

Oakfield Academy

Oakfield Road, Frome, Somerset BA11 4JF

Inspection dates

2–3 March 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 provides committed leadership that is focused on a pursuit of excellence for all pupils. Under this dynamic leadership the school lives up to its motto of 'Believe and Achieve' on a daily basis.
- The headteacher is ably supported by an effective senior leadership team. Leadership of teaching is a particular strength.
- The school's middle leaders, those in charge of particular subjects or key stages, are an emerging strength. They act together very well as a group and this is having a clear impact on the progress pupils are making.
- Teaching, learning and assessment is typically good in the school. Effective use is made of teachers' subject specialisms to provide a coherent curriculum across all year groups.
- Pupils make good progress during their time at the school as they move from Year 5 to Year 8. The gaps between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and others are closing.
- Pupils develop well in the school and become mature, thoughtful and respectful learners during their time there.
- The school is working hard to encourage all pupils to read widely and both pupils and staff see reading as an essential part of daily life.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next steps in their education when they leave the school to move on to secondary school.
- Governance of the school is strong. Governors are very committed to improving the school and provide high levels of both challenge and support to the school's leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers sometimes need to make more effective use of information from their assessments of pupils' work in order to help these pupils make faster progress.
- The level of challenge for pupils of all abilities is sometimes not high enough.
- Gaps still remain between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that made by other pupils. This is also true of those pupils with special educational needs or disability.
- Pupils report that their learning is occasionally impeded by low-level disruption.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
 - make thorough use of evidence from assessments to help pupils fully understand what they need to do next in order to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills
 - plan teaching which provides a high level of challenge for all pupils, whatever their starting points, and reinforces the school's high expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement with learning
 - focus clearly on the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability in order to close further the gaps between their outcomes and those of other pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- In her two years at the school the headteacher has provided clear and dynamic leadership which focuses clearly on improving the outcomes for pupils. She embodies the school's motto of 'Believe and Achieve' in her conviction that all pupils should be challenged to make rapid progress from whatever their starting points. She has a clear understanding of where the school is now and what it needs to do to improve. Senior leaders provide the headteacher with strong support and share her vision; they work well together as a team.
- Leadership of teaching is particularly strong. The emphasis now is not simply on monitoring but on challenging the quality of teaching. Further training for teachers is relentlessly focused on improving pupils' learning. Regular use of what the school calls 'teaching MOTs' is increasingly effective in sharing good practice and in achieving a greater consistency in the quality of teaching across subjects and year groups. Nevertheless, the school itself recognises that it still has work to do in relation to the consistent application of its assessment policy and in building on the collaborative work that is already happening. Newly qualified teachers and those relatively new to the profession speak positively about the support they have received from the school.
- Middle leaders, those in charge of specific key stages or particular subjects, are an emerging strength of the school. A restructuring of responsibilities has created an atmosphere in which middle leaders are empowered by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and, thus, outcomes for pupils. With this empowerment, however, comes accountability and middle leaders are clear about their targets in terms of promoting pupils' progress. They now work together as a group and this collective approach is beginning to have a powerful impact on the quality of education provided by the school.
- Staff morale is extremely high and there is a strong sense that all staff are closely involved in a collective endeavour to provide the best quality of education they can for all the pupils in their charge. In their replies to the online survey of staff opinion all state they are proud to work at the school and they comment on how it is a 'cohesive unit' and that 'the whole environment is one of positivity and encouragement'.
- Teachers' progress up the pay scales is closely linked to effective management of their performance that includes an assessment of pupils' progress. This process is overseen carefully and thoroughly by the school's governors.
- The curriculum at Oakfield Academy is a strength of the school. The headteacher's vision of an all-through curriculum from Year 5 to Year 8 has been realised and there are no artificial barriers between a 'primary' curriculum in years 5 and 6 and a 'secondary' one in years 7 and 8. Pupils' journeys through the school are thus seamless and this continuity helps them to make good progress. Leaders keep the curriculum under constant review and, as a result, it is well tuned to the needs of pupils. The school promotes fundamental British values across the curriculum and also via registration periods and assemblies. Pupils are reasonably well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The opportunities provided by the curriculum are nicely balanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These range from the extremely popular performing arts club to coding and robotics clubs. Sports such as netball, hockey, football, rugby and tennis are also catered for after school. Participation rates are high. Nonetheless, the school closely monitors attendance at these activities and makes a special effort to encourage participation from pupils, such as the disadvantaged, who would particularly benefit from engaging in them. All these opportunities are very much welcomed by pupils and contribute well to their outstanding personal development and welfare.
- The school uses the pupil premium, extra funding from the government for disadvantaged pupils, effectively. It has invested some of this money in extra staffing in core subjects such as English and mathematics in order to focus closely on the needs of these pupils. Notwithstanding this, there is still some variability in the effectiveness with which teaching addresses the specific needs of the disadvantaged. The school also receives Year 7 catch-up funding for those pupils with low levels of literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stage 2. The impact of the use of this funding is unclear, however, as the school's analysis of impact is not thorough enough. By contrast, however, the school has a clearer understanding of the impact of its use of the PE and sport premium; it is being used well to promote participation in sport and the development of healthy lifestyles.

■ The governance of the school

- Governance of the school is strong. Governors provide the right balance of challenge and support to the headteacher and her team.
- The challenge the governors provide can justifiably be characterised as exhaustive and rigorous. Governors compose a written response to the headteacher's report to governors. In this they not only ask for clarification of key points but also put specific challenges to the headteacher, to which she responds at later meetings. This dialogue is developmental for both governors and leaders. As a result, school leaders are providing governors with the precise information they need and governors are developing a better understanding of this information. This approach is in its early stages but is proving to be a useful one for leaders and governors in their joint endeavour to improve the quality of education provided by the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safety of pupils is at the heart of all the school's activities and the school leaders and governors responsible for overseeing safeguarding are passionate about keeping it at the top of everyone's agenda. Pupils are safe and feel safe. Parents also recognise this and understand how it is the basis upon which their children make good progress. As one parent stated, the school 'provides my child with a safe, stimulating and enjoyable education'. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and child protection and the school makes all the required checks on teachers and other staff and records them appropriately. Staff training in protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremism is underway but is at an early stage in its development.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching in the school is characterised by teachers' good subject knowledge and is largely well planned. As a result of this, teaching is effective and pupils make generally good progress across subjects and year groups. Occasionally, however, insufficient attention is paid to the differing starting points of pupils and, as a consequence, the level of challenge is not high enough. For example, effective teaching of the most able pupils occurs in the school but at times they are doing work that they are clearly fully competent in rather than moving on to work that they will find more demanding and stretching. As a consequence of this, teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes not fully realised.
- At its most effective, teaching takes into account the needs of specific groups of pupils, such as the disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and disability. As a result, the gaps between the outcomes for these pupils and those of others are, in general, closing. This is not universally the case, however, and the school needs to ensure that teachers use the information they have about pupils' needs and abilities to plan appropriate work for them.
- For the most part, teachers use the information they gather from the results of pupils' assessments to help them make further progress. Information about what pupils need to do next in order to improve their work, however, is sometimes not communicated clearly enough to pupils; this can slow down their progress.
- Time is used efficiently in lessons and classrooms are positive learning environments. They are safe places to learn and pupils' mistakes are treated as creative opportunities to develop understanding further.
- Questioning is used effectively by teachers to probe pupils' understanding and to help them develop further. This was particularly the case in some subjects such as mathematics, geography and religious education. In these subjects teachers built upon pupils' responses to develop their ability to think critically.
- Relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils are good; there is a clear sense that the pupils trust their teachers to do their best for them.
- Teaching assistants work effectively across the school, particularly when associated with specific subject areas. They provide important support to teachers, especially in work with pupils who have low levels of literacy and numeracy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The respect with which pupils treat the views of others is a noticeable feature of many aspects of the life of the school. They listen to each other attentively and politely in a variety of contexts, whether it be a philosophical debate or a dramatic or musical performance. In one Year 5 assembly, for example, pupils sat in rapt attention as fellow pupils sang, played the piano, performed gymnastics or were congratulated on sporting achievements, applauding each in turn with enthusiasm. Parents who were attending this assembly spoke with passion about how the school had helped their children to develop as individuals. It is clear that all pupils' contributions to school life are valued and celebrated, once again demonstrating the living reality of the school's motto 'Believe and Achieve'.
- Pupils also recognise how important this respect for each other is, not just in itself but also in how it prepares them for future study and employment. No instances of derogatory or aggressive language were heard. On the contrary, pupils demonstrated a great willingness to help each other.
- Pupils demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe and how to live physically, emotionally and mentally healthy lives. They are very clear about the dangers that can ensue from misuse of social networking sites and are aware that many such sites are inappropriate for children of their age.
- As a result of their maturity and growing independence, pupils are very well prepared for the next steps of their education when they leave the school after Year 8. Pupils actively wish to become independent learners and develop a resilience, which means they persist when they meet problems rather than simply giving up or turning to the nearest adult. This preparedness for the next stage of education is clearly recognised and very much appreciated by the schools that they go on to attend.
- A well-planned programme of personal, social and health education makes an important contribution to the outstanding personal development of pupils. They learn to discuss complex issues, such as the difference between natural and moral evil, in a mature and thoughtful manner.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Alternative Learning Programmes (ALPS) and this is having a positive impact on their personal development, behaviour and welfare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well and are polite and courteous to other pupils, staff and visitors. They wear their uniform well and move around the school in an orderly and safe manner.
- Inspectors observed virtually no incidents of low-level disruption in classrooms but both in conversation and in the online survey of their opinions pupils did report that their learning was sometimes interrupted by such behaviour. Nevertheless, the majority of both staff and parents think that behaviour is well managed in the school.
- Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that the school deals well with it when it does occur. They speak very positively about the role played by pupils who act as anti-bullying ambassadors in dealing with this issue.
- Overall attendance is improving and it is now just above the government's minimum expectation of 95%. Nonetheless, it is still below average for similar middle schools. The attendance of key groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, is also improving but, as is the case with overall attendance, there is still a little way to go before it is at a level comparable with other similar schools. The school is working very hard to address this issue by, for example, having a breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils.
- Rates of fixed-term exclusion are dropping and there have been no permanent exclusions for a number of years. The school's work to keep pupils in school is effective and by doing so it helps pupils that might otherwise be at risk of exclusion make successful transitions to secondary school.

Outcomes for pupils**are good**

- Outcomes for pupils in the school across all year groups and a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, are now good. Measured in terms of the progress made from when they enter the school in Year 5 until they leave at the end of Year 8, pupils are achieving well. This is especially true in science where progress has been strong for some time.
- Progress in reading, which showed some underachievement in the most recently published Key Stage 2 data, has improved, particularly when taken in the context of the entirety of pupils' time at the school. In fact, many of the pupils who had not made good progress in Key Stage 2 in 2015 have now caught up, as demonstrated not only by the school's own robust tracking systems but also by the fluency with which these pupils now read.
- Against this background of improving overall achievement, the gaps between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and others is narrowing, showing an improving picture. The picture is less consistent for those pupils with special educational needs or disability. As a whole, therefore, the school still needs to maintain a focus on the particular needs of these two groups of pupils in order for gaps to continue to close.
- The school has put considerable amounts of time, effort and resources into improving reading, particularly in the light of some underachievement in Key Stage 2 in 2015. In so doing it has created a culture in which reading is widespread and celebrated. Pupils read nearly every day in registration and are expected to complete six episodes of reading a week, including some at home. It is clear that pupils do not see this as an imposition or a chore but as a wonderful opportunity to engage with a variety of texts. In fact, pupils have been vocal in their desire for an even wider range of books of greater complexity. Pupils read with fluency and can explain how they deal with unfamiliar words when they encounter them. They talk clearly and enthusiastically about their favourite kinds of books or authors and show a good level of comprehension of the works they are reading. The culture of reading is augmented by visits from authors and events such as World Book Day, which pupils from Years 5 and 6 participate in enthusiastically.
- The progress made by pupils during their time at the school means that they are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	136970
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10012370

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	566
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Cutting
Headteacher	Emma Wilkes
Telephone number	01373 462539
Website	www.oakfieldschool.co.uk
Email address	office@oakfield.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 April 2014

Information about this school

- Oakfield Academy is a larger-than-average-size middle school. It became an academy in 2011.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British ethnicity and the school has a much lower than average number of pupils for whom English is not their first language.
- The proportions of pupils at the school who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs or disability are higher than average.
- The school is in receipt of additional government funding in the form of the pupil premium, the PE and sports premium and Year 7 catch-up funding for pupils with low levels of literacy and numeracy.
- The school is part of the Frome Learning Partnership and is involved in Somerset Challenge.
- The school uses one alternative provider, Alternative Learning Programmes (ALPS).
- The school meets the government's floor standards for Year 6. These floor standards set minimum expectations in terms of pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook observations in 33 lessons across all year groups and a wide range of subjects. A substantial number of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors also visited registration groups and attended assemblies. During observations in lessons the opportunity was taken to scrutinise pupils' work.
- Inspectors had discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with four governors, including the Chair and Vice-chair of the Governing Body. He also spoke to representatives from the local authority on the telephone. Inspectors had discussions with pupils from all year groups.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was scrutinised, including the school's own self-evaluation, minutes of governors' meetings, records of assessments of pupils' work and information about their progress. Documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also checked, as were the school's records of the checks it makes on teachers.
- In making their judgements inspectors took into account 42 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire. They also took into account 33 responses to the online staff questionnaire and eight responses to the online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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