

Oak Lodge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116637
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338849
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Rowles
Headteacher	Beverley Hawker
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Most of the time was spent looking at learning, despite over half the students being out of school on a theatre trip to London on the first inspection day. Twelve lessons, taught by different teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with a variety of staff, the school improvement partner, the chair of governors and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, such as the strategic plan, safeguarding information, assessment data and records of school monitoring and evaluation. The 47 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were also analysed.

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

- procedures for tracking and analysing students' achievements in each key stage, and the use of this information in setting individual students' targets
- the progress and achievement of different groups of students, including those in the Oakmore Centre
- the extent to which the school actively promotes the features of modern multicultural Britain.

Information about the school

Oak Lodge caters for students with a broad range of special educational needs who live in a wide geographical area, including adjoining local authorities. Three quarters of students are boys. All students have a statement of special educational needs. In most cases, this is for moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism, or speech, language and communication difficulties. The vast majority of students have a White British background. A few students are children in care. Approximately a fifth of students are entitled to free school meals.

Since September 2007, a small number of students have been admitted to the Oakmore Centre, which is part of Oak Lodge School. This provision is tailored for more capable, higher performing learners, although all students have autism and very high anxiety levels.

The school has achieved a number of awards since the previous inspection. In 2007, it achieved a Healthy School award and accreditation as an Investor in Careers. It acquired specialist school status for the arts (drama, music and art) with effect from September 2009.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Oak Lodge is a good school. Significant features of its work are outstanding. It is a very popular school and valued highly by students and their parents and carers. One parent summed this up as: 'We feel very fortunate that our son goes to such a 'special' special school.' All students thrive, including those with additional special educational needs and/or difficulties in the Oakmore Centre. Governors carry out their roles well. Leaders have established good procedures for safeguarding students. Leaders responded well to the findings of the previous inspection. They continue to move forward ambitiously, with a good capacity to do so successfully.

Although acquired only recently, specialist status gave the school the impetus and freedom to extend the curriculum, develop stronger links with partners and enrich students' lives. This opportunity was seized and the specialist school plan is already having a marked impact in all of these areas. The curriculum provides an outstanding range of learning activities and the impact that it has is underpinned by the school's excellent links with its partners. The school's ethos is one of supporting and working with others. Its success is evident in the students' outstanding contribution to the community and their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Exceptional care, guidance and support contribute greatly to these aspects of personal development, just as it does to students' excellent appreciation of a healthy lifestyle. Teaching is good overall. Students' good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute greatly to the good pace of learning.

Despite attainment being low, students make good academic progress and achieve well. Teachers have accurate and detailed information about students' learning because assessment takes place regularly, but the information is not always used as well as it could be. On a very few occasions, teachers do not acknowledge students' previous learning when planning lessons. In these situations, students do not learn as quickly as they could. Assessment data are used to set targets for students. The students are generally informed of these targets but the language is sometimes too complex and they are not used routinely to improve the standard of students' work.

Leaders have a good understanding of their school based on accurate self-review. They are assured of individuals' progress by monitoring lessons and tracking students' achievements, but they do not use this assessment information as comprehensively as they could. The data are not collated and analysed to confirm the relative progress made by different groups of students and nor is the information summarised and reported upon in a format that other leaders can use easily.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Collate and analyse assessment data better in order to:
 - determine securely and robustly the progress made by different groups of students
 - produce detailed reports for school leaders and governors so that they can carry out their particular roles in monitoring and evaluating students' progress over time.
- Implement procedures for supporting and guiding students' learning even more effectively by requiring teachers to:
 - consistently use their knowledge of students' prior achievements when planning the next stage of learning
 - share longer-term targets with students in a language that they understand
- use targets more creatively to help students to have a more informed view of what they need to do next to raise their level of performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Personal and learning outcomes are good for all students. Students achieve well. They make good progress as they move through the school and, therefore, are successful in the accredited courses that they follow. Students in the Oakmore Centre have their complex needs met well and the specialist provision ensures that these students make good progress, too. Students enjoy being at school. Attendance is above average and students arrive for lessons punctually and prepared. The vocational education programme and the specialist subjects have been particularly influential in promoting personal qualities such as self-confidence, self-esteem and teamwork. These personal skills, combined with the rate at which students acquire key literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, prepare students well for leaving school. The impact is evident in students' destinations. All 27 leavers in 2009 went to college or into employment or training.

Students are unanimous in their positive views about the school and how it helps them. One described the situation in a way that all his peers understood: 'It's wicked!' Consequently, they are very proud of the school and are keen to support it. They make an excellent contribution to the school and local communities. For instance, within the school, they contribute via the school council, by being part of the group seeking the Eco-School Award or by acting as a buddy to younger students. Students are very active in the local community, too. This enables them to develop a very good understanding of the needs of others, especially those who are less fortunate; the night shelter for the homeless prompted the very poignant poem 'I got no bed it makes me feel sad'.

Students feel safe in school and are well aware of how to report any concerns, although they are not always confident that they are dealt with as quickly as they might be. They have a particularly good understanding of internet safety and how to use the report

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abuse' button.

English and the school's specialist subjects in particular support students' awareness of their own culture. Alongside the personal, social and health education programme, these make important contributions to students' good understanding of other cultures and beliefs.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The school is fully committed to providing the highest quality care, guidance and support to all its students. The school was a very safe place at the time of the inspection. It provides an excellent programme of pastoral and emotional support to those students who are potentially vulnerable or who have more complex social needs. Programmes such as focused literacy projects, and excellent links with other agencies, such as a range of therapists, help students to overcome barriers to learning and to

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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develop positive attitudes. Excellent transition arrangements enable students to settle into school quickly.

This successful transition at the end of Year 11 is aided by the school's excellent curriculum. The work-related learning programme begins in Year 9 when the most capable students begin to follow accredited courses. Courses such as the Arts Award are taught in school, while more vocational ones are studied off-site, like the entry-level qualification in the land-based environment that is followed at a local arboretum. The vocational programme expands significantly in Years 10 and 11. A much wider range of qualifications is available, some via links with local colleges, and more discrete work-related learning is supplied through work experience. The majority of students take advantage of the very many clubs that support learning in out-of-school hours. The community is used very well to support students' learning, including residential visits for outdoor education. Individuals' curriculum needs are catered for very well, such as the personalised programmes for Oakmore Centre students. These could involve lessons in the centre or inclusion in lessons in Oak Lodge School or in the mainstream school with which the school shares a campus.

Very good relationships are a feature of all lessons, enabling students' behaviour to be managed smoothly and with minimum fuss. Staff use ICT very effectively as a teaching and learning tool. Staff are very knowledgeable of the subjects that they teach and so they generally maintain very high levels of expectation and challenge, especially in the specialist subjects. Generally, this includes planning new learning tasks that build on students' previous learning in a progressive way. Just occasionally, however, this link between prior achievements and current activities is too loose. Some inconsistency is also evident in teachers' use of assessment data to set targets. Targets are invariably set but not always in a language that students understand. This reduces their value and it limits their usefulness in encouraging students to evaluate the quality of their work and how to improve it.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Leaders expect high standards and they maintain them through effective monitoring procedures. Reflective leaders evaluate all aspects of the school's work routinely, with regular monitoring of classroom practice. Most of the information that is gathered through monitoring is evaluated thoroughly and the results used to bring about change.

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Oak Lodge is an ambitious school; the strategic plan is incisive and the impact of the specialist school development plans is constantly under review.

Students' assessment information is tracked and analysed, too, but at only a superficial level. Currently, interrogation of data is insufficiently sharp. The procedures tease out individuals who appear to be falling short of their targets and leaders then put in place interventions to support these students. This typifies school leaders' strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all learners and hence there is no uneven progress made by students. However, the systems are not fine-tuned enough for leaders to monitor the performance of different groups of students and nor does it enable sufficiently detailed reports/analyses to be compiled. This limits the extent to which governors can get a secure grasp of achievement in the school and it reduces the ability of other managers, such as subject leaders, to effect change.

Leaders have secured good safeguarding arrangements. All recommended practices are well established, with very detailed risk assessments. Good induction and training ensures that all staff and governors are well aware of child protection processes and so the school is alert and ready to take prompt action.

Leaders have a well-informed view of the school community and of the wider community in which it is located. Potential obstacles to learning within school are dismantled and, insofar as is possible, community links are promoted. Although very few of the students live in the neighbourhood, the school opens its doors to local groups, including adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The specialist status community plan has also helped to drive a positive engagement with all groups in the local vicinity. The school stretches students' imaginations by looking beyond the immediate area through, for example, its active link with the Indi Nursery in Kenya.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

Views are almost unanimously positive. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers added additional comments to the questionnaires and these were immensely positive and complimentary, with expressions of gratitude for the work of the staff. Inspectors fully support parents' and carers' appraisal of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oak Lodge 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 inspection team received 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 145 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	60	18	38	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	77	10	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	57	19	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	55	19	40	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	55	20	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	53	21	45	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	55	20	43	0	0	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)	27	57	17	36	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	62	16	34	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	49	23	49	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	55	20	43	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	72	13	28	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	77	10	21	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.



1 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Oak Lodge School, Southampton, SO45 4RQ

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. There is a special thank you to those students who gave up their time to talk with us. We spent two very enjoyable days in your school, even though the trip to London meant that we saw most of you for only one day.

You told us that you really enjoy going to school and now we can see why. We agree with you and your parents. Oak Lodge is a good school and you make good progress. Lessons are good and you get opportunities to do lots of exciting things in school and when you go on visits. The staff take excellent care of you and you told us that you feel safe in school. We were very impressed to see how much you help your school. Members of the school council, the eco group and buddies all do a great deal to help others. We thought that you supported each other extremely well and celebrated each other's successes. You have a very good view of what a healthy lifestyle means. The staff prepare you well for leaving school.

The people who run the school do a good job. They have lots of ideas about how to make things even better and we have given them some suggestions, too:

- Check that they know for sure that different groups of students, such as boys and girls, all make as much progress as they can.
- Make sure that teachers use words that you understand when they give you your targets and that they help you to use these targets to improve your work

You can help them by continuing to go to school as often as you can and by behaving so well and working hard while you there.

Thank you once again for welcoming us into your school. I wish all of you the very best of luck in the future, especially if you are leaving school this year.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell

Lead inspector

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