

Oakwood School

Woodside Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA7 6LB

Inspection dates	21–22 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, supported by her leadership team and the executive headteacher, has improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, consequently, outcomes for pupils since the last inspection.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the school's work and governors share an ambition to raise standards even further. They challenge leaders by asking probing questions to hold them firmly to account.
- Staff have a clear understanding of pupils' specific needs. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and plan well for the pupils they teach. Support staff are deployed carefully to effectively manage those pupils who show behaviours that are more challenging. As a result, pupils are interested in their learning and understand how to improve their work.
- Safeguarding is effective and procedures are comprehensive. The school works closely with other agencies to support pupils' good levels of personal development, behaviour and welfare. Pupils say they feel safe and staff deal with any issues of unkind behaviour swiftly.
- In 2015, almost half of all pupils at the end of key stage 4 successfully achieved five GCSE passes at grades A* to G in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are eligible for the pupil premium, make at least good progress from their different starting points.
- The curriculum is highly relevant to the needs of pupils. A broad range of subjects is offered and those pupils with speech, language and social communication needs and the most able pupils are challenged to succeed.
- The attendance of pupils has improved. Very many pupils make rapid improvements in their attendance from when they first join the school and sustain their attendance over time.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They understand how the school prepares them successfully for their future education, training or employment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all groups of pupils make rapid progress from their individual starting points. This is true of a few older pupils. Therefore, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is yet to ensure the highest outcomes for all pupils.
- Strategies to support a very small number of pupils who attend school less frequently are not always successful.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that all pupils make rapid and accelerated progress from when they join the school.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by ensuring strategies to improve the attendance of those few pupils who attend school less regularly are successful.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and governors have successfully addressed the areas for improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher is ably supported by her leadership team and the executive headteacher in ensuring that consistency and high expectations exist across the school. As a result, the standard of teaching and the outcomes for pupils have improved. Leaders are accurate in their assessment of what the school needs to do to improve further.
- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This involves regular visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Leaders provide strong support for any teachers where weakness is identified. All teachers receive detailed information about their performance to improve their practice. As a result, the standard of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection.
- The school makes excellent use of the pupil premium. It provides a range of help for pupils, including speech and language therapy, behaviour intervention, a daily breakfast club and enrichment activities. Leaders effectively evaluate the impact this has on the progress made by pupils eligible for the pupil premium. Gaps in performance between those pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their peers have closed since the last inspection.
- A high proportion of pupils in Year 7 receive support in literacy and numeracy through catch-up funding. The school ensures that this additional funding is targeted at appropriate activities to improve number, reading and writing skills for these pupils. As a result, those pupils who receive catch-up funding make similar good progress to that of their peers.
- Leaders ensure that teachers' performance management includes targets that focus on the outcomes of pupils and the development of professional skills. All teachers, including those who are newly qualified, and support staff access an effective range of training courses. Staff who completed the online questionnaire confirmed that they feel supported in developing their skills. This was a view shared by those staff who spoke with inspectors. Middle leaders are effective in leading their subject areas. They regularly observe learning in lessons and check the progress pupils make. Therefore, they have a good knowledge of the school's quality of teaching, learning and assessment and share good practice with federation colleagues.
- The curriculum is highly relevant to the pupils' needs. It appropriately challenges all groups of pupils, including the most able. The school has evaluated the subjects taught to pupils and extended the opportunities for them to study both academic and vocational skills. In key stage 4, all pupils can follow GCSE courses in as many as eight different subjects that include: English, mathematics, science, design subjects and a modern foreign language. This wide offer is broadened through pupils accessing enrichment activities such as gardening, team sports and learning to play musical instruments.
- Pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Pupils often debate topical issues in tutor sessions. For example, during the inspection pupils were able to reflect on life in modern Britain and fundamental British values through discussion on the European Union referendum in tutor time. A range of educational trips and visits take place frequently and extra-curricular sport and creative activities help pupils develop their self-confidence and social skills. Pupils also have the opportunity to access the London Fire Brigade LIFE project, which is intended to support the social and communication needs of more vulnerable young people. This programme is well linked to the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education, which includes pupils learning about issues such as substance misuse, healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- Leaders and managers have created a culture where the complex needs of pupils are effectively met. The newly developed reception area is welcoming and pupils' work is displayed in corridors to add colour and demonstrate an expectation for learning. Attendance information, support advice and pupil rewards are displayed which promote the care, safety and well-being of the school community and raise aspirations.
- Senior leaders check the progress of pupils regularly. The school's own assessment information identifies any variation in the progress different groups of pupils make. Therefore, leaders have an accurate understanding of those pupils making good or better progress. However, the system does not yet allow for the quick analysis of the smaller steps made by those pupils who join the school mid-way through the year. Leaders have rightly recognised this, and are due to launch a new system to record pupils' small progress steps.
- The local authority has provided effective external support since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have been supported in strengthening their own evaluations and plans aimed at improving the school. As a result, the school has improved its overall effectiveness.

■ The governance of the school

- Members of the governing body work closely with the executive headteacher of the federation and have been supported by a national leader of governance (NLG). Governors have undertaken an external review of their work and experience since the last inspection. As a result, they are clear in performing their statutory duties and secure in their understanding of the school's performance.
- Governors have completed training to help them monitor the school's work more closely and to hold leaders to account.
- The governing body has responded well to significant building resource requirements and financial challenges. Governors responsible for checking the spending of pupil premium and catch-up funding are informed very well. Furthermore, governors are appropriately involved in reviewing pay progression requests and leaders' performance management.
- Governors regularly visit the school and document their work carefully. This includes any actions during meetings and any questions raised. They use this information to provide informed challenge to leaders by asking probing questions. However, governors are less familiar on the strength of outcomes for pupils, despite leaders' detailed analysis.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The single central record and arrangements for checking the suitability of staff to work with children meet requirements. The headteacher, the leadership team and members of the governing body ensure that safeguarding procedures are a priority. Any behaviour incident is carefully recorded and swift action is taken to address concerns. Leaders work closely with parents and carers regarding safeguarding issues. The governor responsible for safeguarding frequently checks the procedures, policies and risk assessments for safeguarding.
- Staff are regularly trained in behaviour management and in a range of safeguarding aspects to ensure that they know how to recognise the potential signs of abuse and neglect. They have a good knowledge of the 'Prevent' and female genital mutilation duties.
- The school follows up the absence of any pupil meticulously. It works closely with the local authority and with external agencies, including the police, to safeguard pupils. As a result, the school ensures that the whereabouts of any absent pupil is quickly known. This includes confirming the destinations of those pupils who leave the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection. Leaders have ensured that teachers' assessment provide pupils with information on how to improve their work. Consequently, pupils make at least good progress in their learning over time.
- All teachers have high expectations. They plan lessons well and demonstrate secure subject knowledge in their teaching. This enables them to help pupils learn through interesting activities and appropriately targeted work to challenge pupils' understanding. For example, pupils regularly experience the chance to debate and question their own understanding in topical discussions with teachers.
- Where any pupil's progress varies because of their changed behaviour, teachers and support assistants quickly and effectively intervene. Any inappropriate or derogatory language used by pupils is quickly challenged so that expectations of pupils' learning remain high. Therefore, the needs of all groups of pupils are understood and successfully met, including for those pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Teachers regularly focus on the importance of literacy and numeracy skills in deepening pupils' knowledge. Pupils were observed in many lessons using their writing skills to describe their understanding of books read in class. They apply their numeracy skills to support their learning. For example, when developing graphing skills in science and making calculations in physical education and cooking. Pupils understand very well what is expected of them in all lessons. They told inspectors that they have to improve their work to get on in life. As a result, the vast majority of pupils show positive relationships with adults when in lessons and develop well their self-confidence.
- Pupils read often during the school day. The start of the afternoon session enables pupils to explore reading freely and share their knowledge with teachers. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 regularly read from books such as 'Lord of the flies' and study play script, including the work of Shakespeare. As a result, pupils are able to explore literacy characters and discuss their understanding of text.
- The most able pupils are frequently asked to debate their answers and are challenged well by teachers. For example, pupils in key stage 4 English were expected to convey to the teacher how different characters in

Shakespeare's 'The tempest' were of varying importance to the play. The most able are encouraged to extend their knowledge and understanding through creative writing and application of a greater range of skills. In mathematics, the most able pupils are quickly moved on to higher level assessments which develop their problem-solving skills, and in art the most able pupils use a range of artists' styles to stimulate their ideas when applying different techniques in their project work.

- Higher-level teaching assistants are deployed to good effect. They complement the work of teachers and work successfully as a team when leading support sessions. Teaching assistants quickly recognise any signs when inappropriate behaviour is likely to occur. As a result, pupils' attitudes are refocused on making the right choices when they take time out of lessons. In these cases, support staff follow well-rehearsed procedures so that pupils quickly calm and refocus on their own learning. However, a small number of pupils, particularly those with more diverse needs, require more intervention to focus their learning than their peers do.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep safe and recognise the important role that their teachers and support staff have in maintaining their positive behaviour. For example, pupils in key stage 4 told inspectors that, 'They are able to resolve issues through restorative justice' (mediation with each other) and that 'homophobic bullying is not an issue because all people are different'. Key stage 3 pupils were clear of the risks from the internet and knowledgeable about e-safety. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school, although some unkind behaviour does take place. Those who spoke with inspectors were clear that any bullying is swiftly dealt with. Inspectors confirmed that school records show that incidents of poor behaviour have decreased since the last inspection.
- The school provides a good range of support to meet the needs of more vulnerable pupils. Effective relationships are maintained between the school and wider professionals such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and speech and language therapists. Furthermore, the school has a strong emphasis on being a 'healthy school'. Pupils are well supported in their personal and emotional well-being. They understand how to develop healthy lifestyles and those with speech, language and social communication needs are helped to improve their self-awareness.
- The breakfast club provides a structured start to the day for pupils. Staff are carefully deployed to sit with pupils so they can check pupils' readiness to begin the day. Any issues are quickly resolved to ensure that pupils start their day focused on learning. Pupils told inspectors that, 'Breakfast club is really a good thing'. They appreciate the fact that breakfast is available for them.
- Pupils have a good understanding about why the school prepares them for the future. They reported to inspectors that their focus has changed to being successful. Pupils appreciate the wide choice of GCSE subjects they have and the vast majority of pupils are prepared well for their next stage in education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Fixed-term exclusions have significantly reduced over time. There have been no permanent exclusions this or last academic year. This is because of the improved behaviour support and consistent systems that have been introduced since the last inspection. Pupils are carefully supervised if they require time out of lessons so that any issues are de-escalated. Those who show behaviours that are more challenging are able to return to their learning in a timely manner. Staff who completed the online questionnaire feel that behaviour is managed consistently well. Inspectors observed staff effectively managing pupils' behaviour during the inspection.
- Since the last inspection, changes have been made to improve the school environment and respond to the voice of the school council. For example, new benches have been provided to enable pupils to sit and socialise outdoors. Therefore, pupils show a greater respect for the environment and typically conduct themselves calmly around the school. Those who spoke with inspectors shared a positive view about the work of leaders to improve the school so that it has a culture focused on learning. During the inspection, pupils were seen socialising well at break and lunch and moving to and from lessons without significant disruption. However, a very few pupils still require more time than their peers take to calm their behaviour, or need more support during their lessons.

- The attendance of pupils has improved. The vast majority of pupils recognise the importance of coming to school. Those who spoke with inspectors were very clear that attending school is the best way for them to be successful in their learning. As a result, a high proportion of pupils make rapid progress in improving their attendance from their previously low levels when they first join the school. However, a very small number of pupils fail to attend as regularly as their peers do. The strategies used to improve the attendance of these pupils are not as effective as for others. Leaders and staff rightly recognise that this is an area for the school to continue to work on. They share an ambition to improve attendance even further.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Since the last inspection, outcomes for pupils have improved. The executive headteacher and senior leaders have successfully reviewed the school's curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. All groups of pupils make at least good progress from their low starting points when they join the school. A very small number of pupils successfully reintegrate back into mainstream schools.
- Many pupils join the school with attainment lower than average because they have experienced gaps in their learning. In 2015, almost half of all pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieved at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to G in a range of subjects including: English, mathematics, science and religious education. Furthermore, some of the most able boys achieved the highest grades in English and mathematics.
- Leaders monitor the progress of pupils closely. They challenge teachers to ensure that pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. Additional help given to those pupils identified as falling behind ensures that they catch up their learning quickly. Pupils in key stage 3 develop well their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils in key stage 4 are challenged appropriately to write with analytical focus and explore the application of number, shape and problem solving. All pupils are provided with effective help to improve their reading. By the time they leave school, pupils read with confidence and fluency.
- Pupils who have speech, language and social communication needs are well supported by staff and professional therapists. This enables them to deepen their understanding and improve their spoken language and communication skills. As a result, they make similar good progress to their peers.
- The school's own information of pupils currently in school shows that pupils eligible for the pupil premium, White British pupils and those who speak English as an additional language make at least good progress across the school. Inspectors confirmed this through the work seen in pupils' books.
- The gaps in the performance between those pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their peers have continued to reduce over time. This is particularly true in English and mathematics. Furthermore, in science pupils eligible for the pupil premium outperform their peers across the school.
- The most able pupils are well challenged in their learning. The work seen in their books included extended writing and the use of wider mathematical skills in subjects beyond mathematics and English. For example, in history, science and art. Furthermore, the most able pupils performed musical riffs with confidence using percussion, and applied well their different art medium and precise cooking skills.
- Parents and other professionals who communicated with inspectors share the view that the school prepares pupils well for their next stage of education, training or employment. All pupils leaving the school are helped to confirm a college course through close work between the school, families and the local authority careers advice. This includes the most able pupils who are carefully tracked by the school to ensure that they successfully transfer to college.
- The school's own assessment information shows that three out of four current pupils are making at least the expected progress in English, and four out of five in mathematics and science. Furthermore, two out of three pupils are expected to achieve five GCSE passes at grades A* to G at the end of key stage 4. This good rate of progress is supported through the work and assessments seen by inspectors. However, although the work of pupils shows that all groups make at least good progress, not all pupils make rapid and accelerated progress from their low starting points. This is particularly true of a few of the older pupils across the school.

School details

Unique reference number	131115
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10008136

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

Type of school	Special
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	Mrs Corinne Botten
Headteacher	Mrs Beverley Evans Mrs Jo Southby (executive headteacher)
Telephone number	01322 553787
Website	http://www.oakwood.bexley.sch.uk/schools/oakwood
Email address	office@oakwood.bexley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils from across Bexley who are supported by a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan for their social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils have a wide range of attainment when they enter the school.
- In 2009, the school became part of the New Horizons Federation with Westbrooke School and Bexley Pupil Referral Service (Pathways Short Stay School). The executive headteacher is a national leader of education (NLE).
- There has been a rise in the number of pupils with autistic spectrum conditions and complex emotional difficulties. The proportion of pupils with autistic spectrum conditions is now over a third.
- A few pupils have moderate learning difficulties and others have speech, language and social communication needs.
- Most pupils are White British. A few are from African, Asian or Black Caribbean backgrounds and one in 10 pupils speak English as an additional language. There are far more boys than girls.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding which supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used to support pupils in school.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in key stages 3 and 4 to observe learning, many jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. They also attended tutor and afternoon reading sessions. Inspectors discussed learning in the lessons jointly visited with senior leaders and observed their feedback to staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with: the headteacher and executive headteacher; senior and middle leaders; a range of staff, including newly qualified teachers; and groups of pupils. Discussions took place with two parents, the chair and other members of the governing body. Inspectors also held discussions with two representatives from the local authority, therapists, welfare officers, and a member of staff from the London Fire Brigade LIFE project. They reviewed correspondence from other professionals, including a headteacher from a virtual school for looked after children and the school's own staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including the work of pupils, assessment information, the school's own self-evaluation, and records relating to the quality of teaching and anonymous records of the management of teachers' performance. They also reviewed records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, and checked the school's records relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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