

Oakley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132148
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	341295
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Timothy Feast

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Senior
Headteacher	Martin Absolom
Date of previous school inspection	5 April 2007
School address	Pembury Road Tunbridge Wells Kent TN2 4NE
Telephone number	01892 823096
Fax number	01892 823836
Email address	principal@oakley.kent.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 18 lessons, seeing 15 teachers teach. They spent just over a third of the school day observing learning. The team held meetings with a governor, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, looking at assessment documentation, monitoring records, development planning and policies and procedures, and scrutinised pupils' work. The team considered responses from 93 questionnaires from parents and carers and analysed questionnaires from staff and from pupils and students.

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

- the progress of different groups of pupils, including girls and pupils with English as an additional language
- the impact that leaders have had on bringing about improvement.

Information about the school

The school admits pupils with both moderate and severe learning difficulties. Almost all pupils have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes an increasing proportion of pupils on the autistic spectrum. Most pupils are of a White British heritage, with much smaller numbers from other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very small, as is the proportion of looked-after children. There are three times as many boys as girls. The school's awards include the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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

Oakley effectively provides its pupils with a good education. Central to its work is the excellent care, guidance and support. One parent, in the inspection questionnaire, reflected the positive comments of many by saying, 'Oakley's really strong points are their expectations that the children will receive the very best.' As a result of this support, pupils' academic and personal development is good and reflects the school's outstanding effectiveness in reducing barriers to discrimination.

Pupils value their school, speaking highly of it. Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave and attend well. Their academic and personal successes are attributable to the good curriculum, which mostly meets their needs well, and to the good teaching. However, teachers' use of strategies to review learning in lessons is not consistent. Adults have very positive relationships with the pupils and have a good knowledge and understanding of strategies that help pupils with these difficulties to make good progress. The school has a number of systems for tracking pupils' progress. Staff find these systems cumbersome and therefore use the information provided inconsistently to inform their planning, particularly for challenges that stretch all pupils appropriately.

Leadership and management are good. Leaders have successfully managed the changing needs of the school population, maintaining good outcomes and provision in almost all areas, with some remaining excellent. The governing body provides good challenge to school leaders, using its expertise well. Monitoring of provision is mostly rigorous, systematic and perceptive. The review of lessons, however, does not focus sufficiently on pupils' learning and personal outcomes, so opportunities for fine-tuning teaching are missed. Governors and school leaders have less evidence of the impact of the school's promotion of community cohesion, particularly across aspects of British cultural and religious diversity, as there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn about such local and national diversity. However, school leaders and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and continue to demonstrate a good capacity to bring about improvement through their ambition to offer what is best for Oakley's pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Apply assessment strategies consistently throughout the school by:
 - using questioning, peer and self-review and plenary sessions more regularly to review pupils' learning and adapting the next steps as a result
 - teachers making greater use of assessment data to plan learning that provides

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greater challenge where appropriate

- helping staff to use assessment data consistently by reducing the range of information that they are expected to work with.
- Improve the school's promotion of community cohesion by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of the diversity of communities locally and nationally
 - ensuring that school leaders evaluate systematically the impact of providing these opportunities and reporting the impact to the governing body.

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

Pupils achieve well, enjoying their learning. Their attendance is above average. The progress of girls and boys varies, according to the particular needs and/or disabilities of individual pupils in particular year groups, but is good overall. The very small number of looked-after children make good progress, as do pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils generally make better progress in mathematics and science than in English, but this usually reflects particular learning difficulties. Pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties and those on the autistic spectrum make equally good progress.

Pupils respond well to practical learning. They enjoy making music. During a Year 7 lesson they showed a good understanding of the need to wash hands and use kitchen utensils carefully. Pupils say they feel very safe and confident that, should they have problems, adults will be available to help resolve them. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to be active and to eat healthily. Pupils contribute well to the life of the school and wider community through active school councils and a very effective eco-committee.

Most pupils stay on after Year 11 and develop a good range of skills to equip them well for the future. The school has acted well on improving pupils' basic skills since the last inspection. Pupils demonstrate good social skills in and out of lessons. They develop well their self-awareness and self-esteem. Less well developed are pupils' knowledge and understanding of Britain's diverse society.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

The good teaching is characterised by positive relationships between pupils and adults and by the expertise staff bring to meeting the pupils' diverse needs. Teachers often make learning fun. In the best lessons an excellent range of resources are provided which enthuse and inspire pupils, as in a Year 6 lesson on Tudor exploration. Pupils are regularly assessed but this information is not used consistently well to plan appropriately challenging activities. There is inconsistency in the strategies used to regularly review learning in lessons.

The curriculum is effective in ensuring pupils' good progress between the Reception class and Year 14. Developments reflect well the changing nature of the school population, for example, to meet the needs of increasing numbers of pupils identified as having autistic spectrum disorders. Younger pupils enthuse about lessons in the innovative soft play area. The curriculum is enriched through a wide range of additional activities and effective links with other schools, for example, in science with the local secondary school.

The outstanding care, guidance and support underpin all the school's work and are prime contributors to enabling pupils to make good progress. Pupils and their parents and carers are especially appreciative of this aspect and recognise the consistently high quality of the staff's contributions in helping to make the school such a welcoming learning environment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	
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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's good leadership is demonstrated through its ambitious and well-considered plans for the future, for example, in achieving specialist status. These ambitions are coupled with a strong commitment by all to see pupils progress well and to support the changing needs of the pupils with high quality provision. Its carefully planned response to the changing nature of its intake reflects its outstanding effectiveness in promoting equality. Through good leadership, strengths in outcomes and provision have been sustained. The provision is supported by good links with other agencies. These are well embedded and are being extended, for example, through occupational therapy. The school regularly seeks parents' and carers' views. Communications are good, but the school recognises it needs to involve parents and carers more in decision making. Statutory requirements are met well in the case of safeguarding, with the good provision reflecting the quality of training provided for staff and governors.

The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school knows the context of its community well and provides a wide range of activities to promote cohesion. Its evaluation of the impact of this work is more limited in identifying any unevenness in provision and its impact in different elements of the school's work.

Governors hold leaders to account well. Leaders have had a good impact on the quality of teaching, for example, supporting staff new to the school whose experience of special needs may be limited. The school has plenty of assessment information to help planning and has recognised the need to make the system less cumbersome to help teachers plan even more effectively.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	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

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	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. All the very small number of children make good progress towards their early learning goals, with good gains in communication and physical development. Children are motivated and enjoy their learning, for example, through horse riding.

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff have effectively established the provision in a short space of time. The environment is well equipped and stimulating. Adults know the individual needs of the children well and plan accordingly. Staff make good use of observations to assess learning and development but systems are not fully in place which identify clearly the next steps required to progress children's learning further. There is an excellent focus on promoting the children's welfare. Good self-evaluation helps identify areas for further improvement and staff act quickly upon them.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form. They make good progress in developing academic, practical and social skills which prepare them well for their next stage of education. This is because teaching is good and the support they receive effectively develops their independence skills. Good links with services such as Connexions enable students to make well-informed choices about their future and move on successfully to college. They have good opportunities to learn about the world of work through enterprise activities such as car washing. Students make good contributions to both the school and to the local community, for example through their eco-work. The curriculum offers a good range of accredited courses. Self- evaluation is thorough and accurately

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identifies areas for improvement. The ongoing development of the curriculum to tackle students' difficulties with communication and social interactions and the continuing excellent systems to support students prepare for their future are testimony to good leadership, indicating that the capacity for sustained improvement is good.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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 overwhelming majority expressed positive views about the school and their child's enjoyment and progress. Parents and carers were really appreciative of the care, guidance and support their child receives. The inspectors agree that this aspect is excellent and agree with the parents' and carers' other positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakley 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 163 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	67	30	32	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	81	18	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	62	67	29	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	59	30	32	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	66	71	24	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	63	30	32	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	66	29	31	1	1	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)	57	61	30	32	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	70	22	24	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	61	66	29	31	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	60	30	32	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	69	74	22	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	73	78	17	18	1	1	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



27 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakley School, Tunbridge Wells TN2 4NE

Thank you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. We particularly enjoyed your contributions to assemblies. We especially thank those of you who filled in the questionnaires and those of you who met us to talk about Oakley.

We think Oakley is a good school and these are some of the positive things.

- The care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding.
- You told us that you feel very safe in school.
- You enjoy coming to school, attending and behaving well.
- You make good progress in both your studies and in your own personal development.
- The curriculum is good and you identified many activities that you enjoy doing.
- The school is very effective in ensuring that everyone can do well and succeed.

We have asked the school to make some improvements. These are the things the school needs to do now.

- Make sure that you always get challenging activities in lessons, even if it means teachers changing things they have planned. You can help by telling teachers when you find the work too easy. To help the school to do this we have asked teachers to regularly check on how well you are learning in lessons.
- Give you more opportunities to develop your knowledge and understanding of the different cultures and religions which we find, particularly in Britain.

We wish you every success in the future,

Yours sincerely

Timothy Feast

Lead inspector

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