



# Oakleigh School and The Acorn Early Years Centre

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 101396  
**Local Authority** Barnet  
**Inspection number** 286048  
**Inspection dates** 22–23 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Melvyn Blackband

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Oakleigh Road North
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Whetstone
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11		London N20 0DH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8368 5336
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	76	<b>Fax number</b>	020 8361 6922
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Gilbert Knight
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jenny Gridley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 January 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 2–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22–23 February 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 286048
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Oakleigh School and the Acorn Early Years Centre provides for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as those with autistic conditions and other severe and complex needs. The school and centre occupy the same building and the headteacher manages all of the provision. There is a large proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and an above average number of pupils who receive free school meals. The headteacher is also responsible for the management of the Barnet pre-school inclusion and teaching teams which are based at the school. This provision was not inspected.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school and early years centre which has many exemplary features and which has maintained and built on the high standards noted at the previous inspection. The school's leadership and staff continually strive to improve provision for all the learners. Pupils love coming to school and parents have the highest regard for the school, knowing their children will be safe, free from anxiety and are making excellent progress. One parent commented, 'I really couldn't be happier with a school'. The exemplary quality of the partnership with parents is a strength and one which the school has worked tirelessly to promote. Because of their learning difficulties the standards reached by pupils are well below average but all pupils achieve exceptionally well and make outstanding progress in their personal development.

Children in the Acorn Centre make an excellent start because of the extremely high quality of teaching and assessment. They are prepared very well for the transition to the next phase of their education and a large proportion of them move seamlessly into the main school provision. Pupils throughout the school are taught by committed and well trained staff who value and celebrate every child's achievements. While the school's tracking of pupils' progress is very thorough, it does not yet fully capture the small steps of progress made by the pupils. The school is aware of this and is well on the way to introducing a more detailed system.

The curriculum is outstanding because every activity is carefully selected to match the learning needs of individual children and every child is fully included in all activities. There are varied extra activities at lunchtime and after school which enhance pupils' communication and physical skills and which add fun to their learning. There are many strong and effective links with mainstream schools which support both the Oakleigh pupils and mainstream pupils with special educational needs.

The head teacher provides outstanding leadership. She is supported by a committed governing body and an enthusiastic leadership team. Together they have driven the continuous improvement since the last inspection. Of particular note is the positive 'can do' ethos expressed by all staff. Every element of provision is rigorously evaluated and improved as necessary and the school shows an outstanding capacity to maintain its stated quest for excellence.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a tracking system which captures each small step of progress made by the pupils.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

All the pupils make excellent progress. Although procedures for measuring and recording progress are being refined, teachers use the existing systems to plan challenging and realistic learning targets for each individual. Pupils with profound and

multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) make regular gains in their ability to communicate and indicate choices. Teachers and support staff are extremely alert to every small improvement and effectively consolidate the improvements to maximise the pupils' achievements. The achievement of pupils with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) is outstanding. The achievement of pupils in the Foundation Stage at the Acorn Centre is exceptional and gives the pupils a very good start to their education.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development of pupils is outstanding in both the school and the centre. Pupils behave extremely well and make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They develop an excellent sense of keeping safe and respecting themselves and others through the sensitive teaching of personal, health and social education (PHSE). Pupils choose healthy food options as part of the daily routine and know the importance of regular exercise.

Above all, pupils really enjoy school, because learning is fun and because they gain pleasure through their own achievements. Their attendance is excellent despite the continual illnesses and debilitating conditions which many suffer. The school monitors attendance very effectively and the pupils benefit greatly from the exemplary support given to parents when the children are ill or where there are family difficulties. Pupils develop their awareness of different people through the school's success in developing partnerships with other schools. They are as prepared as possible for the next stage in their education because of the significant gains they make in basic skills and because they learn wherever possible to make appropriate choices. Without exception, parents are full of praise for the school's work in promoting their children's development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding because teachers know their pupils so well and adapt their work to ensure each pupil makes the best possible progress. Teachers are skilled in selecting appropriate resources and providing imaginative activities to effectively teach pupils who have a range of complex learning needs. In one outstanding lesson the teacher conducted activities to help pupils learn numbers. In a darkened classroom she shone a torch on the large cut out numbers she had provided. This was accompanied by a specially recorded song and helped pupils with visual impairment to make exceptional progress. Teachers and support staff effectively use a range of techniques to support pupils with autism. Classroom staff throughout the school form very good teams. They work closely together, sharing their observations of pupils and their responsibilities within the classrooms. The pupils like and trust their teachers and they try hard to do their best. They work with concentration, enjoy their lessons and achieve success.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is exceptionally good because it is very well adapted to the needs of each pupil and so has an outstanding impact on their progress and personal development. The curriculum is rigorously monitored by subject leaders. The imaginative use of communication aids, visual symbols and signing, underpinned by a very good use of information and communications technology (ICT), enables all pupils to play a full part in lessons and to make excellent progress. At all stages, the learning of basic skills is developed very effectively through the varied and stimulating curriculum. There are a wide range of activities to take pupils out of the classroom, teaching them that new things can be learned in a variety of situations.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care procedures are exemplary. The school ensures the safety of pupils through rigorous health and safety monitoring, very good child protection procedures and the suitable monitoring of staff. The school places tremendous importance in supporting children and their families. Staff have an excellent knowledge of their pupils and use this knowledge to provide a very high level of support. The pupils' achievements are celebrated enthusiastically. During the inspection it was observed that almost every member of staff in the vicinity rushed to congratulate a pupil who had achieved a success. Pupils are made aware of their progress. The school's imaginative use of video recording and the very good use of a wide range of other recording such as annotated photographs enables parents to regularly learn about their child's achievements. Although assessment of pupils' progress is a strength, the school's tracking system does not yet fully describe each small step in attainment which the pupils make. Parents commented however that they have an exceptionally clear picture of their children's work and progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management is exceptional. The head teacher is an outstanding leader and she leads a committed and highly skilled leadership team. A strength of the school lies in the effective way senior staff work with each individual member of staff and how they monitor, evaluate and improve on every aspect of the school's performance. This has produced a significant positive impact on pupils' achievement. The school improvement plan is a very well constructed document with clearly identified priorities and supplemented by action plans for each area of provision.

Communication within the school is excellent. Staff feel valued and involved and the school has recently been re-accredited with the Investors in People award. The quality of professional training is excellent and is closely tailored to the needs of the school and the development of individual staff. As a result, staff bring a constantly improving

range of skills to enhance pupils' progress and development. Governors are active and effective. They have an established procedure for monitoring the school's provision and they play an important role in providing challenge and support to the head teacher. Parents feel very well informed and appreciate their importance to the school as valued partners in their child's education. There has been very good progress since the previous inspection. The school's exceptional systems for self-evaluation mean it has an outstanding capacity to maintain this improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Not long ago I came to the school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classroom. Thank you and well done.

I was with you for two days. That was long enough for me to realise that Oakleigh is an outstandingly good school. One of the reasons is that you all enjoy school so much. There were lots of other things that I liked. Here are a few:

- you work hard and make excellent progress
- the many different people at the school do their very best to look after you
- you are helped to be as independent as possible and to make as many choices for yourselves as you can.

There is one thing which I think would make the school better and which all your teachers are already working towards. Teachers should continue to develop an improved way of writing down what level you have reached in your learning to help you get even better.

Please thank your parents for the many very helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes and good luck,

Yours sincerely,

Melvyn Blackband

Lead Inspector