

Inspection of a school judged Outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Oaklands School

Montgomery Way, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 1NU

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 February 2025

Outcome

Oaklands School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and thoroughly enjoy learning at Oaklands. The school's ethos, 'The best for all, the best from all' is deeply embedded. Staff nurture highly positive and caring relationships with pupils. Pupils rise to the school's exceptionally high expectations. Most pupils behave exceptionally well. In lessons, they listen attentively to others and try their best. Pupils flourish academically, socially and emotionally at this school.

Opportunities on offer ensure that pupils have a wealth of experiences that enable them to improve their independence and resilience. They relish taking part in clubs such as sports, choir, art and dance. The school organises a range of trips that develop pupils' cultural awareness, such as to theatres and museums. Visits to outdoor residential centres develop pupils' confidence and teamwork exceptionally well.

Pupils are incredibly well supported to prepare for their future. Older pupils are offered a wide array of work experience placements to participate in. For example, pupils practise their communication and social skills while making and selling food in a local café. Pupils' views are well considered. They take great pride in raising funds for charities and taking on responsibilities within the school. For example, some pupils actively participate in recycling, while others take charge in overseeing the bowling area.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is highly ambitious for pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff identify any additional needs of pupils at the earliest opportunity. The school has designed a vibrant and varied curriculum to meet pupils' needs. All pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects. Older pupils follow a suite of GCSE, functional skills and/or other vocational qualifications. Subject curriculums

are carefully adapted to ensure that pupils learn detailed knowledge in a logical order. Pupils are supported very well to overcome any barriers to learning.

Staff know pupils very well. They take account of both their learning and emotional needs when designing learning activities. Staff use their strong, specialist subject knowledge to present and explain new content clearly. This helps pupils to build their understanding. All pupils have access to a variety of resources and practical equipment that support their learning. Staff skilfully check pupils' knowledge and address any errors or misconceptions that they may have. Pupils make substantial gains in their knowledge across the curriculum.

Reading is a high priority from the moment pupils begin their journey at this school. Pupils benefit from tailored, daily phonics sessions delivered by skilled staff. This develops pupils' understanding of phonics well. All pupils across the school have regular opportunities to practise their reading. Pupils are encouraged to read a wide range of genres of books. Over time, pupils become increasingly confident and fluent readers. Staff also skilfully develop pupils' language, communication skills and vocabulary across all subjects.

Pupils benefit greatly from well-established routines and high expectations. They receive exceptional support to develop, improve and manage their emotions in socially appropriate ways. Pupils are kind and polite to each other and to staff. They show highly positive attitudes to their learning. The school checks pupils' attendance rigorously. It employs highly effective strategies to make sure that pupils attend school regularly. Most pupils have excellent attendance.

The personal development programme is a golden thread running through all aspects of school life. The school places a very high priority on pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils feel well cared for and valued by the school. They have numerous opportunities to shine. Examples include whole-school drama productions and local sports competitions. Pupils thoroughly enjoy taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. This builds their character and resilience. Pupils learn about the importance of respecting people from different religions and cultures. Careers guidance and advice is of a high-quality. Almost all pupils successfully move on to further education, employment or training when they leave the school.

All staff enjoy working at the school. The school is very considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff are highly appreciative of the opportunities they receive for professional development. The governing body is extremely effective. It fulfils its statutory duties efficiently. Governors use their extensive expertise to both support and challenge the school. This has enabled the school to continue to go from strength to strength.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in May 2015.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	111504
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10348082
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Williamson
Headteacher	Neil Oxley
Website	www.oaklandsschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there have been some changes in leadership and staffing. This includes the appointment of two deputy headteachers and one assistant headteacher from within the school. In addition, there have been some changes in the membership of the governing body, including a new chair of governors.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Many have additional and sometimes complex needs, including speech, language and communication difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and an independent school improvement advisor.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. Inspectors took account of the views expressed by pupils in Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and considered the opinions expressed through the Ofsted staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents and carers through Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Farrent

Ofsted Inspector

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