

Oaktree School

Chase Side, Enfield, London, N14 4HN

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has sustained an outstanding level of care and support for the personal development of the pupils. This has taken place against a background of considerable change in staffing and in the governing body.
- The impact of the all-round care is clear in the excellent behaviour of the pupils around the school and in their engagement in learning within the classroom.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and parents agree that pupils are looked after exceptionally well.
- Learning is good and all groups of pupils achieve well because of typically good teaching.
- Leadership is good. Senior leaders show a relentless drive to do the very best for the pupils. In this they are well supported by the staff team and governors.
- The school works very closely with parents to involve them as fully as possible in the education and training of the pupils.
- Pupils attend school very regularly. Their attendance is well above the figures for special schools nationally.
- The sixth form is good with all post-16 students well integrated into the life of the school. They are very keen to support those younger than themselves.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- New ways of recording pupils' progress are not well enough established to show clearly the extent of the pupils' achievements.
- Staff do not use all the information available to them to set appropriate goals for pupils.
- Post-16 students have too few work-related options within the curriculum. There are insufficient links with alternative external providers.
- Subject leaders are not held fully accountable for the progress of pupils in their areas of responsibility.
- Not all governors have the skills to challenge senior leaders sufficiently on pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed nine lessons and made three other visits to lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils from across the different areas of the school. There were discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority link officer, the headteacher and other staff. Inspectors heard two pupils reading.
- There were no recorded submissions to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and inspectors took account of the school's own surveys for parents as well as of the views of 30 staff who returned questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sheila Nolan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oaktree School provides for pupils with complex needs, mainly those with severe or moderate learning difficulties. A number have speech, language and communication difficulties and a diagnosis of autism.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Boys outnumber girls and pupils often join the school at times other than at the start of the school year. Most of the pupils require organised transport to and from the school.
- The school is currently at full capacity and over half of the pupils are from a range of minority ethnic heritages, with a third of the pupils speaking English as an additional language. None is at the early stages of learning English. White British pupils form the largest group followed by pupils of Any Other White background and those with African heritages.
- Almost two thirds of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding provided by the government in this school for those pupils in the care of the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school is not in receipt of the Year 7 catch-up funding nor of the primary school sports funding.
- Sixth-form students are integrated fully into the various groups within the school, depending on their main areas of need. They are not taught in separate groups other than in Years 13 and 14.
- At present there are 15 pupils in Years 3 to 6, 28 in Years 7 to 9 and 18 in Years 10 and 11.
- The school employs six therapists with specialisms in speech and language, occupational therapy, psychotherapy and physiotherapy.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club at which pupils also receive an evening meal.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the present good rate of progress across all groups is accelerated by:
 - using every piece of information on the pupils when they join the school to predict their best possible outcomes and set goals that support these expectations
 - developing the sixth-form curriculum for those students with moderate learning difficulties so that they can access a wider range of work-related options in their future training
 - extending the range of links with other 16 to 19 providers.
- Continue to develop leadership and management skills at all levels by:
 - ensuring all subject leaders are held accountable for how well pupils perform in their areas of responsibility
 - improving governors' understanding of information on the pupils' progress so that they are better able to challenge the school's leaders.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join the school with starting points that are much lower than those expected for their ages. Pupils in all groups make at least good progress over their time in the school. Those supported by the pupil premium make as fast progress as their peers because of the carefully managed nurturing they receive.
- From their various starting points, all pupils gain some form of external qualification by the end of Year 14. In functional skills, for example, pupils in mathematics achieve from Entry Level 1 to Level 1 in adult numeracy. Results in literacy are marginally less favourable, from Entry Level 1 to 3, as many pupils have significant difficulties in writing.
- Pupils from minority ethnic heritages and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well because of the good support they receive.
- Most pupils are really keen on food technology, gaining a range of related qualifications and often using these skills well for the benefit of the school community. Work in art, displayed throughout the school, is a real strength. Not only do pupils use artwork to express their ideas but their classroom displays also encourage good writing skills.
- Communication skills are encouraged at all levels and pupils gain excellent social skills through extensive oral work both within and outside the classrooms. Early reading skills show rapid development with many of the younger pupils able to identify single words and simple sentences. They enjoy reading and are happy to talk about their books.
- The good progress information recorded over time is confirmed by that seen in classrooms and in social situations throughout the school day. Despite the good gains for all pupils, however, information on pupils' starting points is not used efficiently enough to set ambitious goals for individuals that highlight expected gains at key points throughout the school year. There are examples of where some pupils have clearly done exceptionally well but records do not always fully show stages of the pupils' progress through the school.
- Students in the sixth form also achieve well and are well prepared for their next stages of learning and training.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and there are pockets of outstanding teaching where pupils learn exceptionally well.
- In every classroom, pupils engage exceptionally well with their learning tasks which are usually well suited to build on their earlier learning. Because of their very willing cooperation with all staff, brought about through warm working relationships, pupils make the best use of their time in lessons. In a mixed group of pupils in mathematics from Years 6 to 8, teachers' excellent knowledge of the pupils' best ways to learn enabled each pupil to recognise and use tallies as a means of recording information. The very good checks on their understanding were highlighted in their asking relevant and, for them, searching questions of their peers.
- Although teachers plan well to provide for their pupils, there are sometimes occasions where small things could make the difference between good and outstanding teaching. In a literacy lesson, for example, pupils' early reading skills were well supported through a range of activities. However, the magnetic letters used by the pupils were all upper case and so matching with the words in the book was made difficult.
- Similarly, one group of pupils, excited by using a thesaurus for the first time, made slower progress in developing targeted vocabulary because supporting staff were not familiar enough with the story line from which descriptive words were chosen.
- Nevertheless, despite such hindrances to learning, the bulk of the pupils' progress in lessons is good. This is because of successful collaborative working between classroom staff, deep knowledge of the pupils' personal needs, high expectations of all pupils and because pupils grasp

that they are valued as individuals.

- Teaching in the sixth form is also good with students having many opportunities to use their learning in supporting their community.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of the pupils is outstanding because of the high priority the school places on the care of the pupils above all other aspects of school life.
- Pupils' attendance is above average when compared with special schools generally. Their behaviour is also outstanding because they understand, at their own level, how they can, and do, contribute to the school community. The rewards system is exceptionally effective with groups of pupils contributing to their class points enthusiastically and saving points for special awards.
- The very positive relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves are reflected in the ease with which they adapt confidently to visitors. They are welcoming and keen to communicate as best they can. Pupils clearly understand right from wrong, know that bullying is unacceptable and have a good grasp of how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils, and former pupils who work in the school, are excellent models for new arrivals and younger pupils. They care genuinely for each other.
- Not only do the pupils engage fully in lessons, but they happily socialise at breaks and lunchtimes, both among themselves and with staff. Within the canteen, lunch is a very pleasant family affair with every table well supported by adults.
- All pupils take great pride in their work, be it as early readers keen to show what they can do, or through the display of their attractive art work, or in their assessments for functional skills.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There is a very strong culture of safety throughout the school that starts with the carefully orchestrated arrival of the morning coaches and runs throughout breaks and lunchtimes as well as in lessons. Pupils are happy to be at Oaktree and this is clearly reflected in the smiling faces when greeted on arrival by staff. They feel safe and confident in the care of the adults around them because of excellent care and a culture of encouraging pupils' personal development to the full. Bullying is not a concern. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding.
- Behaviour in the sixth form as in the rest of the school is outstanding with students contributing as much as they can to the life of the community.
- All pupils benefit greatly from the before- and after-school clubs which ensure pupils are well nourished and well prepared for the school day or for their journey home.

The leadership and management are good

- Despite some turbulence in both staffing and governance since the previous inspection, the school has continued to provide very effective high quality care for its pupils. The impact of this work is clearly seen in the excellent personal development of the pupils. This is due in no small part to the relentless drive of the headteacher and his senior team, all of whom give very high priority to the well-being and safeguarding of the pupils. Their very clear drive to provide the right conditions in which the pupils can flourish enables both staff and pupils to concentrate on learning within and outside of the classroom.
- Changes to the procedures through which the pupils' progress is checked and recorded mean that learning is only recorded centrally twice per year. As yet, not all staff record efficiently the progress pupils make over time despite evidence that such is the case during individual lessons. This limits the effectiveness of checks on how well pupils are doing in relation to their longer-term targets.
- The school works very well with parents and with a range of outside agencies to support the students. It is developing its links with other providers but recognises that these are not always wide-ranging enough to offer the best options for sixth form students with moderate learning

difficulties.

- Although the school curriculum covers all expected areas of learning, the school realises that there is more to do to broaden the curriculum for post-16 students so that they have greater access to work-related courses and qualifications, not least because this will widen their options as they move on to the next phase of their training and education.
- Senior leaders drive the school forward in the best interests of the pupils. However, they do not always hold subject leaders well enough to account for the pupils' progress within their areas of responsibility. Nothing less than good teaching is acceptable from classroom staff but not all post-holders contribute enough to the work of the school.
- The leadership of the sixth form is also good and the sixth form students are fully integrated into the life of the school.
- The school is an outstanding ambassador for the rights of its pupils and their families. It ensures that all groups of pupils have the best opportunities suited to their needs to develop as well as possible.
- The local authority has a very light touch approach to the school but is very supportive of its work and is working closely with the governors to develop their skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body, some very new to the work, are keen to support the school. Increasingly they are aware of how to challenge senior leaders on the outcomes for the pupils but are not yet secure in evaluating information on pupils' progress and how well the school is doing in relation to other special schools. Regular visits by governors and reports from the headteacher inform their understanding of progress. They are particularly astute with regard to school finances and have a secure overview of expenditure, including that of the pupil premium and its impact. The performance of the headteacher is managed successfully and there is an adequate overview of how staff pay is linked to pupils' good progress. Attention to safeguarding procedures is a great strength and governors are experienced in the processes of safer recruitment. They also have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and of the provision throughout the school for the pupils' personal development. They play an active part in shaping the future of the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102069
Local authority	Enfield
Inspection number	431593

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	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amita Clements
Headteacher	Finlay Douglas
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 March 2011
Telephone number	020 8440 3100
Fax number	020 8440 4891
Email address	info@oaktree.enfield.sch.uk

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