

Oakgrove School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134630
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	341484
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Caroline McKee

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	977
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Megan Crawford
Headteacher	Peter Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors and one trainee inspector. Twenty-five lessons or parts of lessons were seen for approximately three quarters of the inspection time. Twenty-four teachers were observed. Meetings were held with students, a few parents, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school development plan, student assessment records, minutes of governors' meetings, monitoring of teaching records and department reviews. Inspectors also evaluated the responses from 207 parental questionnaires and responses from students and staff.

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

- what the school has done to address the underachievement of lower attaining students and how successful this had been
- what the school needed to do to move teaching from good to outstanding
- the attainment and achievement of the students in the new sixth form and how they contribute to the whole school ethos.

Information about the school

The school has a humanities specialism and has been in existence for five years, with the first year group now being the first sixth form intake in Year 12. The school had its first set of Year 11 national results in 2009. It has a broad mix of students from all over Milton Keynes with an average but increasing number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has been awarded a number of accolades such as Every Child Matters (ECM) Gold award and a Leading Aspect National for Values and Ethics.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Oakgrove School is an outstanding school. From the beginning, it has aspired to be the best. It is led by an inspirational headteacher who is supported by an exceptional team of senior managers, governors, staff and students who share his vision and commitment. Self-evaluation is embedded at every level and is based on secure data which results in accurate appraisal of provision, the setting of challenging targets and the introduction of appropriate plans for future development. This has resulted in exemplary outcomes. Students are known as individuals and challenged to give of their best. Success is celebrated openly and their needs are met through carefully targeted intervention and support. As one student said, 'it's cool to achieve'.

The school provides an outstanding, flexible and innovative curriculum that is strongly influenced by the humanities specialism. The influence of this results in students who are well versed in the skills needed for life. The school has shown its outstanding capacity for sustained improvement in a number of ways, including:

- an alteration to the work-related curriculum that has resulted in students of lower attainment and those with specific learning needs making impressive progress, improving on 2009 results
- rigorous intervention and support in art which has resulted in the externally moderated GCSE results doubling.

Early entry to national exams in English and mathematics already puts the students well in line to exceed the school's ambitious GCSE targets, improving on their first set of above average results in 2009. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as others and are very well supported by specialist staff and by students. The school has rightly identified ways to improve the quality of teaching to move it from good to outstanding. There is currently some outstanding teaching that generates a rapid pace of learning. However, not all teachers feel confident to provide opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. When this happens, it leads to lessons that are less dynamic and too teacher led. Marking of work in many, but not all, instances is well focused to help students improve.

There is total involvement of the whole school community when making decisions about future developments. The students and parents are overwhelmingly supportive and know that their views are valued. The strong school ethos has a major impact on the students' outstanding personal development. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. They are impartially and well informed of their choices and talk enthusiastically of their next steps in employment or education. The students are exceptionally well informed and make sensible life choices about health and their own

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safety. The new sixth form is already held in high esteem and students aspire to be a part of it.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - encouraging teachers to increase the number of lesson where students take responsibility for their own learning and use criteria to self and peer-assess
 - ensure that the best quality marking is replicated consistently between teachers to sharply focus the students on what to do to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

The students make good progress overall and reach standards in English and mathematics that are above average. The lower attaining students who are following an alternative curriculum that resulted in 2009 in students making less progress than could be expected now make the same good progress as the others. This is because they are following courses that will give them more qualifications and where they have already gained some examination passes. The best progress is seen in lessons where students are actively engaged in assessing their own progress using criteria that help them to make decisions about what to do to improve their own and the work of others. Some particularly good examples were seen in media, physical education, geography and history, where the students were highly stimulated and rapidly increased their subject skills and knowledge.

The humanities specialism makes an excellent contribution to students' achievement, personal development and enjoyment of school life, and for students in other schools locally. It engages students in learning and makes a significant contribution towards them gaining the skills they require for future education, training and employment. □Shuffle' days, information and communication technology (ICT) skills and excellent links to external providers and businesses also contribute to students' knowledge, understanding and future economic well-being.

Students have a very mature attitude to health issues and making healthy choices. They are well informed and the school has put in place some innovative and imaginative programmes to target those at highest risk of making unwise choices. Participation in sporting activities is very high.

Behaviour in lessons is a key factor in the students' learning. They are friendly, attentive and excel in discussion and group activities when given the opportunity. Around the school, they are sensible and show consideration for others and welcome visitors.

From Year 7 onwards, students have an extremely wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility and contribute to the school and wider community. Just two examples include becoming a learning ambassador or eco warrior. These have contributed to the school gaining the ECM Gold award. The contribution of the school and its students to the wider community is also unusual in the extent to which it has demonstrated impact

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on the town through eco and business projects. Attendance is high and historically good for past Year 11 students who had been refused by other schools. All of these students are now in further education or work. Exclusion rates are low and some students say that the guidance the school has given them has changed their attitudes.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The school accurately evaluates the quality of teaching and learning. Improvements since the last inspection reflect the considerable work done by senior leaders to raise standards but have been slowed by a large increase of teachers each year who need to be inducted into the 'Oakgrove way'. At their best, lessons have pace and challenge and tasks are accessible and engage students who, in turn, can articulate ideas fluently and with confidence.

Students know the levels at which they are working and their work is assessed regularly and systematically. The marking of work is not of a consistently high standard and the school recognises this as an area for development. There are some opportunities for students to learn from assessing themselves and each other, where they demonstrate

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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well-developed skills of giving and receiving positive criticism. These opportunities are not consistently given by all teachers.

The curriculum is flexible and seeks to meet the needs of all students. It is highly personalised and motivates students by meeting and raising aspirations. The values and ethics provision makes a major contribution to their personal development. Students are very appreciative of the wide range of additional clubs, classes and holiday programmes to allow them to study further.

Intervention is a strong feature of the school's work to ensure that no student gets left behind. This is widely accepted by the students as a positive aspect of school life and the special unit gives some students time out to reflect and catch up on lost work. The school is quick to ensure that students do not miss out in case of illness or, as recently seen, when students were stranded abroad as a result of the volcanic ash.

Students display very high levels of trust in the adults around them. Every student is known as an individual and the excellent links to external agencies complement a coherent, integrated approach to developing the whole person.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, from the school's conception, has had a clear vision for the school which is shared, supported and implemented by staff, governors and students. No stone or barrier to success has gone unturned, resulting in high morale amongst the school community. Searching self-evaluation and monitoring are very effective in holding people to account, enabling the school to maintain and improve the outstanding features from their first inspection. The vision to include a sixth form was relentlessly followed and is now in its first year, adding a depth and maturity to the school.

Governors have been an essential part of the school's development. They are frequent visitors and have a very well-informed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have lively debates and hold leaders to account when needed but are also fulsome in their praise and have tackled some challenging external issues with the building programme of the school.

Safety procedures to ensure that students remain safe are outstanding. Records are meticulous and all current safeguarding requirements are met and, in many instances, exceeded. The school is an outstanding example of how to draw a community together. It recognises areas for development, plans effectively to build on strengths, has a good

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understanding of its context, and actively promotes a deeper understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of communities beyond the school. The school is central to the community and drives forward aspirations and self-belief. It also engages the students in working with other schools, both nationally and internationally, in a way which has meaning and broadens their understanding of life beyond their immediate environment.

The school is a harmonious community in which a wide range of young people from various backgrounds get along extremely well together. Discrimination is not tolerated. The promotion of equality and acknowledgement of diversity is evident throughout the work of the school and shines through in so many ways.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

The first intake of students began their studies in September 2009. The modular results in January 2010 for AS level examinations, along with the school's predicted grades, indicate that standards are above average and that achievement is good. These judgements are supported by a recent local authority survey. Although interviews were held with the students, no lessons were observed because students were on study leave. However, management records rightly show observations that indicate good teaching overall. The inspection team found the school's own judgements of learning to be accurate. From the discussions, students agree that teaching is good and that they know how well they are doing and are very well supported in knowing what they need to do to improve. They spoke very enthusiastically about the school, especially how the facilities have improved as the specialist areas have been finished and fully equipped.

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They feel, and concur with the inspection judgement, that the care and guidance they receive is outstanding and that they are fully informed of all possible routes for education and the world of work. They are proud to be part of the school and enjoy opportunities to work with younger students as trained mentors and the responsibilities to instigate other events.

The curriculum is good, with plans to offer an increased number of subjects and vocational courses in 2010-2011. There is a rich range of activities to add depth to the students' education. The outstanding leadership and management of the sixth form provided meticulous preparation leading to a seamless launch of sixth form life for Year 12. Rigorous systems are in place to track students' academic progress and ensure their outstanding personal development.

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	1

Views of parents and carers

Responses were received from a quarter of the families at the school. The overwhelming majority were supportive and appreciative of the school. Almost all felt that the leadership of the school and the teaching were very strong and only a very few had any concerns. These were mainly about incidents of behaviour and about how parents and carers could be helped to support their child's learning. Students felt confident that poor behaviour was dealt with swiftly and effectively. There were extremely positive comments about the ethos of the school and the high expectations for academic improvement and behaviour. The inspection team were in agreement with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakgrove 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 207 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 977 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	93	45	10	53	3	1	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	117	57	85	41	4	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	127	61	76	37	3	1	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	108	52	92	44	4	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	97	47	107	52	1	0	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	72	35	117	57	11	5	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	32	127	61	7	3	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)	84	32	127	61	7	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	92	44	104	53	6	0	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	101	49	89	43	10	5	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	32	121	58	5	2	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	108	52	94	45	2	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	124	60	78	38	2	1	1	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). 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">■ 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.



12 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Oakgrove School, Milton Keynes MK10 9JQ

Thank you so much for the warm welcome to your outstanding school. We enjoyed talking to you and some of your parents, observing your lessons and looking at your work. Your contributions to the smooth running of the school are impressive. The outstanding care, support and guidance that the staff provide for you ensure that you develop your personal attributes exceptionally well, enabling you to become mature young adults who have much to offer to your local and wider communities. You are thoughtful and support each other well, particularly those who have learning and physical difficulties, in a range of activities. We were impressed with how well you think about your health and the choices you make to ensure your own safety. You reach standards that are above average, particularly in English and mathematics. The school was quick to address any reasons for underachievement last year and, as a result, progress is now good for all groups of students.

Your headteacher is inspirational and, as one of you said, 'he really cares about what we think'. The whole staff team has a tremendous team spirit with one aim in mind, to provide the best for you. They know the strengths of the school well and they have an outstanding capacity to continue to improve. The curriculum in the main school provides you with excellent opportunities to develop your skills and academic achievements. It also gives you a wide range of exciting extra-curricular activities. We judged the curriculum in the sixth form to be good, only because it is still at an early stage of development as is still evolving to meet your aspirations. Overall, we judged the teaching to be good and the school knows this is an area to develop further. In order for this to happen, we worked with the senior team to decide on the best way to do this and agreed that:

- teachers will increase the number of lessons where you can take responsibility for your own learning and use criteria to self and peer-assess
- teachers will ensure that the best quality marking is replicated consistently to sharply focus you on what to do to improve

We would ask you to use these opportunities to improve your learning, and wish you every success for your future.

Yours sincerely

Caroline McKee

Lead inspector

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