

# Inspection of Oak Hill School

Church Hill Road, East Barnet, London EN4 8XE

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Inspection dates: 11–12 December 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy their time at Oak Hill School. The school supports their personal and educational needs to great effect. Pupils achieve well and value the excellent relationships that they have with their teachers. These are built on trust and mutual respect. Pupils said that their teachers understand them, and this makes them feel safe.

Leaders and staff believe that every pupil can achieve, whatever their learning needs or past educational experience. Pupils develop practical life skills, such as cooking. They practise their communication to boost social interaction. Pupils aged 14 to 16 years achieve qualifications that showcase their mastery of basic skills.

Pupils' behaviour is positive. This is a direct result of the effective support they receive from staff to help them overcome difficulties related to their needs. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves.

Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils are confident that the school takes effective steps to resolve incidents when they occur.

Parents and carers acknowledge the positive difference the school is making to their children's attitudes, including towards learning. They appreciate the weekly communication from the school about their child's progress and welfare.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The curriculum provides pupils with an engaging and ambitious education. It upholds the school's motto for pupils to 'enjoy their learning, aspire and achieve'.

Staff use their subject knowledge to plan sequenced tasks that help pupils learn and remember key points. For example, pupils develop their reading skills and use these to interpret complex text. Similarly, pupils use their knowledge of multiplication tables to calculate areas of shapes. Pupils recognise that real-life connections in science make their learning more interesting.

Pupils make every effort to improve their knowledge in core subjects. They also develop their skills in practical subjects, such as information and communication technology (ICT), art, design and food technology. Pupils were proud of the items they had made, for instance wooden candle holders and bird feeders.

Owing to the nature of pupils' specific needs, they join the school with starting points below those expected nationally. Although the standards achieved are below what is expected for their age, pupils make clear gains in their knowledge and skills. This is because the strong curriculum is implemented well and pastoral care is effective.

The committed and collaborative work of the senior leadership team underpins the school's success. Teamwork is effective throughout the school. Leaders are mindful of staff workload. They provide direct support and access to training courses to raise teachers' skills.

Pupils respond well to the management of their behaviour, which includes rewards. Leaders and staff work hard to encourage pupils' regular attendance at school so that they have the best possible chance to achieve well. Despite this, a small number of pupils are still absent too often without good reason.

Staff maintain a sharp focus on pupils' well-being and personal development, including through pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Partnerships with outside agencies, professional services and therapies support pupils' social and emotional well-being effectively. However, leaders are actively seeking even more of these resources because they know that they are so important to pupils' development. They are right to do so.

Pupils explore moral and social issues in society, for example the wider impact of knife-related crimes. The school council has a high status with staff and pupils. It has achieved positive changes for the school. It is proud of securing a pool table and additional computers for pupils' use.

Pupils celebrate diversity, including through appreciating foods from different cultures. They reflect on their own and others' life experiences. This, together with careers education, boosts pupils' aspirations and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Governance shares the ambition for pupils to receive an inspiring education and be prepared for life after Oak Hill School. Governors provide a wealth of experience to support and challenge senior leaders on school improvements. They ensure that all statutory obligations are met, including those related to safeguarding.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are appropriately vetted to ensure they can work with children. They are also trained to spot the signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Comprehensive procedures are in place to record and track pupils identified as vulnerable. Pupils learn about online safety.

Leaders and staff are approachable by pupils. Well-established partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies ensure that pupils receive early help, if needed.

Leaders and staff know the possible risks pupils may face within their local communities, including gang-related activities. A watchful approach is in place to protect pupils' welfare.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and staff have enabled some improvements in pupils' attendance, including through working closely with external agencies and families. Despite this, a few pupils are still frequently absent when they need not be. Leaders should continue to focus on raising attendance and reducing avoidable persistent absences.
- Leaders are actively seeking further support from external agencies for aspects of pupils' development. This includes therapies and professional services to enhance pupils' social and emotional well-being. Leaders should persist with these efforts.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144784
<b>Local authority</b>	Barnet
<b>Inspection number</b>	10128271
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	37
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair</b>	Robin Archibald
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kevin Grant (Head of school) Joanne Kelly (Executive headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.apoakhill.org.uk">www.apoakhill.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Oak Hill School became an academy special converter on 1 May 2017. When its predecessor school, a specialist resource provision of Mill Hill County High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the AP Barnet multi-academy Trust Ltd. Currently, it is the only school in the trust.
- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Many pupils have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The current head of school started the substantive post in January 2018. Prior to this, he was acting head of school and worked in the predecessor school.
- The executive headteacher is seconded to Oak Hill School and serves on the board of directors.
- The school has a breakfast club, which is managed by the school.
- At the time of this inspection, the school used no alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held discussions with the head of school, executive headteacher and assistant headteacher throughout the inspection.
- We met with six trustees and two members (including the chair) of the board of directors, which make up part of the school's governance. Minutes of the governing board's meetings were looked at.
- School documents were examined, including the school's self-evaluation. We scrutinised the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding, attendance and behaviour.
- We met with the designated lead for safeguarding and the pastoral manager, and examined the school's records of the actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- Discussions were held with staff about safeguarding, including the training and support that they had received.
- We met with a group of pupils and spoke to others informally.
- English, mathematics, science and ICT were focused on in depth. We spoke to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We looked at pupils' work with leaders and spoke to pupils about what they knew in these subjects.
- Discussions were held with five parents, including at the school gate and by conversations on the telephone.
- Inspectors considered 10 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to provide a report.

## Inspection team

Rosemarie Kennedy, lead inspector                      Ofsted Inspector

Gary Pocock    Ofsted Inspector

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