

Oakwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104275
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	324008
Inspection date	23 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Pirt

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	51
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	B Perkes
Headteacher	Kay Mills
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Druids Walk Walsall Wood Walsall WS9 9JS
Telephone number	01543 452040
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Age group	2–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Oakwood School provides for pupils and students with severe learning difficulties and those with profound and multiple disabilities. An increasing number of the school's population have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) or complex medical issues in addition to their learning needs. There is an Early Years Foundation Stage organised into Nursery and Reception groups.

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. It is a friendly, orderly and yet exciting community in which pupils get great delight from the pleasure of learning. Excellent leadership and management ensure that all learners flourish. Outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage provision encourages children to make excellent progress in both their learning and their personal and social development. All parts of the accommodation are used to very best effect, from corridors that contain very high quality displays of pupils' multicultural artwork to the well-organised classrooms. Not surprisingly, parents and carers are virtually unanimous in their praise of what the school enables their children to achieve. Typical of their views are comments such as, 'Without their expertise, our son wouldn't be as developed as he is today,' and, 'I could not ask for more support, understanding and cooperation from a school.'

The pupils say that they love going to school and this is shown by the good attendance, only affected by absence required due to individual medical conditions. Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. They are enthusiastic, and their excellent behaviour and attitudes enable them to make the most of their time in school. Adults have very high expectations to which pupils respond exceptionally well, and so they learn at a very good rate. Excellent teaching and an extremely good curriculum accelerate pupils' learning and so their achievements are outstanding, although the severity of their learning needs means that standards are well below the national averages for all age groups.

This impressive rate at which pupils learn and develop as young people is created by the school's excellent level of care, guidance and support. At times, the information gained from the impressive recording and tracking of pupils' progress is not always used to full effect in setting targets in lessons. Relationships are outstanding throughout the school, which is a very safe and supportive community, and so pupils thrive. Much of the school's success in this respect is due to the excellent teamwork between staff and their colleagues from other agencies, such as a range of therapists and personal care staff. Very close liaison provides a coordinated and structured approach to working with the pupils and their families. Very strong links with other partners are also used to very good effect. Local mainstream and special schools are used to extend pupils' social and learning opportunities and to ease pupils' transition into their next stage of learning as much as possible.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and accurate in identifying the major priorities and in measuring the extent of progress towards achieving challenging targets. This contributes significantly to its success. Governors support the school leaders very well and are actively involved with the school's developments. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold the school to account, particularly in relation to effective use of its budget. Although they monitor the school's work to strengthen their overview, this is not always formalised. Despite its consistent success, the school remains ambitious and forward-looking and has an excellent capacity to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make outstanding progress in their learning, physical and personal development and get off to a flying start when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage. High quality facilities and resources support the full coverage of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and

enable pupils to achieve outstanding results. There was obvious delight as they anticipated their names and identified pictures using communication aids. Rigorous procedures to assess and monitor the children's work and their activities are very well matched to the small steps in learning children need from their very low starting points. The staff know the children very well and give a high level of individual attention leading to excellent relationships, ensuring learning remains fun. The promotion of children's welfare is outstanding and they feel safe and secure at all times, responding by behaving very well. There are very effective partnerships with parents that continue through the school. The children are very well cared for and consistently encouraged to understand the importance of keeping safe and healthy. The department is very well led and managed and the organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage caters very well for the children's needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Match teaching more closely to individual pupils' needs by using tracking information in teachers' planning to ensure that all children work on targets appropriate to them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

All pupils have very low starting points and their success must be measured in small steps. Pupil profiles, assessment and tracking records and analysis of individual education plan targets show that a significant majority of pupils make excellent progress and almost all pupils make at least good progress. Pupils' achievements are outstanding as they gain key literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills at a very rapid rate. They build on these skills very effectively by using them across all subjects of the curriculum. This helps to prepare them very well for moving on to secondary school. The school meets the learning needs of all of its pupils equally effectively. A high level of focus on alternative methods of communication helps considerably with this important aspect of pupils' development. The school's very effective analysis of each pupil's progress helps ensure that there is no underachievement by individuals or groups within the school. Pupils make great progress in acquiring the necessary independence and self-help skills. Those pupils who are part of the very well planned inclusion programme with mainstream schools also achieve very well as they practise their newly acquired skills working alongside pupils in these schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional and very effectively promoted throughout all the work of the school. The outstanding relationships pupils develop with staff help them to be happy and contented at school and confident as learners. Expectations for behaviour are very high so pupils behave outstandingly well throughout the school. Staff deal quickly, fairly and very effectively with any challenging behaviour. Despite the severity and complexity of pupils' learning difficulties, they have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong and what is acceptable. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent attitudes to their work and their good attendance. Many parents report that their children are happy at school and are thrilled at the progress their children are making in becoming as independent as is possible. Pupils learn the importance of leading healthy lifestyles by being guided in making suitable choices about food, drink and leisure activities. They take part, regularly, in a wide range of physical activities, many of which are led by specialist sports

coaches, and make very good use of the school's hydrotherapy pool. Pupils develop essential skills for living such as shopping, budgeting and personal independence which will stand them in very good stead for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers have a very good understanding of pupils' needs ensuring that they make excellent progress. Activities are linked well to pupils' abilities and so they are fully engaged in their learning. Speaking and listening skills are developed very well and are often supplemented by additional means such as symbols, objects of reference and communication devices, which are used very well. Teaching expertise is evident, supporting much outstanding learning through the active and creative planning of tasks. Teachers' very clear planning is communicated to teaching assistants, although not all planning focuses firmly on what the pupils are expected to learn based on what they have achieved previously. There is excellent teamwork between teachers and support staff so all know their roles and responsibilities during lessons. All staff have very trusting relationships with the pupils, encouraging and celebrating effort and achievement with lots of praise and rewards, therefore pupils try hard and really enjoy their learning. The assessment during lessons is usually at least good, recording what pupils have done against their targets, but occasionally opportunities to record pupils' responses are missed. Work with parents in supporting pupils' learning through their individual education plans and workshops is excellent. They comment that, 'Parents are encouraged to be a big part of the school.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The pupils receive an excellent range and quality of learning opportunities. These are provided through a very well planned and delivered formal curriculum, and enriched extremely well by a variety of other activities. Educational visits, such as links with Walsall Football Club and residential visits to Bryntisilio Outdoor Education Centre bring class-based learning to life and they are an integral part of all teachers' planning. The school makes very good use of the outstanding provision from the sports coaching scheme. The partnership classes in mainstream schools are a very powerful sign of the inclusive nature of Oakwood School. Regular visitors to the school include those from different beliefs, cultures and traditions and the many visits to places in the community, including participation in artistic events, provide opportunities for pupils to gain in confidence by demonstrating the social skills they learn in school. The visiting arts worker contributed to the excellent multicultural work on show in the school. The school's expertise in dealing with pupils with ASD is being increasingly recognised within the local authority and the region, providing effective help to staff dealing with pupils with ASD in mainstream schools. Computers and other additional communication aids support and extend pupils' learning opportunities very well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe and secure at school are rigorously applied and work very well, with all requirements for the safeguarding of pupils being met. Pupils feel

safe at school and see the staff as their friends. Staff are trained well and, collectively, their range of skills, expertise and knowledge cover the very wide range of pupils' learning needs. The working relationships with a range of other services, from within the local authority and from other agencies such as the Health Trust, are strong enough to provide outstanding support for pupils and their parents and carers. Transition links with the pupils' next school are very good and those who are supported in classes in mainstream schools gain great benefit in their learning and in the way they develop as young people. Statutory requirements relating to pupils' statements of special educational needs are fully met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a very clear vision for the future of the school and the drive and determination to fully achieve it. They have maintained the very high quality seen at the last inspection, meeting the challenge of the increased level of complex needs and the change in the age range and learning needs of pupils following local reorganisation. Statutory targets meet requirements and targets for raising individual achievement are challenging. Underpinning all of their actions is a commitment to very high levels of care and learning opportunities for all pupils, and this is shared and implemented in practice by all staff. Self-evaluation is recognised as an important tool in helping develop the school and its quality is outstanding. Leaders analyse assessment data to make sure that all groups of pupils, regardless of their needs or backgrounds, achieve equally well. Resources are used very efficiently to identify and then remove barriers to individual pupils' progress. This very effective practice within the school is one part of the school's overall excellent contribution to promoting community cohesion. Links with partner schools, multicultural experiences and links with a school in Turkey provide pupils with a much greater understanding of the world in which they live.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakwood School, Walsall, WS9 9JS

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school. You told us that your school is excellent and that you love going there. We can see why you think that and we agree with you. Oakwood is a very, very good school.

Lessons are really good because your teachers give you lots of interesting and fun things to do. You listen carefully and work very hard and most of you go to school as often as you can. Therefore, you learn a great deal and make lots of progress in your work. All of the staff take very good care of you and help you a great deal with your work. They also help you to grow up as young people so that you learn how to make the right choices. You know how to stay safe and how to live a healthy life. You also learn a lot about how to get along with other people.

The people who run your school are doing a really good job. They have lots of ideas about how they can make your school even better. We have given them one more thing to do.

- Use information they have about you to help them plan exactly what you need to learn next.

You can help them to make sure that Oakwood stays this good by continuing to work hard while you are there. Finally, thank you once again and I wish all of you the very best of luck in the future, especially if you are going to a new school in September.

Yours faithfully

Graham Pirt

Lead inspector