

Oak Grove School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131887
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	341243
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Dunne
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Nash
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector spent two hours looking at learning in four lessons each taught by a different teacher. She held meetings with senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, pupils, and the School Improvement Partner. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding policies and records, assessments of pupils' progress, the school improvement plan and attendance data. A total of 13 parental questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work, looking in detail at the following:

- the school's success in enabling pupils to manage their own behaviour so they are not over-reliant on adult support
- the effectiveness with which pupils' progress is tracked and the use made of the information gathered
- how well the school meets the needs of small groups, such as children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and girls.

Information about the school

This is a small school catering for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils have mental health needs and/or learning needs, in addition to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Pupils typically join the school at other than the usual time for starting primary education and do not always stay until the end of Year 6. Often they have been previously permanently excluded from mainstream schools. In addition to being taught in the school itself, some pupils attend lessons in the adjacent mainstream primary school. Pupils' homes may be situated throughout the Stockport area. Nearly two-thirds of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is a very high proportion. Most pupils are White British and very few girls are on roll. Currently, two pupils are in the care of the local authority. There are two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The headteacher oversees the management of the local authority's behaviour support service for primary-aged pupils. The school has gained National Healthy Schools Status. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was absent from school.

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

As a result of their time in this good school, pupils' prospects are enormously brighter. Their behaviour improves dramatically enabling pupils to benefit from lessons to such an extent that some successfully transfer to mainstream schools. Pupils recognise the school's impact on the way in which they behave. They consider, correctly, that teaching plays a major part in this. One pupil explained very perceptively, 'Teachers explain things really well so I know what to do and don't panic'. Justifiably, pupils feel safe in school and know that there is always someone to help them. Support is tailored to meet the changing needs of each individual so they gradually learn to cope with challenges, such as taking responsibility for managing their own behaviour.

At whatever point pupils join the school, the levels at which they work are typically far below the expectations for their age. By the end of Year 6, attainment is low, particularly in writing. However, this represents good progress from pupils' starting points. This strong improvement in attainment is especially impressive because all pupils have to develop the characteristics of effective learners, for example, the ability to listen carefully and to follow instructions, before they can even begin to make measurable gains in their academic knowledge, skills and understanding. Consequently, although most do not reach average standards, pupils' achievement is good.

The curriculum promotes both learning and personal development well. Pupils' interests are captured and they enjoy learning Spanish and about the wives of Henry VIII. They are often reluctant to write. Pupils develop a good awareness of healthy living and are enthusiastic about sports and swimming. They are prepared effectively for the next stage in their education, but have relatively limited opportunities to take on formal responsibilities in school or to be actively involved in the local community.

Senior leaders and governors have a clear picture of the school's performance. Plans to tackle weaknesses and move the school forward are effective. For example, more precise identification of pupils' needs has led to an increase in the provision of a variety of therapies. In turn, this has contributed to the trend of improvement in overall behaviour and pupils' achievement. Senior leaders and staff work together as a strong and professional team, leaving no doubt of the school's good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by ensuring that:
 - pupils have frequent and relevant opportunities to develop and practise their

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skills during lessons in all subjects

- examples of their writing are displayed and celebrated in classrooms and around the school.
- Increase the range and number of opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school and to the local community.

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

Pupils have enquiring minds and show they want to learn and do well. They are usually happy to attempt to answer teachers' questions and join in discussions, quickly learning to take turns and share the attention of adults. Pupils consistently show pleasure when successful and relish praise and rewards. They particularly enjoy practical activities.

Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were totally absorbed and took immense care as they constructed balloon-powered vehicles. Pupils throughout the school often find writing difficult and sometimes do their best to avoid putting pen to paper.

Small numbers of pupils attain the nationally expected levels at the end of Year 6. Attainment is best in mathematics and science. Last year, half the Year 6 pupils reached the expected level in science and nearly one-third did so in mathematics. Performance is weaker in English, particularly in writing. Progress is equally good for all groups of pupils, including the small number of girls and pupils in the care of the local authority. Pupils generally achieve their challenging targets and sometimes exceed them.

The school is calm and orderly. From time-to-time there are outbursts of aggressive behaviour, owing to an individual pupil's special educational needs, but these seldom affect the learning of others. Overall, pupils behave well during lessons, when moving around school and at playtime. Pupils learn to recognise their own emotions and to appreciate the impact of their behaviour on other people. At frequent points during the day, they readily and sensibly contribute to searching assessments of their progress towards their personal targets and consider how well they have observed golden rules, such as 'Be kind and helpful'. Attendance is average. Many pupils attend very much better than before joining this school. Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe, understanding the need to be careful on the roads or when using the internet. The school council is becoming more active, recently requesting a seat near the school's kitchen garden. Pupils work together, for example, to sponsor a rescued donkey or during performances. However, they are ready and willing for more such opportunities to make a difference to the school and wider community.

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.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour. They quickly establish positive working relationships so pupils are confident that they will be treated fairly. Expectations are made very clear, through consistent application of the golden rules and quiet reminders about the attributes of effective learning. Because staff know each pupil and their stage of development so well, they frequently avoid problems and confrontation, for example, by making sure pupils realise that they will all get an opportunity to use the interactive whiteboard. Tasks are very well chosen to appeal to pupils' interests. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were captivated during an English lesson as they pretended to be detectives and used their knowledge of similes to solve a mystery. Teachers make sure activities do not run on for too long, so that pupils remain interested and focused. Assessment information is used well in order to match work to what each pupil needs to learn next. Opportunities to promote writing are sometimes missed. For example, not enough examples of pupils' written work are displayed. This means that they do not always understand the importance of writing or have the pleasure of seeing their efforts to write appreciated.

Learning is planned well and takes very good account of the needs of particular individuals and groups of pupils, such as girls or the most-able. Play therapy, programmes to develop fine motor skills, and opportunities to learn in mainstream settings are amongst the adaptations to the basic curriculum. Increasingly, planning makes links between different subjects, enabling pupils to see the relevance of what they learn. However, there are sometimes insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to practise their writing in lessons across the curriculum. Pupils recall with pleasure special

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events, such as spending the day in the role of evacuees, including time in air-raid shelters and a wartime lunch. Visitors to school enable pupils to practise their social skills, as well as promoting learning in areas such as sport, music, Spanish and art. A highly successful programme of social and emotional aspects of learning features prominently in dedicated lessons and assemblies and in day-to-day activities, such as breakfast in each classroom.

Learning mentors and the behaviour support coordinator make a significant contribution to enabling pupils to benefit from lessons. They work with individual pupils, for example, to reduce their anxiety, and lead whole-school drives, such as promoting attendance. Above all, it is the way in which all staff share information about each pupil and the responsibility for their development and well-being that underpins the school's success in this aspect of its work. Each pupil has an individual support plan, of which all staff are aware, setting out clearly the agreed approaches to meeting their needs. Daily staff briefings enable information to be pooled so that everyone is aware of pupils who are particularly vulnerable. When ready to experience mainstream school, pupils are prepared carefully and supported by specialist staff. A range of agencies and professionals enhances the school's work. In particular, close liaison with the behaviour support service enables, for example, the school to be fully appraised of pupils' needs before they are admitted. Support is also readily available for parents and carers, for example, through home-school books, home visits by staff, and opportunities for them to meet informally for mutual support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have created a staff team in which each member shares a determination to meet the needs of each pupil as well as possible. Those with leadership responsibilities are quick to identify opportunities for improving the provision. For example, the deputy headteacher has refined the way in which pupils' progress is tracked through the school, making it easier to compare how well different groups are performing. Systems to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching are effective and include lesson observations and regular discussions with teachers about their practice. Governors are led well and are knowledgeable and increasingly influential. They share the staff's commitment to offering every pupil equal opportunities to succeed. For example, last year every child took part in the residential visit because the school ensured that none

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of them was denied this experience, whatever their circumstances. A working party of governors is currently seeking additional ways to promote community cohesion beyond the school's immediate vicinity. Partnerships with local schools are strong and the school reaches out into the community, for instance, by inviting local residents to attend school events. The school's safeguarding procedures reflect the recommended good practice. For example, records are maintained and monitored with great attention to detail.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents' views are very positive and the inspection confirms that they are right to think so well 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 Grove 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 13 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 28 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	69	4	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	62	5	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	69	4	31	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	54	6	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	62	5	38	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)	9	69	3	23	1	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	62	5	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	92	1	8	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.



4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oak Grove School, Cheadle, SK8 3BU

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when I inspected your school. I really enjoyed meeting you and seeing your lessons. My special thanks go to the members of the school council. They were very helpful. This letter is to tell you that Oak Grove is a good school. Here are some of the things that are best about it.

- You make good progress in your learning, because you have good teaching.
- You behave well and this helps you to get ready for leaving school.
- You feel safe in school and the staff take good care of you.
- You know a lot about how to be healthy.
- The staff plan lots of interesting activities for you.
- The school's leaders and the staff work very hard to make your school a good place to learn in.

To make the school even better, I have asked the leaders and staff to.

- Help you do better in your writing.
- Find ways for you to do more to help each other, the staff, and the people who live near the school.

I send all the adults and each one of you my very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Lead Inspector

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