

# Oakfield High School and College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131530
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	360287
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Honoree Gordon HMI

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>	163
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	46
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Muirhead
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Long Lane Hindley Green, Wigan Greater Manchester WN2 4XA
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 22 lessons, seeing 20 teachers and many teaching assistants. Inspectors spoke to a small group of parents and carers and held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and a senior leader from one of the school's partners. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation; data on students' progress and attendance; a sample of students' records; and information related to the school's plans for development. Inspectors scrutinised 79 parental questionnaires, and questionnaires completed by students and by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The strength of partnerships in contributing to improving provision and raising achievement.
- The effectiveness of the school's arrangements for transition: how well students are supported when they join the school and when they move on.
- The impact of the specialism in business and enterprise.
- How well the school has addressed the two points for improvement specified at the time of the previous inspection, related to teaching meeting students' needs and the tracking of progress.
- Students' attendance.

## Information about the school

Oakfield High School and College is an average-sized special school for students aged 11 to 19, located on two sites. The school (Key Stages 3 and 4) is on the main site, newly built and opened in March 2009. The college (Key Stage 5/ sixth form) occupies the former school site one-and-a half miles away. Around half of the total number of students is on each site.

All students have a statement of educational needs. The majority of students have moderate learning difficulties, but a few have severe learning difficulties or physical needs, and a few have emotional, social or behavioural difficulties. Seven students are looked after by the local authority. There are three main points at which students join the school: Year 7, Year 10 and into the sixth form. Additionally, in September 2010 a further 25 students joined the school following the closure of another special school. A number of students who have special educational needs, but attend mainstream schools, join courses at Oakfield as part of partnership arrangements. Classes are grouped by students' age.

The school is a member of a local collaborative of six schools in the Eastern part of the borough. Together with other schools, it also owns and runs the Eastern Skills Centre, where construction skills are taught. A floristry shop run by students operates out of the college site. Qualifications in floristry are offered there.

The school holds a number of awards recognising the quality of its provision. These include the Customer Service Excellence Award, two leading aspect awards for Enterprise, Eco Schools Silver Award, Arts Mark Gold Award, Investor in People and Healthy School status. The school and college gained business and enterprise specialist school status in September 2010.

A new headteacher was appointed in September 2008.

**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

Oakfield High School and College is an outstanding school. It has gone from strength to strength since its previous inspection and now provides an excellent curriculum for its students, enabling them to make outstanding progress over time and to leave school with useful accreditation for their learning. Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students' attainment, although low owing to their educational and other needs, has risen year on year. Students' achievement now ranks amongst the best nationally, with no obvious difference between the various groups of students. Leaders successfully ensure that the school's mission statement 'Learning today for our tomorrow' becomes a reality.

Students are well taught, so that their skills and confidence build up well over the years. In the lessons observed on the inspection, students' progress was only very rarely less than good. Teachers plan well to meet individual students' needs. Teaching assistants help students to stay focused in lessons, supporting them well. There is scope for enhancing the role of the teaching assistants still further, so that they can play a more prominent part in lessons. Equally, in some lessons opportunities are missed to allow students to be creative, independent learners, adding still further to the progress of some individual students.

The outstanding curriculum has a strong work-related dimension, as befits a school with business and enterprise specialist status. This helps to ensure that students leave school exceptionally well prepared for their next steps in life. In this, extensive and highly effective partnerships with other schools and providers play a significant part.

Importantly, this is a happy school. Behaviour is excellent; students are very enthusiastic learners. The care, guidance and support that students receive are outstanding. Particular care is taken to ensure that the needs of students joining or leaving the school are accurately identified and that students receive the support they require. In their questionnaire responses, parents and carers show that they are overwhelmingly satisfied with the care and education that their children receive.

The sixth form is a great strength, with a unique identity distinct from the main school. All aspects are excellent.

The school's leaders and managers show excellent capacity to improve further. They conduct thorough monitoring, evaluation and review of all areas of the school's work. Their accurate analysis enables them to set appropriate priorities for the further development of the school and college, and they have the enthusiasm and drive to see these through.

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

- Improve further the quality of teaching and learning in lessons to match the very best by:
  - refining the planning for lessons to include a clearer focus on the outcomes expected for individual students and for groups, including where independent work and creativity might be fostered
  - involving the teaching assistants more closely in the planning and delivery of lessons and in the evaluation of day-to-day progress of individual students.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>1</b>
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Students enter the school with attainment that is below the national average. Though attainment remains low when compared to all maintained schools, students make excellent progress from their starting points. They exceed the targets the school sets for them, even though these are suitably challenging, and achieve above what would normally be predicted. This is because of good quality teaching and an exciting curriculum, which engage them well in learning. Learning in the classroom day to day is at least good and, at times, in lessons observed during the inspection was outstanding. Literacy and numeracy are systematically developed across all subjects so that students acquire and apply the skills necessary for their future.

Achievement and enjoyment are high. All groups of students make excellent progress and all successfully gain qualifications, including entry level certificates and full GCSE, where students are capable. Examination results since the last inspection have continued to rise.

The proportion of students who persistently do not attend school has fallen dramatically over the last three years so that this figure is now much nearer to the national average for all schools. Attendance overall is broadly average, and continues to improve. This figure includes a number of students with severe medical needs.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students' social skills develop particularly well. The extensive curricular opportunities and work in partnership with other schools and providers in the community mean that students meet with a range of adults and others in their peer group. Being in tutor groups composed of students of different ages encourages cooperation and helps to create a harmonious atmosphere in school.

The strong work-related dimension to the curriculum raises students' awareness of real-life situations and allows them to develop the necessary social skills to cope well, including working in teams. Students learn how to behave well, concentrate and persevere. They cooperate highly effectively with others and develop good enterprise skills. This prepares them exceptionally well for life after school.

Students say that they feel very safe in school and feel confident that any bullying that might occur is dealt with. They show good awareness of the factors that lie behind a healthy lifestyle. There are good opportunities for students to take regular exercise but the school could do more to successfully encourage students to adopt healthy habits in eating.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>

<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

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good. Lessons proceed at a good pace and build well on students' prior learning. Good systems for tracking progress have been established, with regular half-termly reviews of students' targets. Lessons much more closely provide for students' individual needs than at the time of the previous inspection. However, plans for lessons do not yet focus sufficiently on what the expected outcomes might be for individual students, when classes have students with a range of differing needs. At times this means that teachers miss opportunities to maximise learning for one or two students.

The quality of lessons observed during the inspection varied, but included some outstanding lessons. In these, students were given good opportunities to be creative and to show independence in learning, which increased their enjoyment and their individual achievement. For example, in a post-16 art lesson, students with moderate and severe learning difficulties were working towards different levels of certification, and were choosing and applying their own designs to decorate a ceramic box they had made. The teacher encouraged them to think for themselves and to each talk about their choices, developing also their language and reasoning skills.

The environment for learning is excellent. Students in the main school benefit from being in a new, purpose-built school that caters well for their needs. The curriculum is highly personalised and flexible, allowing individual students to follow combinations of subjects that suit them best and for which there are good routes forward into further education or

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training. There are many vocational courses, such as construction, hairdressing, catering, and floristry that students can follow, either in school or at the college, the Eastern Skills Centre or a partner school. Access to this practical, relevant curriculum has been made possible by first-rate partnership working and is a major factor in students' high achievement and enjoyment. Students' confidence and self-belief blossom.

The school's leaders and managers work in a highly effective way with outside agencies, professionals, families and carers to support those students that the school considers to be the most vulnerable. Extensive outreach work with primary schools and families helps prepare students very well for entry into school.

*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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body supports and challenges the school well. Together with leaders and managers, the governing body has ensured that safeguarding policy and practice are robust, consistent across the two sites and followed through with partners. The school's leaders and managers promote equality and diversity exceptionally well.

The school's motto is enthusiastically embraced by all the staff and students. Senior and middle leaders show a strong grasp of their respective roles in successfully driving improvement and development. They work highly effectively as a close-knit team, harnessing the skills and enthusiasm of the staff and the school's partners to develop provision for all the students in the eastern sector of the borough who have special educational needs. Partnership arrangements not only significantly enhance the range of opportunities and the outcomes for students at Oakfield, but also provide the mainstream schools with valuable expertise, advice and specialist support on special educational needs. Leaders and managers in the collaborative, plan together and share good practice across different types of schools. In this way the school makes a good contribution to building a cohesive community.

The impact of the school's specialism, though only recently awarded, is good. Business and enterprise approaches can be felt throughout the school. The floristry shop at the college, run by students, is a good example of enterprise in practice and leads to recognised qualifications.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>2</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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Sixth form

Students thrive in the college, which provides a suitable, distinctly more adult environment for the students. Students grow in confidence so that they are able to make a significant contribution both to the school community and beyond. There are excellent opportunities to gain qualifications at both level 1 and level 2, wide-ranging work-related learning and a good enrichment programme.

Teaching is good and some lessons observed were outstanding. Students engage enthusiastically in learning, and as a result, attainment in the college has risen year on year. Students are confident, articulate and proud to be members of the college. Attendance is average overall and the attendance of many students is good. The staying-on rate to finish courses is good. The provision is highly flexible, to meet students' needs.

The care provided and the outcomes for students are outstanding. Pastoral care is strong. The transition of students joining from other schools into the college is very well managed, as is the inclusion of those who attend courses, but are on the roll of other schools. The college very effectively recognises and promotes individual success.

The management of the college is closely linked to that of the main school so that the headteacher retains a clear overview. The leader of the college communicates passionately her ambition for the post-16 students to prepare them well for adult life. To this end an independent travel coordinator works across both college and school to develop students' readiness for travel and for leading independent social lives. The college engages well with parents and carers, for example, through the parents' group.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## **Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly pleased with the school and college. This fits with inspectors' views that the overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding. Only a very small proportion of parents and carers feel that communication could be better. Inspectors judge that communication with parents and carers is good, particularly in the college, although the school recognises that there are still some families it finds harder to reach.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakfield High School and College 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 82 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	35	43	42	51	4	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	42	51	39	48	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	40	42	51	4	5	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	37	46	56	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	38	46	39	48	0	0	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	37	44	54	6	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	34	49	60	3	4	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)	34	41	43	52	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	51	37	45	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	50	36	44	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	35	43	52	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	45	40	49	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	49	36	44	1	1	1	1

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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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 pupils' 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.**



14 January 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Oakfield High School and College, Wigan, WN2 4XA**

I am writing to thank you for your help when I came to inspect your school and college recently with Mrs Ward and Mr Ellwood, and to tell you what we found.

We think your school is outstanding –in other words, super!

You told us in your questionnaires, and when we talked with you, that you are happy in school, that you feel safe and that the teachers support you very well. Your parents in their questionnaires told us that they are very pleased with your school.

Here is what we found.

- You are making excellent progress.
- You enjoy and achieve outstandingly well.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- You have a really good range of courses that give you useful qualifications.
- Teaching is good.
- Staff care, guide and support you very well, including when you are new.
- The college (sixth form) is outstanding: we liked the way the staff prepare you really well for life and work.

The headteacher and senior leaders have very clear ideas of how they want to keep developing the school in the future. We have asked them to also think about:

- what the teaching assistants are asked to do in lessons
- how best to check what each of you has learnt in a lesson.

Thank you once again for talking to us and for making us feel so welcome.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Honoree Gordon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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