

Oaklands Park School

John Nash Drive, Dawlish, Devon, EX7 9SF

Inspection dates

3–4 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not always high enough to ensure that all pupils make the best progress.
- During lessons, teachers do not check how well the pupils are learning and modify activities as appropriate. This means that the work does not always meet pupils' learning needs.
- Not enough opportunities are given to pupils to practise their early skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not have a clear picture of how well learners are progressing across the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Teaching assistants' roles are not clearly defined and they have not, until recently, contributed fully to supporting pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders do not always hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders have not received sufficient training to enable them to support senior leaders to make the necessary improvements in teaching.
- The systems currently in place to gather information about pupils' progress are not reliable.
- Aspects of record-keeping in safeguarding are weak. There is insufficient evaluation of when incidents take place to prevent further occurrences.
- Until recently, governors have not had enough knowledge of the school to challenge the senior leaders in sufficient depth.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed executive headteacher is tenacious. She has a clear vision for the school's development and is resolute in her determination for it to improve rapidly.
- Since the change in leadership, parents are now overwhelmingly positive about the school.
- Pupils progress well in their personal, social and emotional development, which is allowing them to become increasingly independent.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They demonstrate an increasing tolerance of each other's differences and show an awareness of the differences between right and wrong.
- Relationships between staff and pupils in the school are strong. This enables pupils to build trust with adults to help them feel safe and secure.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - gather accurate information about what pupils can and cannot do, and plan activities that meet their needs
 - check carefully during lessons how well pupils are learning and modify teaching to enable pupils to routinely make good or better progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and hold teachers to account for pupils' progress
 - all subject leaders rigorously monitor and evaluate their subjects to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - governors improve their skills and expertise in understanding the school's performance and rigorously challenge leaders to tackle the areas that require improvement
 - all records relating to school improvement, especially in safeguarding and behaviour, are regularly monitored to confirm their effectiveness.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Historically, leaders and governors have not ensured that staff performance is managed effectively to support staff to improve their teaching skills. While this has now been tackled by the executive headteacher, the process is not fully embedded and governors are not monitoring the impact.
- Until recently, subject leaders have not focused rigorously enough on improving the quality of teaching and learning. They understand their roles but have only just been given the responsibility to undertake any form of monitoring in their subjects. Consequently, the impact of their work is limited.
- Staff, governors and parents believe that the school is moving in the right direction. Leaders acknowledge there is still a significant way to go to ensure that all pupils receive the very best education.
- The executive headteacher is passionate about the education, care and guidance of pupils. She is resolute in her determination to bring about the necessary improvements. She is uncompromising in her resolve that pupils receive the best 'all round' education. Also, she staunchly believes that the school has a responsibility to ensure that pupils become confident young people with as much independence as is possible.
- The federation with Ratcliffe School has significantly strengthened the leadership of the school. Consequently, the capacity of the school to make rapid improvement is strong. Leaders from both schools work together well and have developed strong professional relationships that are helping to secure improvements. For example, the joint work undertaken on 'team teach' has seen a decrease in the number of physical restraints and an improvement in the quality of record-keeping. Also, the sharing of good practice in science has resulted in teachers being more confident in the teaching of this subject.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of exciting experiences. It promotes regular opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and to pursue their interests. For example, pupils are invited to play the piano in assembly. This this they do with confidence and pride. Pupils show delight and enjoy participating in the extra opportunities being provided, such as football and dance. The Paddleboat Theatre, a specialist company working with pupils with significant learning needs, helps to develop pupils' skills in communication and socialisation.
- Leaders have improved the effectiveness of their use of the extra government funding for disadvantaged pupils. Individual pupils' needs are known well and funding is effectively used to enable pupils to gain access to a wide range of activities.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in a democratic society. The teaching of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship supports their development. Pupils select the activities they want to participate in, such as going to the public swimming pool, shopping, or playing football. They are taught whom it is appropriate to talk to when they go out and know what is meant by inappropriate behaviour.
- Pupils receive helpful careers guidance when making decisions about their future and post-16 choices. The advice is impartial and appropriate to their stage of physical and mental development.
- Parents spoken to, or who contacted Ofsted, are overwhelmingly positive about the education their children are receiving. One parent described the changes in their child since the arrival of the executive headteacher as being 'immense'. A further comment was: 'This is a fantastic school, my child has grown and developed in many areas'.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has been significantly strengthened as a result of the federation with Ratcliffe School. Members of this recently formed governing body have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
 - Governors' monitoring of leaders' work is improving and they have established increased accountability. Nevertheless, they are not monitoring the impact of actions carefully enough to check what is working well and why. For example, governors are aware that some record-keeping is weak and needs to be strengthened.
 - Governors now monitor the school's finances more closely to ensure financial stability. For example, governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and the positive impact it is having on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about the safety or care of pupils. Training is carefully planned to ensure that

staff fully understand and apply current guidance to minimise risk to pupils. The school engages well with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. Parents spoken to feel that their children are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Pupils throughout the school do not make securely good progress because teaching is not consistently good. The systems currently in place to gather information about the progress pupils are making are not reliable. Consequently, teachers are not always confident to use this information to refine and adjust learning opportunities for pupils.
- Teachers' expectations are not high enough to ensure that pupils make the progress they are capable of. Teachers do not use their strong knowledge of individual pupils sufficiently well to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress.
- Work in books shows that pupils are not making consistently good progress in English or mathematics, given their starting points. However, there are some examples of high-quality work. For example, pupils in Key Stage 3 are able to write simple sentences that are clearly legible with correct letter formation.
- Following her arrival, the executive headteacher has taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching. Increased monitoring and guidance are having a positive impact on raising the quality of teaching and there is evidence of some strong and effective practice.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they represent) and setting work at the right level for individual pupils are helping to improve pupils' reading skills. For example, pupils in Key Stage 4 were able to read a recipe accurately and follow the instructions to make muffins.
- In mathematics, pupils are able to complete basic number exercises, including answering questions in addition and subtraction. However, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that pupils have developed a deep knowledge and understanding of these mathematical operations.
- The change in deployment of teaching assistants is having a positive impact. They know the pupils well and deal sensitively with their significant needs. Nevertheless, the executive headteacher is fully aware that their roles have not been fully strengthened to aid pupils' progress. Plans to tackle this through further training and development have been implemented and they are starting to bring about the intended improvements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Communication between home and school for day pupils lacks consistency. Although home-school logs are used effectively as a communication channel between staff and parents, daily calls home and handover conversations with taxi drivers are not a regular feature. This means that the school cannot always establish the well-being of the pupils on arrival at school.
- Handover arrangements for pupils attending the school from the children's home are strengthening thanks to more consistent deployment of staff, supporting the same pupils day-to-day.
- Record-keeping and evaluation of incidents are inconsistent. For example, the accident report logs do not demonstrate well enough the actions taken following an incident in order to minimise the risk of reoccurrence. Fire drills are in place but these are not well recorded to demonstrate how the school would reduce the risk to pupils and staff in the event of a fire.
- All staff are trained to recognise signs of harm and abuse and act quickly to deal with concerns. Although there are daily meetings between the residential head of care and school staff, they are often brief. Consequently, school staff do not always receive the detailed information needed about each pupil to ensure the best possible transition between the residential home and school.
- In lessons, staff encourage pupils to participate in discussions and respond to their instructions. Sign language and individual visual timetables are used effectively to engage with those pupils who are not able to communicate verbally.
- The personal development and social welfare of pupils is strong. Pupils demonstrate their increasing social tolerance of each other, recognising that everyone is different. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, pupils continued to listen to the teacher despite the distractions going on around them.

- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care and guidance their children are receiving.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders check pupils' behaviour to identify patterns and triggers for future lapses in conduct. Records confirm a reduction in incidences over time, although 'spikes' appear when pupils face particularly challenging times. The school's reward scheme serves to promote good behaviour. Pupils are highly motivated to achieve the rewards on offer. For example, pupils clearly relished their 'sno-tube' experience at the ski slope in Plymouth. This encourages them to behave well and experience achievement and success.
- Pupils typically respond well to the structure of the day. Clear routines are in place that help to reduce pupils' anxieties and provide a secure learning environment where they feel safe. Teaching assistants have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.
- Break and lunchtimes are happy and sociable occasions. Lunchtimes are used well to provide an opportunity for pupils to build relationships with each other and develop positive social skills. Pupils have a growing understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, including bullying.
- Staff use consistent approaches to manage episodes of challenging behaviour. Physical restraint is used as a last resort and records show incidents are reducing over time.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their regular attendance, which is carefully monitored and checked by leaders. As a result of hospital and therapy appointments, pupils' attendance is just below the national average for mainstream schools.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Not all pupils make consistently good progress relative to their starting points. This is because teachers do not have regular and reliable information on what pupils can and cannot do. They do not routinely modify pupils' learning during each and every lesson to help pupils make the best progress.
- Pupils experience a wide range of learning activities encompassing many subjects. Although reading, writing and mathematical skills are taught daily, not enough focus is given to help pupils to practise and develop these skills. Pupils are able to read simple instructions to complete activities but there is not sufficient opportunity for pupils to access books for pleasure. Pupils in some classrooms lack opportunities to develop and hone their writing skills.
- No pupils are currently entered for national testing at Key Stages 1 and 2 or for any GCSE examinations.
- Pupils join the school with skills and knowledge that are significantly below those typical for their age. They display severe social, emotional, mental and physical health needs. A significant proportion of pupils do not speak. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to ensure that pupils are able to communicate successfully in a range of ways. However, teaching assistants are only now able to develop pupils' communication skills more fully as their support roles become clearer and better established.
- Pupils who live in the associated home in the grounds of the school make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, leading to greater independence.
- Historically, teachers have not set pupils sufficiently challenging targets. The recently introduced target-setting system places higher expectations on pupils to achieve the very best they can.
- Disadvantaged pupils who are supported by additional funding are making similar progress to that of their peers in the school.
- Outcomes for pupils in their personal, social and emotional development are strong. This is helping pupils to develop independence in readiness for their future. For example, pupils enter the classroom, take off their coats, put them on the peg and self-register.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Staff do not demonstrate a clear understanding of the progress learners make in mathematics or English across the sixth form. Consequently, they are not making consistently good progress in these subjects.
- Learners work, as appropriate to their needs, towards AQA awards and ASDAN life skills accreditation.
- The leader of the sixth form is new in post. Post-16 provision is currently under review as the previous provision was not meeting the needs of pupils well enough or preparing them effectively for life after school.
- Pupils who stay at the school are prepared effectively to cope emotionally with a future placement at college. Taster days at college and work experience placements are used very effectively to help pupils feel confident enough to gain workplace skills.
- Pupils described how they thoroughly enjoy attending Combe Pafford School in Torbay. All participate in this placement, which prepares them well for life beyond school. This weekly visit provides pupils with the chance to experience a range of vocational training, including hairdressing, mechanics, painting and decorating. Consequently, pupils have found suitable college courses leading to career plans that are appropriate for their interests and levels of attainment.
- Learners behave very well and show positive attitudes to their learning. For example, during a life skills lesson, they showed resilience and determination to peel, core and chop apples for cooking. They were able to use knives safely and follow recipes with minimal support required by the teacher.

School details

Unique reference number	113642
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10009334

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Bruton
Executive headteacher	Cherie White
Telephone number	01626 862363
Email address	admin@oaklandspark.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 July 2014

Information about this school

- Oaklands Park Special School is a small school with boarding provision. There are currently 18 pupils who board at the school.
- The school provides for pupils with complex learning difficulties.
- The school federated with Ratcliffe School on 1 January 2016 and is now part of the Dawlish Federation of Special Schools.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for children who are looked after and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is just above the national average.
- There are currently no pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- This was part of an aligned inspection with social care who will report their findings separately.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in every class, often jointly with the executive headteacher. During this time, the quality of pupils' work was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors. A meeting was held with an independent special educational needs consultant, and a telephone conversation took place with an officer from the local authority. Inspectors took into consideration the responses of 14 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the inspection to listen to their views. An inspector met with pupils from the school council.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's development plan, records relating to behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, and data relating to pupils' achievement and progress.
- There were too few responses to the online survey, Parent View, for these to be published. However, three text messages from parents were taken into account and inspectors spoke to parents to gather their views.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

Martyn Groucutt

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016

