

Oak Lodge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101394
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	354990
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Stuart 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Robin Vicary
Headteacher	Mrs Lynda Walker
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2007
School address	Heath View Off East End Road London N2 0QY
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. All 18 class teachers and all subject coordinators were observed and 25 lessons were visited. The inspectors held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner, staff and groups of students. The inspectors looked at the improvement plan, minutes of senior management and governing body meetings, a range of other documentation, planning and assessments of students' progress as well as questionnaires returned by 99 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The management structures and strategies at all levels to determine that they are sufficiently effective to maintain the quality seen at the last inspection, especially in the sixth form.
- The systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning to ensure that all students make the progress of which they are capable.
- To ensure that the curriculum provides the necessary balance between meeting students' needs and their entitlement to an appropriate mix of academic, vocational and work-related provision.
- To check that the target-setting and tracking systems are rigorous and robust.
- The outcomes for students in relation to their personal development to determine these are sufficiently focused given their changing needs.

Information about the school

Oak Lodge is a larger than average co-educational special school for students who have a wide range of learning needs and disabilities. All have a statement of special educational needs, about half of which refer to autistic spectrum conditions (ASC). Students are taught in age-based key stage departments within which there are discrete ASC classes. The majority of students are from the Barnet area with a few from nearby local authorities. About one third of students speak English as an additional language but only a very small minority are at the early stages of learning English. The ethnic background of students reflects the diversity within Barnet. In Oak Lodge just under half are of White British origin with significant Asian and Black African minorities. About one third of students are girls. Exclusions are low and there are only a very small number of looked after students. The school was awarded specialist status for Cognition and Learning in September 2007, which was reaccredited in September 2010. It holds the Healthy Schools Status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Oak Lodge is an outstanding school. The care, guidance and support which all staff provide are exemplary, ensuring that students gain excellent personal, social and learning skills. All students make outstanding progress in their academic learning regardless of ethnicity, gender or their special educational needs. This is based on extremely high-quality teaching and learning. There are rigorous and robust systems in place to set challenging targets and monitor students' progress. These are used extremely well by teachers in their planning. The school is beginning to use its data to make comparisons with similar schools, but as yet this underplays how well it is doing.

Safeguarding procedures are exemplary and students indicate that they feel safe and secure in Oak Lodge. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and are a crucial factor in the school's success. Students thoroughly enjoy school and say that lessons are fun. Attendance is good, even though a number of students have medical needs which require regular treatment. Behaviour is exemplary and staff manage challenging occurrences extremely well so that the learning of others is not disrupted. The curriculum is very carefully tailored to match students' needs, and the school quickly adapts its provision to meet the changing needs of its population. Through the focused development of their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills (ICT) and their personal skills, students are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school makes every effort to involve parents and carers actively in their children's learning. Staff are aware that sometimes the distance between home and school makes immediate communication a challenge, particularly in helping their children at home. Plans to use the school website in a more interactive way to address the concerns of a small minority of parents and carers are at an advanced stage.

The headteacher provides the vision, commitment and determination to lead the school forward. She is well supported by the senior leadership team and they have established very effective teamwork between the teachers and support staff. Staff development is given the highest priority and the input of staff is highly valued and acted upon so that all strive to improve the school even further. The school uses its specialist status very effectively so that partnerships with others are used extremely well to promote the learning and well-being of its own students and those in other local schools and colleges. The sixth form has developed extremely well since the last inspection and is now a strength of the provision. The governing body provides excellent challenge to the school and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. The commitment of all staff and governors to getting the best for students ensures that the school is extremely well placed to maintain its current strengths and improve in future.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use its data about pupils' progress to celebrate their achievements more effectively.
- Implement the planned changes to the website so that all parents and carers feel fully involved in their children's education.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Across the school, all students, regardless of their needs, make excellent progress and enjoy learning. By the end of Year 11, students gain a wide range of qualifications including GCSEs, some at grade C and above, Entry Level and functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT. This is brought about by consistently very high quality teaching and learning across the school. Excellent learning was seen in all areas of the school and the consistent use of a wide range of communication techniques and behaviour management strategies enabled all students to make rapid progress in developing their communication skills. In an excellent literacy lesson with Year 8/9 autistic students, the teacher and the learning support assistants switched seamlessly between signing, pictorial and oral support to enable students to develop their learning.

All aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Through the Learners' Council, students are closely involved in helping to contribute towards the school community; a good example of this is the way in which older students 'buddy' younger ones. Students contribute extremely well to the wider world and all are very willing to express their views on a range of issues. They show excellent understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and say that they feel safe. They appreciate the importance of the wide opportunities for physical development and the benefits of the healthy lunches. This is reflected in the award of Healthy Schools Status. Students have the confidence and skills which prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

The school has particular strengths in teaching students on the autistic spectrum. Staff use a wide range of specialist techniques, including signing and pictorial systems, depending on pupils' needs. Teachers and support staff work together extremely well as a team and have a seamless approach to behaviour management. Planning is very effective, enabling support staff to make an important contribution to students' learning by clearly identifying the needs of individuals and how these will be met. In every lesson throughout the school, students work on individual timetables and there is a 'choice session' when students choose their own activities related to the topic being studied.

The curriculum is a strength of the school. Changes to accommodate the increasing number of students with more complex needs have been made very quickly and are monitored extremely effectively to ensure that the very wide range of needs are fully met. It provides a highly appropriate balance between students' needs and more practical and creative activities. An excellent example was a Year 7/8 art lesson where students with complex needs who were new to the school explored mark marking in a very structured way and reflected on their achievements. A wide range of therapies, particularly speech and language, occupational and physiotherapy, enhance the provision and ensure that the range and complexity of students' needs are met extremely well. Enrichment activities,

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such as the sports clubs, visits to the theatre, museums and a local farm, add to students' enjoyment of school and link their learning to real-life experiences.

Staff make sure that all students, including those who arrive at different times, settle quickly and happily into school life. Transition arrangements for those who move to other schools are excellent and contribute extremely well to reducing students' anxieties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads by example and uses her insight and depth of knowledge to give a clear sense of direction across the school. The governing body is highly active in promoting the school and its aims. Along with staff, it has worked tirelessly to ensure that the quality of provision is such that the school is recognised as a leader in the local and national community. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers fully appreciate how the school works with them to help them to understand and meet their children's needs. Through its work, the school fully meets its commitments to the promotion of equality of opportunity for pupils with additional needs, and tirelessly campaigns to eliminate discrimination. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and everyone is clear about what needs to be done for the school to improve further. Staff approach key developments very enthusiastically. Safeguarding and child protection are high on everyone's agenda and fully meet national requirements and guidelines. This was clearly demonstrated during the emergency fire evacuation during the inspection. The calm, quiet and purposeful way in which staff and students, especially those very new to the school, conducted themselves was impressive. Child protection and risk assessments are extremely rigorous and are reviewed regularly to ensure that the changing needs of students are fully met. There are excellent links at local, national and international level through which the school promotes community cohesion extremely effectively.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

In the past, at the end of Year 11, a significant number of students have left Oak Lodge. Now a majority stay on into the school sixth form and consequently the range of need has increased dramatically. The organisation mirrors that in the main school, but although there are discrete ASC groups, in general, there is more integrated provision. A majority of staff teach in the main school and the sixth form and so teaching and learning and care, support and guidance are of the same high quality. All aspects of the provision have improved significantly since the last inspection so that the changing needs of students are fully met ensuring that all are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives. The curriculum is very carefully adapted to the age and ability of students and provides excellent opportunities which enable them to extend the skills they bring with them into the sixth form. Consequently, all aspects of the development of their personal qualities and learning skills are exemplary. The new coordinator is extremely well supported by the senior leadership team and the provision has improved dramatically since the last inspection.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Views of parents and carers

Nearly two thirds of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. These show that the overwhelming majority are entirely satisfied with the school and the provision it makes for their children. Comments such as, 'Oak Lodge is more than just a school. It is a nurturing environment that incorporates and involves the whole family's well-being,' capture the school ethos. The views expressed confirmed the findings of the school's own surveys and the school has acted on these, and has plans in place to address the concerns of a very small minority about communications between home and school and ways in which to support their child's learning at home, by making better use of its website. The very positive views are fully supported by the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oak Lodge to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 164 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	64	34	34	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	58	59	38	38	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	51	52	39	39	6	6	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	36	51	52	6	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	47	47	48	48	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	40	40	40	13	13	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	39	53	54	4	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	39	39	48	48	6	6	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	43	47	47	7	7	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	38	49	49	4	4	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	43	47	47	7	7	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	53	54	38	38	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	54	37	37	4	4	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Oak Lodge School, East Finchley, N2 0QY

We really enjoyed coming to visit you. You helped us by letting us see your lessons and look at your work.

We found Oak Lodge to be a brilliant school.

You showed us how happy you are at school and your parents and carers told us how you look forward to coming every day. The school keeps you safe and there is always someone to help and look after you.

We could see that you enjoyed rebound therapy, rugby and football. You all behave extremely well.

To make things even better, we want staff to use the information about the progress you make to make sure that everyone knows that Oak Lodge is an excellent school. We have also asked them to use the school website to ensure that all your parents and carers know quickly how best to help you at home.

I hope all of you will help staff by doing your best all the time you are in school.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton

Lead inspector

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