



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Oakleigh House

**38 Penlan Crescent
Uplands
Swansea
SA2 0RL**

Date of inspection: June 2011

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Context

Oakleigh House School is an independent primary school for boys and girls aged two and a half to eleven years. It is situated in the Uplands area of the city of Swansea. The school was founded in 1919. Since 2007, the school has been owned by Cognita, an organisation that operates independent schools in the UK and overseas.

There are 145 pupils on roll, 55 of whom are in the nursery and reception classes. Most pupils live in the Swansea area. A few pupils travel from surrounding rural areas and from as far as Carmarthen.

English is the predominant language of almost all pupils and they are fluent speakers. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. Three per cent of pupils speak other languages at home. Approximately 20% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.

The school reports that none of the pupils is socially disadvantaged. Five per cent of pupils receive additional learning support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN).

As part of its admission procedures, the school invites children under-five years of age to attend an educational play session. Staff observe the session and assess the children's readiness for entry into the school. Older children seeking entry to the school are assessed in class and also accompany their parents for an informal interview.

Many pupils transfer at age eleven to Ffynone House School, a local independent secondary school that is also operated by Cognita. Under the previous proprietor, pupils transferred to Ffynone House School at the end of Year 4. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 now continue their education at Oakleigh House School. This is the first year that the school has had a Year 6 class.

The headteacher was appointed in 2001. The school was last inspected in 2005.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

Oakleigh House School is a good school because:

- across the school, pupils make at least good progress and develop particularly good skills in speaking and reading;
- pupils are keen to learn and respond very well to the wide range of opportunities offered;
- pupils' attendance and behaviour are very good;
- leaders and managers have high expectations for staff and pupils that they communicate well;
- there is very good use of data to track pupils' progress; and
- there are very good-quality written policies and procedures for the school's work that provide staff with clear appropriate guidance.

Prospects for improvement

The school has excellent prospects for improvement because:

- there is very effective leadership and a shared vision at all levels;
- there is a strong culture of self-evaluation and very good processes to promote school improvement;
- the school has taken appropriate action on the recommendations of the last Estyn inspection and there is extensive evidence of improvement over time;
- staff have very good opportunities for professional development and attend training courses that improve their skills and have impact on school improvement; and
- the proprietor provides strong support and direction.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- have regard to any National Assembly guidance on health and safety responsibilities and powers of schools by providing emergency lighting. [3(4)]

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the staff and proprietor should:

- R1 comply fully with the regulations for registration;
- R2 raise standards in writing, especially in key stage 2;
- R3 plan more effectively to meet the learning needs of more able and talented pupils;
- R4 share best practice in teaching to ensure that lessons have a sharper focus that impacts on raising pupils' standards; and
- R5 use the findings of self-evaluation processes more effectively to plan improvements to raise the good standards to those of the very best.

What happens next?

Since the inspection report notes that the school does not meet one or more of the standards required for registration, the National Assembly for Wales will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan must set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend the current development plan to show what action the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents at the school.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Across the school, pupils make at least good progress.

The school does not select its pupils by ability. The wide range of assessment data the school uses indicates that there is a very broad range of ability across the intake. Overall, outcomes from nationally standardised tests taken over time show that standards are high. In Year 6, all pupils attained the level expected for their age in National Curriculum Tests. Most Year 6 pupils attained the higher level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has not educated Year 6 pupils in recent years so it is not possible to report on trends in the school's performance over time.

Almost all pupils in both key stages listen well, speak clearly and with confidence, and use well-developed vocabulary for their ages. By the end of Year 6, they ask relevant questions and are able to challenge others in a mature and supportive way. Almost all pupils in the Foundation Phase develop very good reading skills from a young age and most are fluent, expressive readers when they enter key stage 2. In key stage 2, pupils are knowledgeable about the books they read and the most able offer sophisticated opinions about the texts.

Most pupils in the Foundation Phase develop very good writing skills. They form letters correctly, use appropriate spelling strategies and use increasingly sophisticated vocabulary to develop their stories. In key stage 2, most pupils' writing is good, but their work does not always reflect the high quality of their speaking and reading skills well enough. These pupils do not use appropriate strategies enough to refine and improve their writing so as to achieve the very best standards.

By the end of key stage 2, almost all pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good and a few pupils use PowerPoint applications extremely well to make presentations. Most pupils use technology with confidence. Overall, throughout the school, most pupils use numeracy skills appropriately for their age and ability, particularly in science.

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, make good progress. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys. However, although standards are high, more able and talented pupils are not always challenged enough in lessons to achieve their full potential.

Overall, pupils are well-prepared for their secondary school education.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and eating; they make healthy choices and talk knowledgeably about the importance of eating healthy food. They

participate in exercise enthusiastically, enjoying games and other physical activities. Pupils feel safe in school and are caring and supportive of each other. They enjoy coming to school.

Almost all pupils are highly engaged in their lessons; they are enthusiastic and motivated to learn. Pupils of all ages take pride in their work and talk confidently about what they are doing in school. They have very good levels of concentration in lessons and follow instructions carefully. All but a very few pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually for school. Attendance is very good.

Many pupils, particularly older pupils, take on positions of responsibility with enthusiasm and other pupils look up to them. Members of the school council and eco committee, prefects, captains and others take their roles very seriously. The school actively involves the pupils in making decisions. Knowing that their ideas and contributions are valued has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing, and especially on their attitudes to learning. Nearly all pupils have exemplary behaviour and are well mannered. They are welcoming and pleasant to visitors.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum that meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. In key stage 2, pupils study almost all National Curriculum subjects, and also French and Spanish. The programme for younger pupils is based on the Foundation Phase areas of learning but has a formal structure that places emphasis on the development of pupils' key skills.

There are well-developed schemes of work for each subject that ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they move through the school. Teachers plan work well to support the development of pupils' communication, numeracy and ICT skills.

Overall, the timetable provides a suitable time allocation for each subject. However, the arrangements and organisation of provision for French and Spanish do not ensure continuity in pupils' learning in those subjects.

The school offers an extensive extra-curricular programme, including musical, sporting and creative activities, which enhance pupils' learning. The curriculum is supported well by a good range of appropriate educational visits.

The school promotes education for sustainable development and global citizenship effectively. The eco committee is an enthusiastic forum. Through its work, pupils have made sound progress in promoting 'green' issues such as recycling as well as developing their own nature trail.

Pupils learn to use a little day-to-day Welsh language vocabulary but the school does not include the subject in the curriculum.

Teaching: Good

In all lessons, staff and pupils have friendly and respectful relationships that facilitate learning.

In a majority of lessons where teaching is judged to be good or excellent, teachers have high expectations of pupils and conduct their lessons at a good pace. They develop pupils' learning by using well-chosen questions that encourage pupils to think carefully and gain greater understanding. Teachers encourage pupils to take responsibility for their learning and to work independently.

Most teachers capture pupils' enthusiasm for learning and motivate them to do their best in lessons. There is a consistent, structured approach to lesson planning that ensures pupils build on their previous knowledge and make good progress. Teachers use resources, including information and communication technology, competently and appropriately, and deploy support staff effectively.

In the few lessons judged to have shortcomings, teachers do not always introduce the lesson well or make their expectations clear enough to pupils. This wastes valuable time.

Teaching does not always challenge the more able and talented pupils well enough. Extension work planned for these pupils generally requires them to complete more of the same work, rather than providing them with opportunities, for example to solve complex problems.

The school uses data very well to assess and track pupils' achievements. It demonstrates very good practice in ensuring that its judgements of pupils' National Curriculum levels are externally verified with partner schools. Moderation of results for Year 6 pupils is at an early stage because the school has only this year's set of results and is not secure in establishing appropriate benchmarks.

The school has recently introduced an appropriate system for pupils to assess their own learning but it is too early to judge the impact. Marking of pupils' work is up-to-date and supportive but does not always inform pupils well enough about how to improve their work.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Pupils are supported and cared for well. Pupils and staff work well together in a warm and happy atmosphere. There are effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing and to encourage their involvement in the life of the school. An extensive range of learning experiences, in and out of the classroom, promotes pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. School assemblies provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to reflect on their own and others' beliefs and to develop a strong moral sense of right and wrong.

The wide range of roles of responsibility many pupils are encouraged to undertake contributes particularly well to their personal and social development. Pupils are

encouraged and guided well in how to carry out these roles. They are proud of their responsibilities for the care and support of each other.

There are beneficial arrangements to support pupils who learn English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Staff receive relevant training to identify pupils' specific learning needs and provide appropriate support.

The school has links with an extensive range of external agencies that provide specialist support, for example from an educational psychologist, and speech and language specialists. The impact of these interventions is regularly recorded and reviewed. The school also draws on a range of other partners, including Careers Wales, to provide helpful additional support and guidance.

There is worthwhile and regular communication with parents about the day-to-day welfare of pupils, as well as about their children's progress.

The school fully meets safeguarding regulations.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive and caring community where all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Pupils' attitudes and values are effectively challenged through the well-organised personal development programme. Visits to the local mosque and a broad range of school activities, for example celebrating religious events, have created an environment where diversity is recognised and celebrated. The school has an appropriate range of policies and procedures to deal with bullying and these are clearly understood by both staff and pupils.

The school has sufficient resources that are well matched to pupils' needs. It has recently upgraded the information and communication technology equipment and this investment is already impacting positively on pupils' standards. There are stimulating and colourful displays in both classrooms and communal areas. These include many examples of pupils' work as well as celebrating their achievements. The school grounds, including the multi-purpose play area and nature trail, are well used during lessons and break time. These areas are all free from litter and are very well maintained.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Excellent

The headteacher and senior management team promote a clear vision and strong commitment to improving standards and providing pupils with the best opportunities for learning. They communicate high expectations for all staff and provide rigorous challenge and support to enable staff to develop their expertise and raise standards. The team use a very effective range of management techniques and processes that brings all staff together to share a common sense of purpose and commitment to achieving the school's aims. This is especially evident in securing a strong culture of self-evaluation and improving quality. Together, the headteacher and senior management team provide outstanding leadership for the school.

Throughout the school, staff understand and fulfil their roles well. They have clearly defined responsibilities, work very well as a team and are generally effective in assuring the quality of work in those areas for which they have responsibility.

Well-organised performance management arrangements identify appropriate professional development opportunities for all staff. These link clearly to the schools' priorities for improvement and contribute very well, for example to raising pupils' achievements in science.

The school's proprietors provide highly-effective support for the school, especially in staff training and development. They are well informed about the school's performance, and provide a strong sense of direction and challenge for the standards and quality it achieves. The proprietor has supported school managers significantly in developing an appropriate range of very good-quality policy documents.

The school complies with almost all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Improving quality: Good

The school has very strong and robust procedures for self-evaluation. Processes, including the analysis of performance data, focus on a rigorous review of all aspects of school life and especially on the standards that pupils achieve. All staff are effectively engaged in monitoring teaching and learning. Parents' views are actively sought and acted upon, where appropriate. Consequently, staff know well the school's strengths and areas for development.

Leaders and manager set clear priorities for improvement. They link these effectively to the allocation of resources, and for planning training and development needs. However, improvement plans often concentrate on processes rather than on pupils' outcomes and do not always link closely enough to self-evaluation findings. This means that priorities for improvement are not always those that will have the greatest impact on raising standards.

The school is a strong learning community. Staff are well supported by opportunities for continuous professional development, are involved in direct classroom observation, and consistently reflect on their own practice. They do not regularly share good practice sufficiently well within or beyond the school. Through the proprietor, Oakleigh House School has established professional links with other schools but it is too early to judge the impact of these arrangements.

The school has met fully the recommendations of the previous inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a wide range of effective partnerships that impact directly on its day-to-day work and the standards pupils achieve. The proprietor provides very effective support for the school. This includes good provision for staff professional development and opportunities to extend their qualifications. For example, the

proprietor supports staff to gain relevant teaching qualifications and senior managers to study for higher degrees in education via the University of Buckingham.

The school has a strong link with the Ffynone House School and ensures that pupils transfer smoothly to secondary school. The schools share teacher expertise and provide opportunities for pupils to receive additional support if required.

There are good links with the proprietor's other schools that provide the headteacher and staff with opportunities for discussion and to share ideas. These links are particularly useful in helping the school compare how well its pupils are performing. The school is developing its links with local maintained and independent schools, especially in sporting fixtures.

Parents are very positive about the school and feel well involved in, and well informed about, activities throughout the year. They know that the school takes account of their views. There is an active Parents' Association.

The school's partnership with Careers Wales promotes pupils' understanding of business enterprise. Local and international community links, for example to the local hospital and with Japanese families following the earthquake disaster, enable pupils to develop their understanding and appreciation of global citizenship.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its finances well. Staff and proprietors monitor expenditure carefully and link this effectively to the school's priorities. Teaching and support staff are deployed very well in order to meet the needs of all pupils. There are plentiful good-quality learning resources and a well-maintained standard of accommodation. Leaders have established very effective appraisal and performance management systems resulting in improved outcomes for all.

In view of the suitable use the school makes of its funding and the good outcomes attained by pupils, the school provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Overall, parents are very positive about the school, feel that it is well run and have very positive views about its work.

Thirty four parents responded to the questionnaire. Almost all parents agree that they are satisfied with the school. Almost all agree that their child likes school, feels safe there, that teaching is good and that the school provides a good range of activities. Nearly all of them agree that pupils receive appropriate support for any particular needs. Most parents agree that their child was helped to settle into school, that staff expect children to work hard and do their best, and that homework builds on what their child learns. A few of those parents who responded do not feel that pupils behave well, that staff show respect for the pupils or that parents are kept well informed about their child's progress. Inspectors took account of these views when collecting evidence and making judgements about the school.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Overall, pupils' responses to the questionnaire are very positive. All pupils agree that they feel safe in school and that the school teaches them about how to keep healthy. Almost all of them say they are doing well at school, agree that nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime, and feel that they have lots of chances for regular exercise. If pupils find their work hard, almost all know who to ask for help and agree that their teachers help them to learn and make progress. A few pupils do not agree that homework helps them to understand and improve their work. Nearly all pupils agree that they have enough books and equipment to do their work. A minority of pupils do not feel that other children behave well and a very few do not think the school deals well with any bullying.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Rosemary Lait	Reporting Inspector
Rick Hawkley	Team Inspector
Sue Halliwell	Team Inspector
Catherine Evans	Team Inspector
Ken Underhill AI	Peer Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003: 3 and 5
Mrs Rhian Ferriman (Headteacher)	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11