

Oakwood School

Woodside Road, Bexleyheath, Kent, DA7 6LB

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Achievement requires improvement because too few students make good progress across all year groups and subjects
- Students do not achieve well enough, because, despite improvements, too many are absent from school and spend too little time in lessons.
- Although many aspects of teaching are good, its impact requires improvement because too few students are in lessons to benefit.
- Teaching is not consistently good in all year groups because some teachers do not set tasks which get the very best out of everybody.
- All the students have particularly challenging behaviour, including short aggressive outbursts, when they start the school. Although behaviour of most students improves and poor behaviour is managed well, damage does occur. Some parts of the school are in poor repair. This reduces students' motivation to respect, take pride in and care for their environment.
- Leaders, including governors, do not always act sufficiently quickly to address relative weaknesses. This is particularly true of attendance, which, although rising for many students, is still below average.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- They have not been afraid to take difficult decisions so that teaching, achievement and the attendance of most students are improving.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Systems for this are detailed and secure. The school is vigilant in working
- with parents and carers especially when students are absent, and in informing other agencies, including the youth offending team and police, where necessary.
- Broad opportunities for learning and supportive relationships have a positive impact on the learning and personal development of some students, especially those who attend well and stay in lessons. Students feel safe in lessons.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 25 lessons or part-lessons, including tutorials and reading sessions, were observed. All observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or senior teacher.
- With the headteacher, inspectors visited two Year 10 students at their placements, who were on work experience during the inspection.
- Discussions were held with parents, students, governors, one current and one previous representative from the local authority, the executive headteacher, senior leaders and staff.
- Inspectors received the views of parents through the 17 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View and informal discussion.
- The inspectors considered the views of staff, through the 20 responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire and discussions.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on students' current progress, students' work, checks on the quality of teaching and students' achievement, local authority reports, documents relating to safeguarding and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Hare

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All the students have a statement of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There has been a recent and sudden rise in the number of students with autistic spectrum conditions and complex emotional difficulties. The proportion of students with autistic spectrum conditions is now over 30 per cent.
- At over 60 per cent, the proportion of students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is much higher than that seen in most other schools. This is additional funding for specific groups of students, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school does not receive additional Year 7 catch up funding because the attainment of these students is too high.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is lower than in most other schools. A few have English as an additional language but none are at the early stages of this.
- There have been some particularly challenging personnel issues since the previous inspection. These have taken time to resolve and have been difficult for the whole school community. After several periods of absence, the previous headteacher resigned in Autumn 2012. The current headteacher was promoted from her previous position as deputy headteacher in February 2013. The current deputy headteacher was appointed from within the school in May 2013.
- There have been significant difficulties with the school building over the past six months. The school hall is currently out of action.
- In 2009, the school became part of New Horizons Federation with Westbrooke Primary School, Pathways referral service and other behavioural support services in the local authority.
- The school runs a breakfast club from 8.20 am each school day.
- A small number of students attend work-related courses at a local college of further education.
- The school has several national accreditations including Achievement for All at gold level and Healthy Schools at silver level.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and impact of teaching in lessons, by making sure that activities and approaches are suitably engaging and effective for all.
- Improve achievement by increasing overall attendance at school and in lessons so that it at least matches the national rate.
- Ensure that all students behave well in lessons and around the school and that all have positive attitudes to learning by:
 - improving the appearance and condition of the school, quickly repairing any damage which occurs and making sure that furniture and fittings are maintained well
 - providing activities in lessons which interest and enthuse all students.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that leaders address areas of weakness, especially attendance, quickly and effectively
 - governors have the confidence and skills to hold school leaders to account for the work of the school.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students do not make consistently good progress in all subjects.
- The percentage of students who make expected rates of progress, including those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, is lower than that seen in most other schools.
- Limited levels of achievement are largely because students do not attend school or lessons frequently enough. Lessons are not always sufficiently interesting, engaging or suitable for all.
- More able students do not achieve well enough, because they are not challenged effectively. Students do not make sufficiently quick progress in lessons because teachers do not move them on to more difficult work soon enough in lessons.
- The achievement of students who have additional needs such as autistic spectrum conditions or speech and language difficulties requires improvement. This is because teaching does not always help address or overcome their barriers, or engage them all sufficiently to stay in lessons.
- Students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding often achieve better than others. This is because funding is used well to provide well directed additional support. . Some of these students benefit particularly well from counselling and family support. Although numbers in any year group are too small to report on, positive outcomes demonstrate equality of opportunity in reducing barriers and discrimination for these students.
- Most students who join the school after Year 7 settle quickly and benefit well from positive aspects of the school. A few achieve more slowly, because their attendance remains low and they are not in school sufficiently frequently to benefit from all that the school offers.
- Achievement is improving. School information shows that an increasing proportion of students are progressing well. This is because activities are increasingly engaging and successfully capturing students' interests. For example, students achieve well in design and technology, which has recently been reintroduced to the timetable. Students who attend enjoy these lessons and are rightly proud of what they make. Students also benefit from gardening and won a local gold award for their produce and environmentalism.
- Achievement in writing has improved because students are now encouraged to write for themselves, rather than relying fully on a scribe. Some, especially those who attend well and stay in lessons, are developing confidence, willingness and skill in this.
- A very small number of students study courses at a local college of further education. The school keeps close checks on the progress of such students. Most are achieving well and are gaining the skills necessary to gain suitable employment or further training.
- Most students go on to college when they leave Year 11. The school works diligently with students and families to find the most suitable courses for each of them. A few students go on to study 'A' levels and a very few then go on to university.
- Student's best interests, progression and capability are taken into account in courses and examinations. Almost all students achieve vocational accreditations such as the Certificate in Personal Effectiveness and Wider Key Skills and a wide range of GCSEs including English and mathematics. Where appropriate and high levels of success are likely, a very few pupils take GCSE examinations early, particularly in practical subjects such as art. They then go on to pursue these subjects at higher levels under specialist teachers

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because although it is improving, it has not consistently been good across all subjects. There are examples of good practice but too few students are in lessons and ready to learn to enable them to make good progress.

- Teachers do not always provide suitable tasks which motivate or help all students, especially those with emotional difficulties and/or autistic spectrum conditions. For example, some Year 11 students had difficulties grasping the concept of percentages because the teacher did not adapt the teaching to meet the needs of the students. Students who attend school regularly enjoy and engage well in practical subjects such as science, art and design and technology. Three Year 11 students learned a lot about forensic science and different materials as they carefully studied the effects of different metals in the flames of Bunsen burners. They did this sensibly and safely, wearing goggles to protect their eyes.
- Teachers make clear to students what they expect them to learn and this helps many make good gains in acquiring new knowledge and skills. This was very evident in a Key Stage 4 English lesson, where students achieved well when studying a Shakespeare play. The teacher organised the lesson effectively, made the learning aims very clear and asked interesting, suitably provoking questions. All the students knew what they had to do and understood how they could succeed.
- Learning support assistants play an important part in students' learning. They provide additional support in lessons and sometimes take work out to quieter spots around the school with students who need this.
- Some of the most effective teaching which engages students well is in subjects such as physical education, gardening and design technology. Some teachers skilfully link reading, writing and mathematics into these subjects. Photographic records clearly show how Year 7 students researched different plants and carefully used mathematics and writing in their garden designs. This successfully helps their learning as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Absence from school and lessons is above average and this reduces achievement. Many students have high levels of anxiety and emotional issues which means that some spend too little time in lessons. Leaders are addressing this by appointing new staff to take work to students at home or to where they are in school but too many students miss learning which then reduces their overall achievement.
- Some students have brief outbursts of aggression, especially on furniture such as doors and cupboards when they first start at the school. Whilst this behaviour usually improves, is managed well and de-escalated quickly, damage does occur. Systems for 'restorative justice' are used effectively; for instance, students pay for, or repair, damage they have caused. However, some damage has not been rectified and motivation for students to care for their environment and take pride in their place of learning is reduced.
- New staff have been appointed to help students overcome their emotional difficulties or disabilities. A support worker for students with autistic spectrum conditions is due to take up this new role next term. Leaders have also reinstated counselling to help students with emotional difficulties. Student in receipt of this support find it helps their achievement and personal and social skills.
- The behaviour of some students, particularly those who attend school regularly, is very positive. For example, some students who found it difficult to remain calm and stay in lessons when they started at the school now show visitors around, serve on staff interview panels and support younger students. Leaders have appointed head students and prefects who eagerly take responsibility and keenly help others around the school.
- The behaviour of a few students improves so much that they successfully return to mainstream schools on a full- or part-time basis.
- Some Year 10 students were seen thriving on work experience in a supermarket and a garage during the inspection. They reported how much staff at the school had helped them and how pleased they were to have the opportunity to learn a trade and to work.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Systems for this are detailed and

secure. The school is vigilant in finding out where students are when they are absent, rapidly communicating with parents and carers and, where necessary, referring any concerns to the youth offending team, social workers or the police.

- Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber, racist, verbal and physical bullying. They know what to do if this occurs and know how, and to whom, to report incidents.
- Students say they feel safe because they know that staff are there to help them. Those who have been at previous schools say that staff at Oakwood help, value, and understand them. They appreciate this greatly.

Students are taught how to keep themselves safe. Through travel training, for example, they learn road safety and how to use public transport. A national scheme has recognised the school's highly positive work on this and awarded them accreditation at the gold level.

- The breakfast club provides food and a safe environment for the few students who use it.
- Staff are well trained in dealing with a range of social, emotional and behavioural issues. They respond well to students and de-escalate incidents quickly and calmly.
- Parents, carers and staff are also positive about students' safety and are confident that issues are dealt with well.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement as teaching and achievement are not yet good because of the poor behaviour and high rate of absence of some students.
- The school has gone through a number of changes and challenges since its previous inspection. Provision and staff morale reached a particularly low level.
- Leaders, including the relatively new headteacher and governors, are tackling the school's weaknesses with determination and tenacity. They have not been afraid to take the difficult decisions needed to improve behaviour, and attendance measures are now being put in place which are beginning to accelerate students' achievement and improve the quality of teaching.
- Leaders' views of the school are slightly over-positive because they have focused on improvements over the past year and the very positive impact they have on some students. This has meant that the drive for improvement, especially in attendance, has not been quite as rapid or made quite as much impact as it could have.
- Leaders have had a very close focus on improving teaching, and especially marking. Developments are positive and they have eradicated some inadequate teaching. However, developments have too little impact because absence remains high.
- Subject leaders are gradually becoming more effective and are beginning to have an impact on school improvements. They make frequent checks on their subjects, but have not yet ensured that improvements are made rapidly and consistently.
- Opportunities for learning are becoming broader and more relevant for all students. Leaders have introduced a wide range of trips, including one to the Tower of London and one for students' participation in the choir 'Voice in a million'. Although these are new, they are already helping students' enjoyment, as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority provides additional support for staff and students, through specialists in the federation. This provides a helpful network for staff training and collaboration. It also provides opportunities for students to attend other schools in the federation, temporarily or longer term, if they need this.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are helping to improve the school, even though the level and urgency of some aspects of their challenge are not as strong as they could be. This is because their understanding of teaching and students' achievement is over-positive. Although they visit the school regularly, they too have focused on improvements in the last year and the school's

positive impact on some students. They quickly address issues when they are raised, however, have tackled challenges which occurred in the school's recent past and appointed new leaders who are having a positive impact. They recognise the needs of new students and have attended conferences with staff, in order to consider and address the needs of those with autistic spectrum conditions. They give high priority to the safeguarding and welfare of students and carry out their statutory duties for these. Their stringent management of finances has been commended by the local authority. Systems to reward teachers and the headteacher for their work are in place and are closely linked with their impact on students. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and its positive impact on eligible students.

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	131115
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	431574

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Corrine Botten
Headteacher	Beverley Evans
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 February 2011
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