

# Oakleigh School and Acorn Assessment Centre

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101396
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barnet
<b>Inspection number</b>	335706
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stuart Charlton

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gilbert Knight
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jenny Gridley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Oakleigh Road North Whetstone London N20 0DH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. About two thirds of the inspection time was spent looking at learning and 11 teachers were observed. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of the governing body and two parent governors, the school improvement partner, staff and parents. The work of the school was observed and the inspectors looked at the improvement plan, the minutes of the leadership team and governing body meetings, a range of other documentation and 35 parent questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the roles and responsibilities of all leaders and managers, including the governing body, to determine their effectiveness in monitoring and evaluating the provision
- how the school ensures that the quality of provision seen at the last inspection is maintained across the school
- the school's systems for monitoring teaching and learning, to determine if these are sufficiently rigorous and robust to ensure that all pupils, particularly those who speak English as an additional language or at an early stage of English language acquisition, achieve as well as they can
- the school's systems to analyse attainment on entry and track pupils' progress to determine that all make the progress of which they are capable, including those with deteriorating medical conditions.

## Information about the school

Oakleigh School and Acorn Assessment Centre provides for pupils who have severe and complex learning difficulties and a wide range of special needs. This includes pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as those on the autistic spectrum. A very small number have visual impairment as their primary need. About half the pupils have a statement of special educational needs and the rest are undergoing assessment. Slightly more than half the pupils are from minority backgrounds, with the most prominent group being Black African. All pupils are at an early stage of English language acquisition. A substantial majority of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Acorn Assessment Centre with a small number in the Oakleigh classes. The school is commissioned by Barnet Children's Service to lead and manage the work of the Pre-School Teaching Team and Pre-School Inclusion Team. The school holds Healthy Schools status, the Happy Award and the Active Mark.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

Oakleigh School and Acorn Assessment Centre provide outstanding education for their pupils. All make excellent progress regardless of ethnicity, gender, special educational needs or whether they speak English as an additional language. This is based on extremely high quality teaching and learning. The support for pupils' development is exemplary, helping them to gain the personal, social and learning skills which prepare them extremely well for their future lives. Safeguarding procedures are excellent, ensuring that a safe and secure environment is provided. Relationships are outstanding and pupils say that they enjoy school and that lessons are fun. Attendance is excellent, even though a substantial proportion of pupils have medical needs which require regular treatment. Behaviour is outstanding and parents cannot speak highly enough about the school and the positive effect it has on their children.

Parents and carers are actively involved in their child's learning. This is made more relevant to pupils because the programmes of study and their individual education plans are made available to parents and carers on a regular basis so that they can be partners in their child's learning at home. In addition, the school's work with parents and carers to help them to understand and meet their children's needs is particularly impressive. Parents and carers are very positive about its effectiveness.

The headteacher provides the drive, commitment and determination to lead the school forward. She has established a shared vision across the school, centred on the belief that it is the right of each child to be able to attain their maximum potential within all areas of development. The established leadership team supports the headteacher particularly well. Together they have established the seamless teamwork between teachers and support staff which is the cornerstone for the high quality learning in lessons. Staff development is given top priority and the input of staff is highly valued and acted upon so that all strive to further improve the school. Partnerships with other professionals are used extremely well to promote the learning and well-being of pupils. Of particular importance is the work of the Pre-School Teaching and Pre-School Inclusion teams, which ensures that transition from home to school and joint placements, with Acorn and mainstream nurseries for vulnerable young children is made as easy as possible. Governors provide high challenge to the school and are actively involved in monitoring provision. There are excellent links at local and national level through which the school promotes community cohesion. Developments at international level to enable pupils to learn more about life for those who live in other countries are not as strong. The continuous programme of school development clearly shows that the capacity for further sustained improvement is of the highest order.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Finalise and implement arrangements for promoting the international aspects of community cohesion to give pupils more extended opportunities to learn more about life for those who live in other countries.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils' progress is outstanding and by the time they leave their achievements are excellent. To meet pupils' needs, the school uses a wide range of communication strategies, based on pictures, signing and the use of electronic switches, to enable pupils to interact with others. The consistency with which these are implemented by all staff makes a significant impact on enabling the pupils' views to be heard. To demonstrate pupils' 'small steps' in learning, a highly detailed assessment system has been developed which uses a range of nationally recognised strategies, adapted to the needs of pupils. In a high quality science lesson with a group of Key Stage 2 pupils, each was given a personal development target and also clear targets for science skills they were expected to gain. Detailed recording of pupils' achievements was used very effectively to amend plans for further learning and to show the depth of their mastery of the skills which had been targeted.

Throughout the inspection, pupils indicated that they have an extremely good understanding of the requirements of a healthy lifestyle by making choices about what to eat at snack and dinner times. Many have specific dietary requirements which they recognise and they make it clear if these are not followed. Pupils participate very enthusiastically in physical activities, as was shown in the after-school and lunchtime physical education clubs involving roller skating and football, the latter led by a trainer from Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. These excellent responses are recognised by the Healthy Schools award. Pupils who have been in school for some time act very effectively to help and support newcomers. All are excellent ambassadors with the local community, for example when they are on trips. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, as shown by their considerate behaviour, thoughtful responses and concentration during the end of week assembly. In spite of the disruption caused to their education, all pupils gain the basic skills which prepare them extremely well for returning to mainstream education or for the next stage of education.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

How effective is the provision?

All staff know each pupil's needs extremely well and in lessons their teamwork to promote learning is exemplary. Teachers' planning clearly identifies the needs of each pupil and how these will be met. The programmes of study for each pupil are made available to parents. Parents are keen to point out how much this is appreciated as it enables them to be partners in learning at home by providing continuity with the strategies used in school. The detailed recording by all staff in each lesson is a crucial feature in ensuring that pupils' needs are fully met by providing flexibility and focus for the next stage in learning. Throughout the school, music is used to maximum effect to engage and motivate pupils. A particularly good example was seen in the end of day story time about 'Henry the Hedgehog' with a group of Key Stage 1 pupils. Each enthusiastically pounded their different drums to represent different characters in the story. The curriculum is excellent. It uses the best features from a range of nationally recognised provision and assessment systems which are very carefully adapted to pupils' needs. Pupils' learning is enriched exceptionally well by a wide range of trips to places of interest and visitors to the school.

The care, guidance and support provided by all staff are second to none. This is much appreciated, not just by pupils, but also by parents. As one parent said, 'This school has greatly increased the quality of life for both my daughter and myself' The school has excellent systems to determine the needs of pupils on entry and to set challenging targets. These targets give staff and parents a clear view of what pupils are expected to achieve and are then compared with the ongoing assessment records to check how well

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pupils are progressing. The school has excellent systems to promote attendance and encourage punctuality. Behaviour is managed extremely well so that any disruption does not affect the learning of others.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher's vision is crucial to the school's success. She is ably supported by the leadership team which ensures that each aspect of the provision, the main school, Acorn, the Pre-school Teaching Team and Pre-School Inclusion Team, all operate very effectively on a day-to-day basis. Their vision and commitment are communicated extremely well to all staff. Since the last inspection, the development of a new recording system and curriculum provision enables learning to be driven forward at an even greater pace. The governing body acts very effectively as the school's critical friend by ensuring that 'it keeps its feet on the ground'. Recent recruitment has ensured that governors have the expertise to thoroughly review and evaluate the school's performance. The use of external partnerships with medical staff, social workers and the specialist teams of Barnet's Children's Service is excellent and fully promotes pupils' learning and well-being.

Safeguarding procedures are exemplary and ensure that very vulnerable pupils can experience the outside world in as realistic a way as is possible. As one parent said, 'Support is exceptional and I am 100% confident she is safe' The school has developed links with the Comenius Project and is actively exploring how these can be used to give pupils opportunities to experience life in other countries. These links are part of the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for pupils with severe and complex needs.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>

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<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

### Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of pupils in the Acorn Assessment Centre have been referred through the Pre-school Teaching Team. Once their assessment is completed, a significant proportion moves into Oakleigh and the rest go to mainstream school placements.. The provision and teaching in Acorn are of the same very high quality as in Oakleigh. Staff provide the same exemplary support and guidance to children and their parents, and consequently children's progress and their achievements are outstanding. Transition between Acorn and Oakleigh is absolutely seamless because the provision in both very successfully nurtures the basic learning and life skills essential to the children's future development. Learning is fun, as was clearly shown in a lesson which focused on developing children's personal, social and basic motor skills. Careful planning, linked to an extensive range of resources, including the use of mirrors so that children could appreciate their own reactions, enabled all to make excellent progress, despite the very wide range of needs in the class. Extremely good use is made of the outside area to develop all aspects of children's learning. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are highly effective. The coordinator is a member of the leadership team and has developed the same high quality teamwork seen in Oakleigh by using common staff development opportunities.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

### Views of parents and carers

Nearly half the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. They are



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overwhelmingly positive about how the school helps their children. The group of parents and carers that the inspectors met emphasised that a particular strength of the school is the way in which staff 'go the extra mile' to help both pupils and parents. They felt that the support they are given to help them to understand and meet their children's needs is outstanding.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakleigh School and Acorn Assessment Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 80 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	66	12	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	71	8	23	0	0	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	54	12	34	2	6	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	22	63	11	31	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	63	11	31	1	3	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	51	14	40	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	40	14	40	1	3	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	66	8	23	3	9	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	49	17	49	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	60	13	37	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	66	11	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	63	11	31	0	0	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



Please note this letter has been kept very simple so that the school can translate it into pictorial format

14 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Oakleigh School and Acorn Assessment Centre, Whetstone, N20 0DH

We really enjoyed coming to visit you. You helped us by letting us see your lessons and look at your work.

We found Oakleigh School and Acorn Assessment Centre to be brilliant schools.

You showed us how happy you are at school and your parents told us how you look forward to coming every day. The school keeps you safe and there is always someone to help and look after you.

We could see that you really enjoyed roller skating, dancing and football. You all behave very well.

To make things even better we want staff to make sure you have more chances to find out how children live in other countries.

I hope you will help staff by doing your best all the time you are in school.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton

Lead inspector

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