



# Oakwood School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104275  
**LEA** Walsall  
**Inspection number** 286896  
**Inspection dates** 27 June 2006 to 28 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Charles Hackett AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Druids Walk
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Walsall Wood
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 14		Walsall, West Midlands WS9 9JS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 452040
<b>Number on roll</b>	61	<b>Fax number</b>	01543 453982
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr B Perkes
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 July 2002	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs K Mills

<b>Age group</b> 2 to 14	<b>Inspection dates</b> 27 June 2006 - 28 June 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 286896
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Oakwood School provides education for pupils with complex learning difficulties such as profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) or challenging behaviour. Because of these difficulties and disabilities pupils' levels of attainment when they enter the school are well below national standards. Of the present population, about 65% do not have verbal skills and about 70% are boys.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

Oakwood is an outstanding school. All pupils make good progress and the school provides effective care and support. Pupils' outstanding achievements and the excellent progress in their personal development begin in the Foundation Stage and ensure that they leave the school very well prepared for secondary school and their future lives. Their communication skills are well supported through signing or speaking, so that pupils are able to make their needs known to staff. Teaching and learning and the quality of the curriculum and other activities are outstanding and attendance is well above average.

The school, through its rigorous and accurate self-evaluation processes, knows itself very well. The leadership and management of the headteacher is outstanding. Through her skilful leadership and management and with the support of her senior colleagues she has pulled together a very strong staff team who all show the same level of high commitment to support and guide each individual child. Links with outside agencies are good, they carefully address the needs of each child and have created a team that puts the needs of the pupil first. Governors, especially the chair, provide very positive and active support. The school has improved even further from its last inspection, when it was judged to be very effective, and offers excellent value for money. It also has the capacity to improve even further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

There are no significant areas for improvement in this outstanding school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' achievements are outstanding. The school has detailed records of these achievements, including an extensive range of photographic evidence, and is able to show that all pupils, irrespective of their particular special needs, are making at least good progress. For many this is shown by the very small steps forward they make in their awareness of others and in sharing and focusing on the adults and activities in class. For those pupils with communication skills their vocabulary and participation in activities are increasing and many are able to join in the many singing activities in lessons. For those without verbal communication skills there is excellent progress in their use of signing and how they respond to the prompts of staff. Pupils' excellent progress is also clearly demonstrated by achieving the challenging targets within their individual education plans. Children in the Foundation Stage show very good progress, especially in responding to music and exploring the shapes and texture of different objects and fabrics.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development because of the very strong emphasis that is placed on this aspect within the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being in school, their smiling faces when they arrive and the way in which they happily enter the classrooms and engage in activities provide good evidence of this. 'Yes I do' was the rapid and determined response of a verbal secondary pupil when asked if he liked school. At lunch and break times pupils happily and safely engage in games with their friends and enjoy using the many cycles and other play equipment available.

Pupils' attendance is well above average and the attendance targets set by the school each year have been met. Pupils are able to celebrate their achievements in lessons and often spontaneously clap each other when one of them is being successful. Pupils become more independent as a result of the emphasis on them doing as much as they can for themselves. They take on responsibilities within the school community such as acting as monitors at lunchtime and engaging in projects such as a recent litter picking activity. Their views are sought in innovative ways. A recent 'pupil review week' gave all pupils the chance to choose the activities they enjoy in school.

The school's strong emphasis on including all pupils, no matter how complex their needs, and the many opportunities to mix with pupils from mainstream schools benefit their personal development greatly. Their economic well-being is well supported through topics such as one within the PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) programme about understanding money and its use, and the many visits they have out of school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning throughout the school are outstanding. Each classroom is a very positive learning environment where bright colourful displays combine with the excellent relationships between staff and pupils to make learning fun and interesting for all. The planning of lessons is of exceptional quality and includes considerable detail to ensure that the different needs of each pupil are met. Good adaptations have been made to national teaching strategies for literacy and numeracy and in all lessons there is a strong emphasis on extending pupils' communication skills. Typically in lessons music and singing are key features that very effectively gain the attention and interest of pupils. Much work has also been done to ensure that all pupils can access learning through a range of different strategies, including the very good use of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils with specific needs are supported through specialised teaching techniques, such as TEACCH (Teaching and Education of Autistic and Related Communication) being used for ASD pupils.

Teachers work very effectively with their support colleagues and the professionals in other services, such as speech therapy and physiotherapy, which ensures pupils' learning and care programmes are fully integrated.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum offered to pupils is excellent. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship are given a high priority and integrated into the teaching of all subjects with the aim of helping to give pupils as much as possible the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to lead confident and healthy lives. The emphasis placed on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, particularly their communication skills, is another key feature in the curriculum as a whole. Pupils, though, still experience all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Termly topics incorporate all subjects and ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their particular special needs, have equal opportunities to learn. The topics, such as the one for this term of 'let's go outside', are carefully planned and work links closely to the targets in pupils' individual education plans. A particularly strong element of the curriculum is the many opportunities pupils have to mix with pupils in mainstream schools. These include very innovative projects such as 'immersion' days, where pupils from mainstream school come in to Oakwood and work alongside pupils throughout the school. An excellent range of visits and projects develops the curriculum further, as do the therapies, such as aromatherapy, that pupils are able to engage in.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of care, support and guidance provided for pupils is outstanding. Parents and carers know their children are well cared for, as shown by the very positive response by parents to the questionnaire. Very careful attention is given to ensuring that pupils are safe and comfortable in school. Staff know pupils so well that any little sign of discomfort is noted and action taken. Child protection procedures are clear and understood by the fully trained staff team. The support and care for pupils' different special needs are very impressive and ensure all are fully integrated into the daily life of the school. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are supported extremely well to allow them to work alongside their peers as much as possible and ASD pupils are supported to mix and react appropriately to the real world as well as following specific programmes. Pupils' academic progress is monitored very closely and often, such as in the Foundation Stage class, regular written notes are made on pupils' responses to help plan future work. 'Annotation sheets' and 'Records of assessments' show photographs of pupils engaged in activities and record the level of support they have been given to complete the tasks set. For older pupils, individual 'intensive support programmes' (ISPs) involve pupils in selecting a specific target and, with staff support, recording their progress. These are particularly effective in helping pupils recognise for themselves how well they are doing.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The leadership and management are outstanding. 'The head is excellent in stretching those around her to do their best' commented the chair of governors, and together with her senior colleagues she has created a very effective staff team all determined to ensure that pupils receive the best quality of education and all can achieve to their maximum. The constant desire to improve has meant the school has moved even further forward from its last inspection, when it was described as highly effective. The school improvement plan is evidence that the school is excellent at evaluating the work that it is doing and finding ways in which to improve pupils' performance and the facilities within the school. The views of parents are carefully considered as part of this process. Teaching and learning are monitored very carefully and the policy of establishing a clear focus for observing lessons has meant that teaching is of a similar high standard throughout the school.

Governors have played an important role in supporting the school and the chair and another governor are frequent visitors. The involvement of other governors has increased recently; however, the formal recording of their involvement is limited. The school provides excellent value for money and has the capacity to improve it even further.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Children,

Thank you for being so helpful when I visited your school. I think your school is great and helping you all to learn a lot. All your staff work very hard at teaching and caring for you. You all work well in lessons and look after each other very well. I will remember your happy school for a very long time.

Best wishes,

Charles Hackett (inspector)