

# Oakwood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125273
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	340751
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Metham

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1270
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs S Tuffield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Child
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 February 2007
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 32 lessons, saw 30 teachers and held meetings with parents, members of the governing body, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at data on students' attainment over the past three years, at schemes of work, policies, the school improvement plan, and reports from advisers working with the school. They considered 315 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents, 153 responses to the students' questionnaire and 66 responses from staff.

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

- attainment and progress, with particular attention to standards in English, mathematics and science
- outcomes for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of the school's technology specialism on the curriculum and on outcomes for students.

## Information about the school

Oakwood School is larger than average, catering for students with a wide range of abilities. Relatively few students come from minority ethnic groups, although the number is growing, and very few are in the early stages of acquiring English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly behavioural, emotional and social development needs is higher than average. Oakwood gained specialist technology status in 2004 and Investor in People re-accreditation in 2010. Curriculum provision for Years 10 and 11 is extended through links with three colleges and with local schools.

**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?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' overall progress and their levels of attainment.

Purposeful leadership by the headteacher and, increasingly, by the senior team, is beginning to have a positive impact on students' attainment and progress but has not yet counteracted a legacy of significant underachievement. Realistic self-evaluation, a decisive response to staffing difficulties and the development of an inclusive curriculum are gradually changing the school's culture. More challenging expectations and clear accountability are strengthening teaching. While significant challenges remain, there is satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The governing body make a good contribution to the school's leadership.

Students' personal skills are satisfactory, and students appreciate the care and support they are given. However, overall attainment has been well below national averages for at least three years and students' progress has been unsatisfactory, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. These outcomes are linked to low expectations amongst some staff and amongst a significant proportion of students. Further challenges have been presented by inefficient use of information about students' standards and progress and by considerable unevenness in the quality and impact of leadership and teaching across subjects. Staffing difficulties have been compounded by long-term absence in a number of departments leading to extensive use of supply cover, and by lack of stability in middle management. These areas are now being tackled, with some success, and progress is being made on issues identified at the last inspection. In addition, the curriculum has been significantly broadened.

Teaching and the use of assessment are satisfactory, but not yet consistently good enough to accelerate progress and enable students to make up lost ground in their attainment. Inspectors saw examples of good teaching and evidence of rising attainment, clearly linked to more rigorous monitoring by senior leaders and well-directed professional development. The performance of individuals and groups of students is now systematically tracked, and this information is being used with increasing confidence to set targets and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and of the curriculum. Nevertheless, in lessons where there was little variety of approach and pace and limited opportunity for group work and practical investigation, students became distracted and distracting. Lesson plans were generally well structured but few

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took sufficient account of the range of ability and learning styles in each group. Whilst its importance was evidently understood, assessment was not consistently used to support and extend learning. Students were routinely encouraged to evaluate each others' work, which was productive when the teacher had set out very precisely the key points to be looked for and when the quality of this peer-review was regularly checked. The marking of written work was uneven in style and quality, but there were examples of good practice. Teachers and teaching assistants often showed good questioning skills but these were not always sustained when students were slow to give the looked-for response.

Responses to the parental questionnaire indicated some frustration over the quality and timings of liaison with the school. Whilst parents spoke very positively about support and advice given when children were encountering problems, many felt poorly informed about how best to help their children's learning. The school is putting in place a range of initiatives to strengthen school-home liaison and ensure that important information is communicated. Amongst these initiatives is the setting up of a website for parents. The recently established 'Parents' Forum' is greatly appreciated by the growing number actively involved.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve teaching in order to accelerate progress, especially in English, mathematics and science, by ensuring it:
  - provides the right level of challenge and support targeted to the students' abilities
  - consistently promotes active and independent learning
  - uses a variety of approaches to engage students through different learning styles
  - maintains a pace that keeps students alert and drives progress.
- Strengthen and embed the use of assessment to enhance learning by:
  - providing students with key points to use when evaluating each others' work, and keeping a check on the quality of their evaluations
  - using questions in lessons to draw out students' understanding and fine tune the lesson's direction
  - ensuring marking consistently gives clear guidance on how to improve.
- Enhance the quality and impact of leadership, particularly subject leadership, by further developing roles and responsibilities at all levels.
- Improve liaison with students' parents and carers and help them to contribute effectively to their children's learning and raise their children's expectations of what they can achieve.

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Attainment has been well below national averages. Rates of progress have followed the same pattern, with students not meeting predictions based on their attainment at the end of Year 6. Whilst 2009 saw a marked dip in the proportion gaining at least five A\* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics, there has been a three-year upward trend in the proportion gaining five or more grades above G. In 2009, there were strengths in some vocational and practical options and no student left without at least one qualification. The small number of students with statements of special educational needs made better progress than similar students nationally. Overall, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they are effectively supported and receive a curriculum that meets their needs. There is evidence that attainment levels are starting to rise for other groups. Results in GCSE modules already banked and a range of externally moderated assessments indicate improved outcomes for the current Year 11. Students are keen to do well when presented with appropriate challenge and effective teaching. As a Year 9 student explained, 'You have a target and you've got to get it done. You go out feeling - I know what I'm doing.' In general, students are amenable rather than independent learners. Behaviour observed in lessons, as well as around the school, was generally good but there was low-level disruption when teaching did not channel students' energies constructively. Nearly three-quarters of those responding to the inspection questionnaire felt that they learnt a lot in lessons and enjoyed the process. This positive approach is reflected in improving attendance rates and the drop in fixed-term exclusions.

Students feel safe, confident that any difficulties will be promptly and effectively resolved either by staff or by student mentors. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, supported by the mainstream and extended curriculum and by the school's focus on personal development. Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle, although not all make healthy choices. Take-up for sports and activities such as dance, however, is strong. The school council is inclusive, well respected and influential. A Year 7 student was emphatic that, 'Everybody has a voice.' Students value opportunities for leadership and teamwork provided, for example, by the house system and peer mentoring. They also work with primary school children and other local groups, many activities growing from the school's technology specialism. Such activities, work-related learning and personal development contribute positively to students' preparation for future economic well-being, and although Year 11 English and mathematics results have been too low in recent years, students elsewhere in the school are applying basic skills of literacy and numeracy securely in a range of contexts. Information and communication technology skills are sound.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

As the school acknowledges, teaching is uneven in quality. Whole-staff training and targeted support for individuals are having a positive impact. However, staff absence has made consistency and continuity hard to achieve. The best teaching seen displayed enthusiastically communicated subject knowledge, lively pace, effective use of technology, well-spaced opportunities for students to review and evaluate their progress, productive questioning skills, through which they regularly checked and consolidated students' understanding of the ground covered, and a positive rapport between teachers and learners. Students were, on occasion, given opportunities for active and independent learning. When, however, teachers spent too long presenting information and explaining tasks, and when low expectations led to repetitive and unrewarding activities that lacked challenge, students became restless.

Recent expansion and reorganisation have given the curriculum good breadth and balance. Pathways that students can take are well matched to their diverse needs. The focus in Year 7 on developing study skills is engaging and constructive and the choices offered in Years 10 and 11 have led to improved attendance and commitment. Opportunities arising from ability-based setting are exploited well. For example, early examination entry in subjects such as classics and humanities is possible for more academic students. Imaginative timetabling ensures that those who pursue work-related courses off-site do not miss lessons in core subjects. Cross-curricular days and 'focus' days are popular and productive. While the technology specialism has had limited impact on in-school provision, it underpins a broad range of community-based activities.

Induction into Year 7 is a strength, building on links with Year 6 pupils established by

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Oakwood staff and older students. Pastoral care and academic guidance have been restructured and are well coordinated, with tutors combining both roles. As one student said, 'If you feel you're not doing well, you can go to a teacher and ask for help.' However, it is too early for the impact of the changes to be seen on progress. Students receive clear and appropriate guidance when moving from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4 and then on to post-16 education, training or employment. However, parents would like there to be more extensive opportunities for consultation. Case studies show that vulnerable students are well supported, with external agencies involved whenever appropriate. The Alternative Learning Unit provides timely and productive support for those finding elements of school life difficult to manage.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The drive to raise attainment and improve outcomes for students has given urgency and focus to leadership and management. Decisive action is being taken to address weaknesses in teaching and middle management and to establish a culture sympathetic to good learning and high aspirations. 'The Oakwood Way' a manifesto and a manual for teaching and learning has grown out of discussion between staff and students. The impact can be seen in improving behaviour, rising attendance rates and indications that academic results will be better in the coming year. A start has been made on establishing clear and consistent leadership roles and responsibilities, particularly at middle management level. However, progress continues to be hampered by staffing difficulties in key departments, including extended absences, so it is too early to be certain that recent improvements are fully embedded. The governing body shows real determination in challenging the school and has given very effective support to the headteacher. It monitors the school's progress closely and adds impetus to the drive for improvement. The budget is curriculum-driven and day-to-day financial management well disciplined. Nevertheless, inadequate outcomes mean that the school is not at the moment giving value for money.

Partnerships with colleges and schools, with agencies and public services, and with local businesses usefully extend provision for students and for staff. The technology specialism makes a positive contribution to this. The school actively promotes equality and tackles discrimination through its ethos, its inclusive and accessible curriculum, the care and guidance given to vulnerable students and opportunities for the most able.



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Racial incidents are rare and dealt with promptly. Appropriate procedures to ensure that students are kept safe and secure, including those relating to child protection, are in place and understood at all levels. The school is growing into a cohesive community and most students understand the neighbourhood and their role in it. An international dimension is added through the mainstream curriculum, trips and expeditions and the growing number of students from minority ethnic groups. Students' understanding of their place in modern multicultural Britain is less well developed.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Views of parents and carers

About a quarter of the parents responding to the questionnaire paid tribute to the care and guidance given to their children. Concerns expressed by a majority of parents and carers related to unevenness in the quality of teaching, the extensive use of supply cover, irregular setting and marking of homework, poor liaison between the school and home, bullying of vulnerable students, disruptive behaviour, and what were considered to be inappropriate disciplinary measures.

The school has implemented a wide range of strategies to improve its engagement with parents, including, as well as the forum, newsletters, a clear complaints channel and a successful new format for an evening about option choices. Parents interviewed were very positive about these changes and the team judged the effectiveness of the school's work in this area to be satisfactory. The school recognises there is more to do to engage parents in their children's day-to-day learning. Behaviour observed by inspectors was generally good, except when teaching was weak. Inspectors did, however, find evidence

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to support a number of parents' other concerns.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakwood 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 315 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1270 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	17	170	54	67	21	22	7
The school keeps my child safe	39	12	203	64	55	17	13	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	12	174	55	71	23	30	10
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	14	132	42	96	30	31	10
The teaching is good at this school	26	8	138	44	102	32	30	10
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	6	154	49	97	31	30	10
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	5	181	57	85	27	16	5
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)	33	10	181	57	58	18	14	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	10	165	52	77	24	30	10
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	4	87	28	88	28	121	38
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	5	148	47	83	26	40	13
The school is led and managed effectively	19	6	111	35	82	26	68	22
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	11	147	47	75	24	47	15

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Oakwood School, Horley RH6 9AE

Thank you for the help you gave my colleagues and me when we came to inspect your school recently. We appreciated your readiness to answer our questions and show us your work. You told us, for example, that you value the wide choice of subjects and we agree with you that the curriculum is a strength. I welcome this opportunity to let you know about the other judgements we reached.

We are giving your school what is called 'a notice to improve' because, for at least the past three years, the standards reached and progress made by students at Oakwood have not matched up to those in similar schools. We can see that your headteacher and the staff are taking steps to change this pattern by extending the your curriculum choices, by setting more demanding targets both for you and for your teachers, by giving you lots of support and encouragement and by checking regularly that improvements are really happening. To ensure that you are given the best possible education and fulfil your potential, we have asked your headteacher to ensure that: We are giving your school what is called 'a notice to improve' because, for at least the past three years, the standards reached and progress made by students at Oakwood have not matched up to those in similar schools. We can see that your headteacher and the staff are taking steps to change this pattern by extending the your curriculum choices, by setting more demanding targets both for you and for your teachers, by giving you lots of support and encouragement and by checking regularly that improvements are really happening. To ensure that you are given the best possible education and fulfil your potential, we have asked your headteacher to ensure that:

- everyone who teaches you adopts the ways in which the best teachers successfully engage your interest and challenge you to raise your standards and to show more initiative
- you and all your teachers effectively assess what you know and can do and identify how you can improve, so that you progress more quickly
- all managers in the school, for example subject leaders, are clear about what they need to do to raise your levels of attainment and about how to check that all is well
- your parents or carers are given all the information and guidance they need to help

you make good progress.

There is still much to do and you have an important part to play in making sure that you attend school regularly and are punctual to lessons, that you set yourself ambitious goals and work hard to achieve them.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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