

Oaktree School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102069
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	355121
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2011
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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	81
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amita Clements
Headteacher	Finley Douglas
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2007
School address	Chase Side Enfield N14 4HN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, seeing 10 teachers and each class at least once. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the senior leaders and others with posts of responsibility. In addition, a meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body and the vice-chair. The inspectors also met formally with two small groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at samples of students' work, assessment and progress files and the school's planning and other assessment records. The lead inspector analysed questionnaires from 35 parents and carers, 62 pupils and 24 staff.

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

- Does the school have a consistent track record of improving students' achievement by the time they leave the school?
- Is teaching (including the use of support staff) sufficiently challenging for pupils, enabling them to make the best progress possible?
- How well is information and communication technology used to support teaching, enliven learning and in preparing pupils for the future.
- How effective is the school in reducing absence and improving attendance?
- How effective is leadership at all levels, including governance, in moving the school forward?

Information about the school

Oaktree provides for students with complex needs, mainly those with moderate learning difficulties or serious learning difficulties as their primary need, as well as a few with speech, language and communication needs. All have a statement of special educational needs. Currently, almost half are of White British background and approximately a quarter are from other White backgrounds. The remainder are from other minority ethnic backgrounds reflecting the make-up of the local area. There are similar numbers of boys and girls. A quarter of the students speak English as an additional language and a few are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.

The school works in partnership with the Children and Parents Advisory Group (voluntary sector) providing afternoon activities, weekend and holiday clubs, as well as short breaks as part of a national programme.

The school has achieved National Healthy School status, the Eco-Schools Silver Award and is a Foundation International School.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Oaktree is an outstanding school. It meets fully its core aim of providing the highest quality education for its students and developing their talents to the full, thereby enabling them to lead happy, fulfilling and independent lives. The ethos of providing outstanding care, guidance and support and matching the curriculum closely to the specific needs and capabilities of all students underpins the school's work across all age groups. The Monday morning whole school assembly is an uplifting experience for all students and sets a highly positive tone for the week. The palpable delight on students' faces during the role play activity on the theme of friendship, involving individual students volunteering to dress up as various characters, was indicative of their enjoyment. All then joined in enthusiastically with the 'signing' choir to songs by Queen and Adele. Finally, students' success from the previous week was rewarded by the headteacher handing out certificates to spontaneous applause from all present. ♦

The school is highly effective in supporting not only students but also parents and carers, especially in terms of transition arrangements for the next stage of education as they move through the school, as well as to life beyond. Without exception, parents are happy with their child's experience at the school. One parent wrote, 'I am happy my child is attending Oaktree ♦ he has achieved so much and learned to have confidence in whatever he is doing.' ♦

Students are achieving exceptionally well because of the full effectiveness of the ♦ education and support provided by the school. ♦ While the levels of attainment reached by the time they leave school at the end of sixth form are exceptionally low because of their special educational needs, all students make excellent progress in their academic and personal progress. Notably, students make an exceptional contribution to the community within the school, locally and internationally. Each class group sponsors a child in different countries across the world, as well as actively supporting a school in Ghana. As a result, students have gained a realistic understanding of others and the lives they lead. The school's work in this respect has been recognised by the recent award of Foundation International School. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. This is indicative of the school's excellent promotion of community cohesion. These many strong features prepare students well for the next stage of their education and, eventually, transition to life beyond the school. The medical needs of many students affect overall attendance statistics. Because of this authorised absence, the school has recognised some may fall behind in their work and need extra individual support to maintain their high levels of progress.

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Students thoroughly enjoy their education. One student commented, 'What is great about this school is the learning.' Teaching is outstanding, which makes a significant impact on students' excellent academic learning and their outstanding wider personal development. As a result of the calm and sensitive and collaborative approach of all adults in the room, students are safe, persevere very well in lessons, develop their independence and build well their own capacity to make informed choices. ♦ Every day, not only do students arrive with smiling faces, they also greet staff and visitors with 'high fives' hand gestures. At the end of the day their attitudes are still positive and they leave in a happy and contented manner.

The passionate and strategic vision of the headteacher is, without exception, shared by all staff working at the school. As a result, the school has continued to improve since the last inspection and new strategies have been identified to move it onwards and upwards. Leaders' accurate and effective self-evaluation has resulted in excellent quality planning with a continuing focus on improving students' outcomes. New technologies are used very effectively to enhance teaching and support students in all aspects of their work. The recently reorganised governing body is highly supportive of the school and it recognises the need for individual governors to develop further their own expertise in order for it to be even more effective in its role of holding the school to account. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of support for students absent because of medical needs in order to maintain their excellent academic and personal progress at school.
- Ensure that all members of the governing body are sufficiently knowledgeable in order to best support the future development of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons all students, including those who speak English as an additional language and the few at the early stages of English language acquisition, consolidate and build very effectively on previous learning. They make outstanding progress in relation to their individual learning targets. Students benefit greatly from working in groups according to their special needs, where they receive focused and individual attention, which helps them to concentrate hard and work independently. In an art lesson, students developed their knowledge and understanding of the use of strong and lighter colours to show depth in landscape paintings, such as those of Monet. Their very positive attitudes, excellent behaviour and willingness to respond to the teacher's challenging questions were indicative of their enjoyment of this activity. In a mathematics lesson, older students made excellent progress in improving basic calculation skills, using subtraction and addition, as a result of being provided with real-life situations. They responded particularly well to the task based on professional footballers' spending habits. In a lunchtime dance club, students' enthusiasm and enjoyment were evident in their enthusiastic approach and concentrated effort throughout. ♦

The vast majority of students who completed the Ofsted questionnaire said they felt safe in the school. This was also confirmed in the student discussion groups with inspectors.

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One student commented, 'The school feels like one big family ♦ we all get along.' As well as eating healthily and having a secure understanding of this, including a love of cooking, students also take part in and enjoy an excellent range of physical activities. Achievement in this respect has been recognised by National Healthy School status. Students particularly enjoy the after-school clubs as part of the school's extended day work with the Children and Parents Advisory Group. They are involved in the life of the school through the student council, which ensures their views are listened to and acted upon. This has resulted in the provision of more seated areas outside and the provision of a sixth form common room. Attendance is average, although individual medical needs affect the statistics. Unauthorised absence is minimal. In terms of their personal development, students' preparation for the future is very strong but because their basic academic skill levels are generally very low their overall economic well-being is good rather than outstanding.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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.

How effective is the provision?

Underpinning the quality of teaching and the significant progress made by students in lessons is the collaborative approach and teamwork of all adults in lessons. As a result,

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students are constantly involved in learning and are keen to do their best and behaviour is excellent. Adults' use of praise and encouragement for students is never overly effusive but always positively appropriate. In a mathematics lesson observed, each adult was deployed highly effectively to ensure that each of the small groups within the class had clear support and guidance as to the carefully planned work set for them. This resulted in all making excellent progress in improving their counting skills. In a science lesson, students made excellent progress in their understanding of light reflection and the formation of shadows. Learning was enlivened by the teacher's excellent use of new technologies to provide visual prompts for learning. Teachers make thorough and in-depth assessment of individuals' progress towards their academic and personal progress in lessons, which then helps them plan the next steps for students' learning. In addition, teachers' tracking of progress over time is highly effective and supports whole-school strategies for further improvements.

The strength of the curriculum is how well it is tailored to students' needs and capabilities and the focus it has on improving their independence. As a result, it is highly effective in supporting their personal development and prepares them well for transition to life beyond the school. It also has a significant impact in developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Impressive displays of students' work throughout the school linked to a broad range of provision and enrichment activities to support learning even further are testament to this. An extensive range of after-school activities adds further valuable breadth to students' learning.

Students' health, safety and well-being are at the forefront of the school's strong ethos of care. All adults work hard to ensure this, helping each individual, including the most vulnerable, in very specific ways. This results in all being looked after in a safe, healthy, caring and welcoming environment. A carefully managed and executed programme of reviews is effective in supporting every student when they first join the school, as well as when they leave. Parents and carers too are given careful support when needed. Procedures for raising attendance rates are effective and have resulted in minimal unauthorised absence. ♦

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

As a result of a programme of rigorous monitoring and evaluation, the overall quality and consistency of teaching and learning has improved greatly since the previous inspection. The school is highly effective in ensuring all students have equality of opportunity, as it is

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in tackling any discrimination, which results in a strong ethos for inclusion and no underachievement of any individual or group.

The governing body and the school work closely together to ensure safeguarding procedures and practices have a high priority, are effective, up to date and reflect current good practice. The school has excellent collaborative working with an extensive range of other professionals to extend curriculum opportunities and to support learners' medical and personal needs. The school also works hard and very successfully to engage parents and carers, involving them in the admissions process and keeping them informed fully of their child's progress. The school's contribution to community cohesion is especially strong within its own community, the local community and beyond. Its work in improving the environment, including caring for and sustaining it, and the development of the horticulture project to grow vegetables, has been recognised by the Eco-Schools Silver Award.

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	2
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	2
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

There is no separate sixth form provision as such; it is a seamless part of whole school provision and the leadership and management structure. Students make excellent progress in developing their independence and personal attributes, which prepares them well for life beyond the school. Underpinning this is the wide range of activities provided in the curriculum, including work-related opportunities and visits to the local and wider community. In a discussion group with one of the inspectors, students confirmed how well the school prepares them for the future, one commenting, 'The school builds up your confidence to help you move on.' In a key skills focused lesson, for example, students developed their understanding of buying the correct size of clothes through use of numeracy and pair work activities, which involved them in measuring and price

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comparisons. At the end of the lesson the teacher carefully assessed their overall learning and personal progress made. Students also make excellent progress in accredited courses, which focus on life skills, as well as in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. ♦♦

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
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

The proportion of questionnaires returned was above the national average for special schools. Without exception, parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at the school. In addition, all state their child enjoys school, and all think the school helps their child have a healthy lifestyle and makes sure their child is well prepared for the future. This inspection confirms these views. A very small minority felt that the school did not take account of their concerns and suggestions. Inspectors found no evidence of this. ♦

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oaktree 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 81 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	71	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	74	6	17	0	0	1	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	74	8	23	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	74	7	20	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	66	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	66	11	31	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	63	12	34	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	57	14	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	66	12	34	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	71	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	57	13	37	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	71	9	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	77	8	23	0	0	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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).

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">■ 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 pupils' 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.



11 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Oaktree School, London N14 4HN

Not so long ago, two of us came to your school to see how well you are getting on. We also wanted to know whether we could suggest anything to make things even better for you. We really enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school and were very pleased with your friendly welcome and interest in what we were doing. We also met formally with two small groups of you. We were particularly interested to hear you enjoy coming to school and value what it provides for you. We agree with you and we also enjoyed our time at the school! In addition, the great majority of you who completed the Ofsted questionnaire gave positive responses to all the statements.

We think your school is outstanding. It makes excellent provision for you. Here are some of the strengths we identified.

- You make excellent academic and personal progress in all that you do.
- You get on very well with all adults who work in the school.
- In lessons, teachers and other adults give you excellent help and support.
- The curriculum and other activities provide lots of exciting things for you to do.
- All the staff care for you well and make sure you are safe.
- The school works really well with lots of other people, including your parents and carers, to support you.
- The headteacher and the leadership team have plans to make things even better for you.

We think the school could be even better and help improve your learning even more. Therefore, we have asked the headteacher to make sure those of you who cannot attend school for medical reasons do not fall behind in your work. We have also asked the governors to work even harder to support the school.

You can help too by continuing to work well. I would like to wish all of you good luck for your future.

Yours sincerely

James Bowden Lead inspector

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