

# Oakwood School

Druids Walk, Walsall, WS9 9JS

**Inspection dates** 18–19 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Senior leaders and governors have sustained outstanding teaching and achievement so that pupils receive an excellent education.
- The school has a vibrant, positive ethos, which encourages pupils' confidence very well and helps them to achieve outstandingly well.
- An increasing number of pupils who enter the school have more complex learning needs, but nevertheless pupils typically make outstanding progress from exceptionally low starting points.
- The leadership and management of the school at all levels are outstanding. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the many strengths of the school but are not complacent. They are constantly striving to further improve the school for the benefit of pupils.
- The school has the confidence of parents and carers, staff and the local authority.
- Teaching is outstanding; the use of a wide variety of creative techniques and resources gets the best out of pupils. Best practice is well established in school.
- Sparkling displays of pupils' work throughout the school celebrate pupils' achievements and reflect the high expectations that permeate the school.
- Pupils behave extremely well; they enjoy learning and are keen to participate in activities which are fun, stimulating and improve their confidence in their personal, social and communication skills exceptionally well.
- The school ensures that pupils are safe and this enables them to develop well as self-confident learners. Pupils feel safe and the bond between staff and pupils is excellent.
- Pupils enjoy being part of the school council and they have raised funds for local and national charities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Community experiences, such as visiting local artists and musicians, enrich pupils' education and expose them to wider cultural influences.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons, all of which were joint observations with different members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were 13 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to analyse.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s information on pupils’ progress, its self-evaluation, its development plans, and information relating to the safeguarding of pupils and from staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Oakwood School educates pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- An increasing proportion of pupils have more complex learning needs, such as those with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and just under a third are from a mix of other ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium which is additional funding allocated by the government for certain groups of pupils, in this case, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are looked after by the local authority, is well above average.

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

- Ensure the pace of learning is more rapid in some lessons, so that even more teaching is outstanding.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Nearly all pupils make excellent progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enter the school operating at very early developmental levels. However, over time they progress exceptionally well and make outstanding gains in becoming more vocal and aware of their surroundings, and interacting with other people. They are prepared for the Reception class well, where they continue their excellent progress.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn how to operate switches that control a piece of equipment and those with visual impairments track light sources and chuckle when a story is read to them using sensory equipment such as objects to feel and explore.
- Pupils with autism develop their social and communication skills well. They learn how to interact with each other positively and become more tolerant of change, and learn to use language more purposefully.
- In literacy, more-able pupils read simple texts confidently and sound out simple words. Less-able pupils learn to read with the aid of symbols and pictures. In numeracy, pupils recognise numbers and count up to 10. More-able pupils group items according to similar attributes and recognise and use money.
- Pupils gain confidence through encouragement to try new tasks. For example, in a sensory lesson a pupil was encouraged to point to parts of her body for the first time on request. The strongly reassuring and supportive approach promotes pupils' positive attitudes to learning in lessons, as well as creating enjoyable learning experiences.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to support pupils' learning. This allows very effective learning in small groups, so that work can be closely matched to the needs of individual pupils and speed up their progress.
- Assessment information is carefully checked to ensure that all individual pupils are making the progress expected of them through effective target setting. Any reasons for underperformance are quickly investigated and addressed. All pupils, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, special educational needs, disabilities or gender, achieve equally well.
- The use of learning journeys to record small steps of progress is excellent. They provide a good overview of important steps of learning, which are valued by parents and carers.
- Pupils who receive additional funding through the pupil premium grant make excellent progress similar to their peers', including those eligible for free school meals. It has enabled some pupils to improve their communication and understanding through the use of 'on-body' signing. For others it has enabled them to participate and enjoy visits and outdoor education experiences to increase and widen their experiences. The attainment of these pupils in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 varies widely, in line with their peers, because of the wide variation in their starting points.
- Primary school sports funding has increased the range of physical activities that pupils experience, such as swimming, participating in carpet bowls and Boccia events, to promote their enjoyment and well-being.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding. Pupils make outstanding gains in their communication and personal and social skills because learning is lively and exciting. There are numerous strengths to teaching and there is much excellent practice across the school.
- Classrooms are vibrant and inviting and set high expectations and pride in displaying pupils'

work. Teaching boosts pupils' positive attitudes and as a result they are keen learners.

- High expectations are established early on in children's school careers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and these are consolidated throughout the school. Children respond well to these expectations. They quickly learn routines, start to develop their language and explore the world around them with eagerness and purpose.
- Pupils learn through a wide variety of activities. For example, in an English lesson pupils learned the sound of the letter 'I' through the use of puppets, drawing the letter on the interactive whiteboard and the use of musical instruments to encourage their vocalisation. Activities challenge pupils very well, including the most able.
- Signs and symbols are used very effectively to aid pupils' understanding and to help them to express themselves. Pupils become adept at using symbols to indicate a preference or to give an answer in response to a question.
- Teachers and support staff have excellent knowledge of special educational needs and how they affect pupils' learning. The school has substantial expertise in addressing visual impairments and managing pupils' behaviour very well. The physical management of pupils, so that they can be placed in the most appropriate position to enable them to get the most out of lessons, is excellent.
- Technology is routinely used both to make teaching stimulating and pupils' learning interesting. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to use the interactive whiteboard or tablet technology to reinforce their learning.
- Resources are used very effectively and there is a very wide range, including hi-tech equipment such as interactive software which reacts to pupils' responses, and simpler resources such as fairy lights used in a darkened room to encourage pupils to focus on a light source.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are superb and staff know pupils very well, so that, for example, they recognise the warning signs of an impending seizure that some pupils experience.
- On occasions, in some activities, some pupils wait too long for their turn and they start to lose focus, which limits their learning.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Staff are very skilled in managing pupils' behaviour. This contributes significantly to the high standards achieved and enables individuals to make substantial improvements to their behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy learning, as activities and experiences provided are highly appropriate for their level of understanding and development and are delivered imaginatively. The high level of enjoyment contributes to the outstanding progress that pupils make.
- They display extremely positive attitudes to learning and their enjoyment of learning is evident. Pupils concentrate well and persevere with tasks. For example, disabled pupils improve their mobility through practice and determination.
- Pupils are appropriately involved in the school council. It is an active body and makes suggestions for improvements and activities to support charitable causes.
- The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils enjoy trips to places of interest in the locality and visitors from different cultures and backgrounds regularly visit the school, which contributes a richness of diversity to pupils' experiences.
- Pupils' attendance at the school is good. Only ill health prevents pupils' attendance from being better.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is outstanding. Lunchtimes are important occasions where pupils develop and practise their social skills, such as learning to become more independent in feeding themselves.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school environment is a

safe place and thorough risk assessments are used routinely to ensure pupils are safe in all activities undertaken, including those off site. Procedures are firmly established to ensure internet safety. Pupils feel safe and are relaxed and confident throughout the school day.

- There is an absence of discrimination and bullying does not take place at school. Pupils are friendly and enjoy showing visitors what they have achieved. The school is a happy place to be. There are no exclusions.
- Parents and carers are extremely positive about behaviour and safety in the school, and staff agree.

## **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- Leadership and management at all levels, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, is outstanding.
- The headteacher, in conjunction with senior leaders and the supportive governing body, has firmly established an outstanding vibrant culture within the school, which encourages high expectations of staff and pupils. Pupils respond well to this positive environment and make impressive progress.
- Teaching and support staff are well trained to ensure pupils are safe and secure. Staff undertake ample training to update their knowledge and skills, for example in signing, using technology and keeping their subject knowledge current. This in turn has an impact upon classroom practice to bring in new ideas and further improvements. There is a close link between teachers' salary progression and the quality of their teaching.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and motivated to embrace the open culture of school and are keen to implement new ideas to meet the changing complex learning needs of pupils. For example, ways of working more intensively with those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, to encourage early communication responses, have been adopted. This is one example of the school's very strong commitment to, and effectiveness in, promoting equality of opportunity.
- The range of subjects and experiences that pupils receive is outstanding. There is a strong emphasis on making learning as imaginative as possible and this makes it enjoyable for pupils. For example, a circus themed week was organised and this was used to deliver aspects of learning in a novel and enjoyable way. Pupils are prepared well for secondary school transition as they near the end of Key Stage 2.
- Additional sources of funding, such as the pupil premium grant and the primary school sports funding, have been used well to help pupils keep pace with their peers and introduce a greater range of physical activities to promote pupils' healthier and active lifestyles.
- The school shares its best practice with other schools. For example, advice on how to manage behaviour, early years provision and making schools more autism and communication friendly has been made available to other schools, to help them improve their own provision.
- The local authority provides minimal support and recognises that high-quality practice is well established and secure in the school.

### ■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have a very constructive relationship with the school. They know the school well through regular visits and reports. All governors have clear areas of responsibility and often these are the focus of their visits. They know the strengths of the school and that teaching and pupils' achievements are outstanding. They are well informed about performance management and about procedures for tackling underperformance. They have ensured a close link between teachers' salary progression and the high-quality teaching. They have a good understanding of assessment information to enable them to ask questions and check pupils' progress. They know how the pupil premium funding has been used and the impact it has had on pupils who have benefited from it. The school budget is managed well. Governors have

received good levels of training to help them fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including ensuring that all requirements regarding safeguarding are fully met.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104275
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	431522

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	62
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Perkes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kay Mills
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 June 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 452040
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