

# Oak Grove College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126161
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	340931
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 July 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Duffy

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	228
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	34
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Liz Cook,Christine Chalmers
<b>Headteacher</b>	Graham Elliker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	The Boulevard Worthing BN13 1JX
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<b>Email address</b>	office@oakgrove.w-sussex.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 10 lessons or parts of lessons, and 10 teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with staff, students and governors, including a parent-governor. They observed the college's work, and looked at documentation and policies, including the tracking of students' progress, the college improvement planning and arrangements for safeguarding. They also studied student and staff questionnaires and the 61 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- the effectiveness of leadership and management and the progress made since the last inspection against areas identified for improvement
- the effectiveness of post-16 provision for students
- the impact of specialist college status upon continuing improvement.

## Information about the school

Oak Grove College is situated on a shared site with a mainstream high school, youth centre and residential provision. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The special educational needs and/or disabilities of students include: moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties; autistic spectrum condition; behaviour, emotional and social difficulties; and speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, and about 7% of students are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Five per cent of students are looked after by the local authority.

The college has specialist status for the arts and holds a number of awards, including the gold Artsmark. At the time of the inspection the majority of Year 10 students were away on a residential trip and the majority of Year 11 students had left the college; those who remained were moving into the post-16 provision and other, younger students were also involved in moving into their new classes.

**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 Grove College is a good school with a number of notable strengths. The two pink flamingos and the life-size polar bear (made out of plastic carrier bags) that greet visitors at the entrance indicate that this is a school which celebrates creativity and enjoyment. Providing many opportunities for each student to find an experience or develop a skill which they enjoy is paramount. As is its commitment to removing barriers and promoting equality results in students' growing ambition and belief in themselves. The college's work with partners to enhance experiences for students is outstanding. Links with other schools and colleges and its work with parents and carers ensure that its influence upon the local community is extremely strong. Much of its good work is underpinned by the specialist status which the college has for the arts and which has had a significant impact upon all areas of its work.

Demonstrating effective self-evaluation, the college has continued to improve since the last inspection. This is evident in many areas of its work and capacity for sustained improvement is good. The collegiate style of leadership shown by the senior leadership team is echoed across the whole college so that students feel safe and have confidence in the adults who work with them. As a result they are prepared to take risks and make huge strides in developing their independence and increasing their self-esteem. Approaches to managing behaviour are effective and contribute to the more vulnerable students' feeling of safety. However, the use of temporary exclusion, in order to ensure that aggressive behaviour does not unduly affect others, sometimes means that the students concerned miss out on opportunities which the college provides.

All groups of students achieve well academically and very well personally and socially, regardless of ethnicity, gender or level of need. This is so both in the main school and the post-16 department. The large majority make good progress in their work and for some this progress is outstanding. Progress is strongest in those areas of learning which reflect the college's specialism and focus on creativity. In the key aspects of numeracy and literacy, including speaking and listening, it is less strong. This is because, when enjoyment and participation take precedence, opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage students to concentrate on and extend their basic skills. Teaching is generally lively and engages students well. The college's recent focus on the use of assessment in classes is beginning to pay dividends. However, not all teachers allow enough time to involve students in assessing for themselves how well they have done and day-to-day, continuous assessment is not yet consistently used to inform the next steps in lesson planning.

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

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- Ensure that all students are challenged to make the best possible progress across all areas of learning by:
  - making full use of the provision for creative learning to incorporate well-planned and personalised links to the key skills of numeracy and literacy, including speaking and listening
  - making consistent use of day-to-day assessment of students' learning in class to track progress and inform the next steps of teaching.
- Reduce further the use of temporary exclusions as part of the college's approach to behaviour management.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Achievement overall is good. Students generally make good progress, and some make outstanding progress, through the P levels and the National Curriculum levels. Most students last year achieved at least one GCSE grade A\* to G, slightly below the national average for secondary schools, and some students gained additional individual GCSE passes, Entry Level or BTEC accreditation. Post-16 students make good progress, both in their learning and in the development of their personal and social skills. Learning is at its best when students are involved in activities which both stretch and interest them. For example, older students responded well to a drama lesson in which they were challenged both to think about and evaluate their responses. Others, while greatly enjoying preparing for their forthcoming 'prom', were not challenged to do much more than complete the tasks allocated to them and so opportunities to extend their learning were missed.

Students thoroughly enjoy school and any absence is usually as a result of medical needs or illness, although it is sometimes because of temporary exclusion. Older students communicate confidently about the skills that they have gained and are keen to demonstrate them. Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is generally good and students are tolerant and supportive of one another. They show that they have trust in the adults working with them so that they feel safe. Students are aware that there might be bullying but are clear about what would be done to deal with it. All aspects of healthy living, including issues of sexual health, are dealt with sensitively so that students are able to take these on at a pace that suits them. The varied menu is appreciated by the students and one girl explained very carefully how she was choosing the right balance of foods in order to reach a healthy weight. Outdoor opportunities abound and lack of physical mobility is not allowed to limit this.

The students benefit greatly from the excellent opportunities they have to participate in the life of the college and the wider community. The college has made good use of its specialism to set a very high standard of production so that, from the performance of 'West Side Story' to a presentation of the surfing and independence trip, all events have a professional quality which enhances the students' experiences extremely well. The very tangible sense of creativity which exists across the college enhances and promotes a strong spiritual element to students' learning. Further afield, students participate in

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dance, drama and musical events and perform at the local theatre; they represent the college locally, regionally and nationally in a number of sports events, including the Disability Olympics. The elected school council members make a very positive contribution in representing other students' views and they contributed well to a discussion about the change in lunchtimes. The college is rightly considering whether there are ways in which those with more limited communication skills can contribute more directly to this. Older students develop work-related skills through the strong links that the department has with local colleges, and opportunities such as working with a local nursery to grow and sell produce and plants.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Lessons are well paced and enjoyable and students respond well to the very good relationships that exist between them, the teaching and support staff. Where

<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.

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

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appropriate, good use is made of visual timetables and symbols to ensure that students know what they are going to do and to support them in taking responsibility for moving independently from one task to another. However, in some lessons, opportunities are missed to link activities to the key skills of literacy and numeracy so that the development of these is not always as well promoted as it could be.

The college's assessment of students' learning and progress over time is thorough. Teachers use this information well to identify students who need additional intervention and this has been particularly effective in improving reading skills for some students. Day-to-day assessment, although used well in some subjects, is not consistent. This means that, in some lessons, an evaluation of students' learning in one lesson is not always used to inform the next. As a result, not all students are challenged in a way that ensures individual progress is as good as it can be.

The curriculum for students in the post-16 department is well planned and meets their needs and interests well. For younger students, the creative curriculum is used well to enhance students' motivation to learn, to cope with new situations and to develop increasing independence. Whole-school themed days, such maths day and the big draw, link different aspects of learning well and contribute strongly to the college's sense of community. Students' development of communication and social skills is supported well by speech, language and communication programmes. The extensive range of activities in school and off-site contributes very well to students' development and well-being.

The college's exemplary work with many partners and the great care taken to involve parents and carers ensure that students' needs are considered and met well. Staff work hard to provide effectively for the needs of students who are more vulnerable or who find it very difficult to behave according to expectation. A robust response to unacceptable behaviour underpins the college's undoubted commitment to equality of opportunity for all and it has strong evidence to show that this has a significant impact upon the future life-chances of many of its students. It has reduced the number of exclusions over the past year but there is more work to be done to see whether they can be reduced further.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<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>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The college's very strong commitment to equality of opportunity and its drive to keep moving forward is evident in the way in which it has developed and grown since it

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opened five years ago. Having effectively pulled together staff and students from three different schools, its determination to ensure that no student is subject to discrimination is reflected in the improvement in outcomes that have been achieved since the last inspection. There is no complacency and staff are ambitious for all. As one member of staff rightly said, 'We focus on the ability rather than the disability.' In striving to deliver the most involving and exciting experiences for all its students, the college has taken full advantage of the opportunities offered by the excellent partnerships that have been established. The leaders and managers have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. They have taken well-focused actions to consolidate good practice as well as ensure continuing improvement. Middle leaders are involved effectively in monitoring the quality of teaching as well as the progress made by the groups of students for whom they are responsible. As the result of good evaluation, the significant role that the college plays in its local community has been extended extremely well to encompass national and world-wide links. These benefit both its own and other students who are involved in joint creative enterprises

.Financial management is rigorous and the school uses its resources well to improve and enhance students' learning opportunities. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure. The school is proactive in building on collaborative working with other key agencies as well as parents and carers in order to support students' welfare and safety. Risk assessments for outings and visits, an area for improvement in the last inspection, are thorough and appropriate. The governing body, which has re-structured during this academic year, has already begun to hold the school accountable in a number of ways and governors show that they have a clear understanding of their role.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>



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## Sixth form

Achievement for students in the post-16 provision is good. Staff support students extremely well so that they develop sensible attitudes and become increasingly independent. The very good development of the students' social skills is evident in their behaviour around the college and in the local community. Teaching is good and in most lessons students are able to demonstrate how well they are doing and what they have learnt. Curriculum provision is well planned and students enjoy opportunities to take part in everyday activities such as shopping and cooking. When these activities are linked well to basic skills, they enhance students' learning and progress. For example, students were very clear that they needed to be able to write, spell and read so that they could make and use a shopping list.

Good use is made of accredited courses to support and demonstrate students' achievements. Students gain awards through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and other bodies which provide well-matched programmes and qualifications to develop independence and life skills. Students undertake many different types of work experience which help to prepare them for the next stage of their education. The good leadership and management of the post-16 provision fosters very positive relationships so that students gain in confidence and feel able to be assertive when making choices about their futures. Many talk confidently about their plans for the future and it is a testament to the college's good work in this area that all this year's leavers have places for further education or vocational training when they move on. One parent acknowledges the difference that post-16 has made, saying, 'My son has had his best year to date in Key Stage 5.'

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

The generally very positive views expressed by parents and carers reflect those formed by inspectors. A very small number of parents or carers felt that yet more could be done to support their children's learning and to manage behaviour in a different way and inspectors feel that these are valid points. However, the overall appreciation of the support the school offers parents and carers and their children is represented by the positive comments that parents made, including: 'My child sees college as an extended family', and 'The emphasis upon developing life skills has had a very positive impact on

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my child and thus my family as a whole'.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oak Grove College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the college.

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

The inspection team received 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 228 pupils registered at the college.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	62	22	36	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	61	22	36	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	54	26	43	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	48	28	46	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	28	46	31	51	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	44	31	51	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	52	28	46	1	2	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)	29	48	27	44	4	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	52	29	48	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	41	32	52	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	56	26	43	0	0	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	32	52	25	41	4	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	43	15	25	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

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.**



9 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Oak Grove College, Worthing, BN13 1JX

Thank you for helping us to learn about Oak Grove College. We really enjoyed our visit. It was good to meet so many of you and to see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found

Your school is good. The staff make lessons interesting and this helps you to behave well and to learn more. It was good to see how independent you can become as you grow older. There are plenty of exciting things for you to do, both in and out of school, and your school has used its specialism for the arts very well indeed to work with other people who can support and help you. It was good to see how much you enjoy using the spaces you have to grow, draw and create things. We were very impressed by the DVD of your latest production of 'West Side Story' and the things that you have done in sport and physical education. We were very pleased, too, to learn about the links that you have with children in other countries.

Your headteacher and all the staff work hard to help you. We think that it is important that everyone who works with you helps you to learn as much as possible, as well as look after you and keep you safe. We think that some of you could do even better with your literacy and number work and we have asked your teachers to look closely at how they can help you to do this. We have also asked the teachers to look at the way they plan their lessons and keep records so that everyone can make as much progress as possible. Lastly, we have asked the staff to think about the best ways of managing behaviour so that you can all make the most of every exciting opportunity that your school provides every day.

I hope that you will all try your best and do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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