

Oaktree School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102069
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	307891
Inspection dates	20–21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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
Number on roll	
School	87
6th form	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Amita Clements
Headteacher	Ms Diane Rochford (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Chase Side Southgate London N14 4HN
Telephone number	020 8440 3100
Fax number	020 8440 4891

Age group	7–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Oaktree is a special school catering for students with complex needs. All have statements covering a very wide and expanding range of disabilities. Students are drawn mainly from Enfield and come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, with the greatest majority of White British origin. A minority speak English as an additional language. The school has a sixth form with 29 students on roll. It has gained awards for Healthy Schools, Active Mark for Physical Education, and Outstanding Contribution to Sport for Disabled People. An acting leadership structure has been in place since January 2005. A headteacher has been appointed to take up post in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Oaktree is a good school with some outstanding features. It is extremely effective in enabling students to develop their personal skills. Comments such as, 'I would recommend Oaktree to anyone' and 'My child loves going to school' show that parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's provision. The school's own self-evaluation is accurate, and recognises that noticeable improvements have taken place since the time of the last inspection.

All students, regardless of their needs, background or ability, achieve well. Although standards are well below the national average, students attain well in relation to their individual education plan targets. The vast majority attain Entry Level and Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. This good achievement is based on good teaching and the highly effective way in which staff help and support students to develop their confidence and independence. Staff work very well as team. Their enthusiasm encourages students, many of whom who have experienced failure in their previous schools, to reach their targets. Occasionally, teachers do not make use of a sufficiently wide range of strategies to challenge every student fully. Excellent relationships are established between staff and students and these are used very effectively to improve students' attendance and behaviour. Staff manage students' behaviour in a positive way and, overall, behaviour is excellent. Attendance is much improved since the last inspection and is now good. Students make an outstanding contribution to both the school and wider community.

The curriculum is well matched to the needs and aspirations of students, with a good balance of academic, vocational and work-related courses that prepare them effectively for life after school. Outstanding enrichment activities make a very important contribution to developing students' motivation and aspirations. However, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is not fully exploited to enhance students' learning in other subjects. The school is actively addressing this issue as part of an innovative project concerned with creating 'a complete ICT-literate learning environment'. This also includes making better use of ICT to interpret the extensive range of information the school has about students' progress. The care, guidance and support provided by all staff are of an exceptionally high quality and ensure that students are challenged in a safe and secure environment to face the demands of the wider world.

The acting headteacher and leadership team lead by example and have the full confidence of students, staff, governors and parents. They have a very clear view of the school's strengths, and have highlighted the most important areas in need of improvement. Governors have developed their role well since the last inspection and act effectively as the school's critical friends. Very strong links have been established with other professionals and parents to ensure that students' needs are met. The school's track record shows that it has good capacity to improve in future.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Good teaching ensures that students in the sixth form make good progress and achieve well. Virtually all gain ASDAN as well as other nationally recognised awards. The curriculum is well balanced and particularly strong in promoting students' personal development. As in the main school, there are occasions where staff do not provide enough challenge in students' learning.

Leadership of the sixth form is good, and a well-focussed review of the provision, including refurbishment of the accommodation, is taking place to ensure it meets the increased complexity and diversity of students' needs. Excellent careers guidance is provided and virtually all students move on to further education, training or employment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers make use of a wide range of strategies to challenge every student fully.
- Improve the use of ICT to enhance students' learning and to make it easier to interpret information about students' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school stresses the importance of students taking responsibility and thinking for themselves. From first starting school, this has a very positive impact on their achievements. Throughout the school, students try hard and reach the challenging 'small step' targets that staff set for them. The strong focus the school places on communication ensures that all students achieve very well in this area and this especially benefits those students who speak English as an additional language. In literacy, numeracy and ICT students make good progress overall in developing the skills they will need in later life for their economic well-being. There are occasions where students are not fully challenged and can do better still.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Their behaviour is excellent and, for many, greatly improved since first joining Oaktree. The success of the school's behaviour policy is clearly shown by the fact that students make constant reference to the Golden Rules to guide their responses to situations that arise. Consequently, the final sanction of exclusion is rarely used. Students thoroughly enjoy school and their attendance is good. They can explain the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle in detail and they say that the healthy school meals are 'fantastic'. Students care for each other very well indeed and those of very diverse backgrounds work together extremely well to create a harmonious learning environment. Students are aware that their voice counts. The school council plays an active role in making decisions that affect everyone, for example in both planning and gaining funding for the newly established environmental area. Everyone gains clear appreciation of their responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to the school and to the wider community, for instance when working with others in sporting activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

All staff work well as a team, and teaching is good. They develop excellent relationships with their students and use these very effectively to develop students' self-esteem and improve their behaviour. Teachers plan lessons conscientiously and usually make good use of students' targets to show them how well they are doing and where they need to improve. Students appreciate the 'hands-on', practical approaches to learning that staff employ and they say 'learning is fun'. In the outstanding lessons, such as one seen in art and another in science, staff make use of an exceptionally wide range of strategies to ensure that students with a very wide diversity of needs are fully challenged in their learning. However, this practice is not fully consistent across the school and more can still be achieved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and much improved since the last inspection. It has been re-organised so that it is well matched to students' needs and aspirations. There is a very strong focus on personal development, which pervades all aspects of school life. The school has developed an extremely wide range of enrichment and out-of-school activities which some students refer to as 'cool'. They really appreciate the high focus given to outdoor environmental studies. Activities undertaken as part of the Extended School provision and, also the work of the Outreach Team, make an important contribution to ensuring students achieve success. There is systematic development of students' skills in communication, literacy, numeracy and ICT. However, opportunities to use ICT are not fully exploited in other subject areas.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Excellent care is provided and the arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and reviewed on a regular basis. The health and safety of students is paramount. Teaching and support staff are vigilant and conscientiously implement the school's procedures. A wide range of professionals give support and help guide students' personal and academic development. Every opportunity is taken to provide them with opportunities to reflect on and take responsibility for achieving improvement, for instance in their behaviour and attendance as well as in their work. The school's information about students' academic achievements is used very effectively to help both the students and their parents evaluate and celebrate the progress they make and indicate where improvement might take place. A video entitled 'Moving On' is a testament to how well students rose to the challenge of presenting their achievements to a conference of local schools. Careers guidance is highly effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The acting leadership of the school has ensured good improvements since the last inspection and is successful in ensuring that students of very different backgrounds and beliefs achieve well. They have developed good team work so that staff work together well with a clear belief that 'the students always come first' and that 'educating for life is our key focus'. All staff show a strong commitment to professional development and also future school improvement.

Governors challenge the school well and are effective in ensuring that the school provides good value for money. All leaders within the school have helped to establish excellent links with parents and other agencies that support the school's work. Rigorous monitoring is undertaken and it takes account of the views of all major stakeholders. As a result, the school is clear about its strengths and the areas that are most in need of improvement. Currently, the system used to record the extensive information about students' progress over time is difficult to interpret. As part of a priority development, the school has started to make better use of ICT to address this issue.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Oaktree School, London, N14 4HN

Thank for all the help you gave me when I inspected your school on 20 and 21 November 2007. The discussions I held with the school council were particularly helpful.

You told me that Oaktree is a good school and I agree with you. A particular strength is the wide range of activities you are offered, such as the clubs and visits out of school. Another is the way in which staff help and support you to manage and take responsibility for your own behaviour, which is now excellent. The school council has taken responsibility for planning and in gaining funding for projects in school, such as the environmental area. You all play an extremely important part in the local community, for example when you take part in sporting activities. You try hard and achieve well so that you are well prepared for life after you leave school. I agree with you that all staff are very approachable. I noticed that they spend a great deal of time helping you by talking things through if there is a problem.

The acting headteacher and all other staff ensure that the school is a safe and secure place in which you can develop your skills. All are keen to make Oaktree even better. At present they are working to ensure that all of you are fully challenged so that your achievements improve even further. I also want the staff to improve the use of ICT in all subjects to make your learning even better. The school has a good plan to use ICT to make it easier for you, your parents and the staff themselves to be able to check all the information they have about your progress. You can help Oaktree improve further by trying your hardest at all times.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector