

Oak Lodge School

Heath View, off East End Road, London, N2 0QY

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Excellent teamwork, extensive experience and deep understanding of individual needs ensure that all the students achieve extremely well and thrive at the school.
- Teaching is excellent because there is a very strong emphasis on continual professional development and research, which ensures that all staff are continually extending their understanding and skills.
- Students have very good opportunities to learn from a wide range of activities throughout the school, including a very high number of out-of-school visits.
- Lessons are planned very well to provide a wide variety of experiences which students enjoy and engage with exceptionally well.
- The sixth form is outstanding. It is highly engaging and relevant, helping students' achievement, and the development of skills for later life.
- Behaviour and safety are exceedingly good. Given their starting points, students develop very high levels of confidence, initiative and choice. Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, are extremely effective. They use their very detailed understanding of the school and high levels of skill extremely well to drive continuous improvement to the benefit of all.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons of 20 minutes or longer, taught by 18 teachers. They briefly visited a further 14 lessons. All of these observations were joint visits with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or a senior leader.
- Discussions were held with parents, carers, students, governors, an officer from the local authority, senior leaders and staff.
- The inspector received the views of parents and carers through 17 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, responses to a school questionnaire conducted in November 2013, written comments and informal discussions.
- The inspectors received the views of staff through 36 responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire and discussions, together with the views of students through formal and informal discussions in and out of lessons.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s information on students’ current and recent progress, students’ work, the school’s development plan, planning and monitoring documents and documents relating to safeguarding, as well as records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Buist

Additional Inspector

Ian Robert McAllister

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All the students have statements of special educational needs for moderate or severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders or complex needs. There are more boys than girls.
- At over 50%, the proportion of students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is higher than the national average. This is additional funding for specific groups of students, in this case, those who are looked after or who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- At over 60% the proportion of students from a very wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than in most other schools. About a third of these students speak English as an additional language, this proportion being higher than in most other schools.
- The school manages a franchised provision on a separate site for post-19 students on behalf of Barnet & Southgate College. This was not included in this inspection.
- The school has National Autistic Society (NAS) accreditation and is a National Support School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching even further by making sure students always get off to a brisk start in their tasks quickly and are given enough time to finish them in order to maximise learning in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Achievement of all groups is outstanding. Almost all students achieve in line with expectations and high proportions achieve even more. Extremely good use of very well focused assessments ensures that the specific difficulties of individual students are quickly identified and addressed. In this way, the needs of all students are paramount. There are no significant differences between the achievement of groups and the promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding.
- Students who learn more quickly, or who are relatively more able, make excellent progress because there is such a positive climate for learning and staff have high expectations and aspirations for all. Students are extremely positive, develop high self-esteem and are very keen to learn.
- Students with more profound difficulties achieve extremely well, because staff have such specialist knowledge and understanding of their needs and because activities are so suitable and accessible to them.
- Pupil premium funding is spent extremely effectively on reducing barriers to learning through pastoral support, counselling, subsidising trips and additional equipment for individual students. Its impact is extremely good and students known to be eligible for this funding achieve on par with others. At the end of Year 11 in 2013, the attainment of these students was very slightly above that of their peers.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used on resources to help students with English and mathematics. This successfully helps towards outstanding achievement, very positive attitudes and preparation for later life and learning.
- Students with different additional needs and starting points, including Down's syndrome and autistic spectrum disorders, all achieve extremely well because staff understand them so well and meet their varying needs excellently.
- Courses of study throughout the school, including the sixth form, are extremely suitable and help all the students to achieve exceedingly well. Students achieve a range of very appropriate accreditations, including some GCSEs in a range of subjects such as English, mathematics, science and art. When they leave, most students continue courses in other colleges.
- Students in the sixth form achieve excellently. They learn extremely well through a wide range of opportunities and responsibilities, such as writing for the sixth form newspaper, or serving on the sixth form council. These all help their academic progress and make for exceedingly good preparation for life beyond school.
- Students read frequently and widely. All students read or look at books, magazines or newspapers everyday on their own, with peers or adults. A group of sixth formers read and animatedly discussed the day's newspapers, while younger students enjoyed reading a range of books.
- Although achievement is outstanding overall, it is no better than good in a few lessons because students are sometimes slightly slow to settle to the well planned practical tasks.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The excellent quality of teaching means that students develop extremely positive attitudes to learning because activities are very interesting, practical and engaging. Some students reported enjoying English and mathematics, while another said, 'I like PE, art and design because I do things.' Teaching is occasionally good rather than outstanding because students do not get off to a quick enough start with their practical activities, which limits their ability to get the most out of the learning.
- There are excellent partnerships between teachers and teaching assistants. They are all exceptionally experienced and well trained, communicate extremely well and value the opinion,

training and experience of others.

- Individual needs are met particularly well through the very effective use of symbols and behaviour management as well as through the excellent use of detailed and highly individualised pupil learning plans.
- Teaching is relevant, successfully promoting students' engagement, learning, and skills for life. Teachers are outward looking and take every opportunity to link their teaching to real-life situations and life outside the school. In the school year 2012 to 2013 there were 370 different day outings and 10 different residential trips. These are all used extremely well to promote learning as well as spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Basic skills of communication, English and mathematics are very successfully incorporated into a wide range of lessons and activities. A group of Key Stage 4 students with severe learning difficulties were supported to use mathematics and money on a shopping trip, while more able sixth formers developed literacy and communication skills through a visit to Parliament to learn about the government and citizenship.
- Engagement with parents and carers is excellent. The website has improved greatly since the previous inspection and parents and carers are kept very well informed of everything that is going on. Parents and carers express appreciation of relevant homework, which encourages their involvement and is extremely well matched to students' needs. As one parent said, 'The school is extremely good at helping me to do additional work at home with my son. There is a real feeling of home and school working together.'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Given students' starting points and particular difficulties, they develop exceptionally good relationships, behaviour and attitudes. Parents and carers appreciate this and comment on how well their offspring develop and thrive.
- There are marked improvements in students who are volatile, or who find communicating and relating difficult. Any challenging or inappropriate behaviour is managed extremely well and disruptions around the school, including in lessons, are minimal.
- Students have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and life. They are happy, friendly and confident. Several greeted and shook hands with inspectors, introducing themselves appropriately and considerably enquiring whether they could help them in any way. One student voiced the opinion of many when he said, 'Every day is a good day.'
- Given their particular difficulties, students develop a very good understanding about bullying, including physical, verbal and cyber bullying. They know exactly what to do if anyone does anything they do not like, how to say 'stop' and how to tell someone if bullying does ever occur. They know they can talk to friends or staff and have every confidence that they will be supported whenever this is needed.
- Students of all ages take responsibility and help with jobs around the school. Older students eagerly and seriously take roles such as 'director of car washing' and 'director in chief' of the sixth form newspaper. Younger ones enjoy taking registers and notes to the school office. As one Key Stage 3 student said, 'taking registers back to the office is an important job which I like doing.'
- Students, parents, carers and staff are extremely positive about students' safety. Students say that this is because they know that staff or fellow students will help them whenever they need it. A parent voiced the opinions of others throughout the school in the comment, 'My son joined in the sixth form and has settled quickly. The school have supported his needs and made him feel safe and secure.'
- Students across the school mix and socialise well. Those who find this difficult are supported extremely well and improve markedly. This was highly evident in the dining hall where students enjoyed chatting together and socialising as they had their lunch. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and the school community is highly cohesive. This breaks down barriers and discrimination between students, who all show high levels of respect and courtesy to others.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Staff have an exceptionally good understanding of students' needs and their additional difficulties, because they are very experienced and have had a lot of very effective training. A number of staff have gained or are actively studying for Masters degrees related to special educational needs including Down's syndrome, severe and moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum conditions, which they use extremely well in order to train other staff. A very secure understanding underpins everything that is done and developed in the school.
- Most staff have worked at the school for a long time. Many have undertaken considerable professional development and developed their roles, for example ..., for example moving from roles as teaching assistants to becoming teachers, pastoral managers, counsellors, or senior leaders. Teamwork is exceedingly good. All members of the school community including governors, the kitchen manager, site manager and office staff play their part in making the school such a cohesive, effective and safe place for all. Everyone knows the students extremely well and has high expectations for them all. Together, they provide very extensive well-focused programmes for learning, address individual needs and reduce any discrimination.
- Teaching is managed and developed through a highly effective approach. Leaders have an excellent knowledge of the quality of teaching throughout the school and continually support and address this, to ensure that its outstanding quality is consistently maintained.
- Leaders work extremely effectively with others in nearby outstanding special schools. They successfully monitor, support and challenge each other to ensure that they maintain and develop outstanding provision for all.
- Parents and carers are very appreciative. One voiced the opinions of others, saying, 'Thank you for your hard work and effort, for making lessons interesting and him [the student] keen to learn.'
- The local authority maintains contact with the school through local network meetings. It knows how effective the school is and uses it as an example of excellent practice, as well as for training and consultancy for other schools and leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is outstanding. Governors are well trained. They have a very good understanding of the school, including how good the quality of teaching and rates of progress are compared with other schools. Systems for safeguarding are met and often go beyond statutory requirements. Governors ensure that finances are managed and used extremely effectively. They have a good knowledge of how pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is used and are diligent in looking at its impact on students' learning. They are highly involved in the performance management of the headteacher and have effective systems to ensure that the financial rewards of staff are robustly linked to Teachers' Standards and outcomes for students. They use their extensive experience and skills extremely well in school development, supporting and challenging leaders very effectively. Extensive reports and frequent visits to the school ensure that their awareness of any issues is up to date, so that they can help tackle any areas of difficulty as they arise.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101394
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	425634

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Lederman
Headteacher	Lynda Walker
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 November 2010
Telephone number	020 84446711
Fax number	020 84446468
Email address	info@oaklodge.barnet.sch.uk

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