They are also extremely positive about the dedication of staff, with one saying how much she appreciated 'their patience and hard work'. Parents are appreciative of the support they and their children receive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oaklands School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	68	6	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	63	5	26	1	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	63	5	26	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	42	8	42	0	0	1	5
The teaching is good at this school	11	58	6	32	1	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	53	7	37	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	63	4	21	1	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	37	9	47	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	53	9	47	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	42	8	42	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	47	10	53	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	58	7	37	0	0	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	63	7	37	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Oaklands School, Isleworth TW7 6JZ

Thank you for all of your help when we visited your school to find out how well you are getting on. We particularly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to some of you.

We think that your school is amazing; we call this 'outstanding'. Here is a list of the really excellent things that we saw.

- You try very hard in your lessons and your teachers make sure that you make really good progress.
- Your behaviour is excellent and it is great that you work with buddies in other schools.
- You clearly enjoy your lessons as well as other activities such as taking part in all the different sporting activities. Congratulations for doing so well in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
- You feel safe and the adults make sure that you are extremely well looked after.
- You are very successful on work experience and extremely well prepared for life after school.
- Your headteacher and all of the other people who help run your school do an outstanding job.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this, we want them to compare your skills with those of students who go to other schools like yours. This will help the adults to keep an even closer eye on how well your school is doing. This is important, as everyone wants to make sure that your school continues to be a fantastic place for many years to come.

Yours sincerely

Kay Charlton

Lead inspector

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