



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Oakleigh House  
38 Penlan Crescent  
Uplands  
SA2 0RL**

**Date of inspection: March 2017**

**by**

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

## **Summary**

The pupils at Oakleigh House School are competent learners and they make particularly strong progress in relation to their starting points. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy their learning, work enthusiastically and engage extremely well in lessons. The quality of teaching is good and the school has a particularly effective system to assess and monitor pupils' work. The school's arrangements for the care, support and guidance of its pupils make an exceptional contribution to pupils' high standards and all-round development. The quality of leadership and management within the school is outstanding and is enhanced through the strong support and challenge arrangements of the proprietor.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

## **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 meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **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**

R1 Improve the quality of teaching further by promoting best practice more widely

R2 Ensure that all pupils have enough opportunities to improve their work in response to teachers' feedback

## Main findings

### 1: Standards

### Excellent

Across the school, pupils have a wide range of abilities. As they move through the school, almost all pupils make particularly strong progress in relation to their starting points. They are competent learners who develop their thinking skills extremely well. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils' performance in a range of standardised tests, such as reading, comprehension and mathematics, is above that to be expected for their age and ability. Almost all pupils with additional learning needs, and more able pupils, make exceptional progress.

Throughout the school, pupils' literacy skills are very strong. From an early age, pupils develop their listening and speaking skills extensively. They listen attentively to other pupils and their teacher and respond positively to the issues that they raise. Pupils in the nursery like listening to and recalling parts of their daily story and they enjoy using and experimenting with words such as 'swish' and 'splashy'. Most older pupils express their opinions clearly and with confidence as they reason and explain their work to each other or to the class.

Almost all pupils develop their reading skills securely in relation to their starting points and age. By the end of Year 2, most pupils read with fluency and expression and have developed a confident understanding of a range of vocabulary in different literary forms. They build on this secure platform as they progress through key stage 2 and, by the end of Year 6, most pupils skilfully scan texts for detailed information and skim documents to pick out the most important ideas and themes.

Across the school, pupils develop their writing skills extremely well. The quality of their extended writing is of an exceptionally high standard. Most younger pupils write with confidence for a wide range of purposes. By Year 2, most pupils form letters correctly, present their work neatly with legible handwriting and use basic punctuation accurately to demarcate sentences. More able Year 2 pupils use more varied punctuation such as speech marks, question marks and exclamation marks effectively in their extended writing. Throughout key stage 2, most pupils show a maturity in their writing. They organise and present their ideas clearly, for example as part of the whole-school extended writing challenge task focusing on the theme St David and Wales. In this task, pupils from each year group use their imagination to write creative stories that include exciting imagery about myths and legends such as 'The day I met a dragon' or 'Why the wolves left Wales'.

Pupils develop their numeracy skills effectively in mathematics lessons and apply these skills successfully in other contexts. For example, Year 1 pupils make valuable use of their problem-solving and measuring skills, and their understanding of shapes, in the weekly challenge to make a 3D object that stands up on its own. Using only spaghetti sticks and marshmallows, several groups successfully made a regular pyramid knowing that triangles would form the sides and a square or triangle could be used for the base.

Most pupils develop secure skills in information and communication technology (ICT). They enjoy using a wide range of applications on tablets, for example to research and support their learning. Older pupils often source and search for information capably before they present their ideas using a suitable graphics software package. For example, pupils in Year 3 create imaginative graphic images to map and record their extra-curricular trips and Year 5 produce very effective presentations on aspects of e-safety.

Across the school, almost all pupils have secure recall of their previous learning and use this suitably to help them in their current work. As they progress through the school, most pupils develop their thinking skills extremely well. They use established classroom routines such as applying the '6Bs', from 'being brave' to 'be still and reflect', to think questions through for themselves. By using these techniques and problem solving skills routinely to explore, predict or infer answers, most older pupils are developing exceptionally well as capable and resourceful learners.

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|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>2: Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b> | <b>Excellent</b> |
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Pupils' high levels of wellbeing and extremely positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to the mature approach they have to their work and the strong progress that they make.

Nearly all pupils behave extremely well and take pride in their school. They are courteous and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils respond eagerly and diligently to the valuable opportunities that the school provides for pupils of all ages to take responsibility for others and develop valuable leadership skills. For example, from reception onwards pupils take turns to be the class daily helper and playground buddy. Older pupils act as sports ambassadors and all Year 6 pupils are prefects and support younger pupils as reading buddies.

Almost all pupils in the school feel safe and secure. They are confident that the school responds appropriately to any allegations of bullying and they know whom to go to if they have a problem.

Pupils enjoy their learning, work enthusiastically and engage extremely well in lessons. As they progress through the school, most pupils become confident, capable independent learners. They work exceptionally well in groups where they are respectful of each other's views and concentrate well. For example, pupils in Year 4 work effectively with learning partners to carry out research from a range of sources to find out more about an Australian frog character in their class reading book. If they get stuck, they share information from 'what we know already' through to 'what we want to know' to strengthen their learning. In many classes, more able pupils are highly motivated by the challenge of stimulating extension work such as the 'mastery challenge', which deepens their thinking and understanding.

From a young age, pupils develop a particularly secure understanding of the importance of healthy eating and drinking, and the need for physical exercise. Most of them participate with enthusiasm in a wide range of extra-curricular activities on a daily basis. Examples include the twice weekly 'early bird wake-up, shake-up'

exercise session for reception through to Year 2, and the puzzle mania and fencing clubs for older pupils.

Nearly all pupils have an extremely strong awareness of the needs of others, both within their own school community and further afield. For example, the school council plan worthwhile fundraising activities to support local and international charities, including their current focus on providing support for children orphaned through the Ebola virus in Sierra Leone.

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| <b>3: Teaching and learning experiences</b> | <b>Good</b> |
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The school provides a curriculum that is broad and balanced and meets the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Throughout the school all pupils participate in a wide range of stimulating learning experiences both in the day-to-day curriculum and as extra-curricular activities. This interesting curriculum is enhanced by many trips in the local area, for example to a university sports facility and to historical and geographical sites. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available, with high participation rates. For example, pupils may learn sign language, play a musical instrument or join a chess or sports club.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Most teachers plan lessons well, adapt resources to meet the wide range of pupils' needs and use a variety of activities that engage pupils successfully. Strong professional relationships between all staff and pupils impact positively on pupils' learning and progress. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils and their different abilities skilfully as part of classroom management, and they use a range of questioning techniques proficiently to extend pupils' understanding. For example, teachers choose learning partners carefully for 'pair and share' activities or adeptly direct a 'phone a friend' request in question and answer sessions if a pupil gets into difficulty with their work.

In almost all lessons, teaching assistants are skilful and accomplished in supporting the work of individuals and groups. For example, they routinely manage intervention groups well, making a positive contribution to the high standards that pupils achieve.

During almost all lessons, teachers provide encouraging oral feedback that pupils respond to extremely well. Many teachers involve pupils in completing self-assessment forms and peer checklists. For example, in Year 5, pupils assess their English and topic tasks against success criteria. Most pupils effectively use a traffic light system to evaluate their understanding of their work. However, a very few teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to improve their work in response to teachers' feedback.

Where teaching is less effective, this is mostly because of a slow pace or too much teacher intervention. This results in missed opportunities for pupils' independent learning and reduces their rate of progress.

The school's planning and provision for pupils to develop and practise skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are effective. Pupils draw on these skills successfully and apply them to their work in lessons across the curriculum.

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| <b>4: Care, support and guidance</b> | <b>Excellent</b> |
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The school's arrangements for the care, support and guidance of its pupils make an exceptional contribution to pupils' high standards and all-round development.

The school has particularly effective and well-developed systems to assess and monitor pupils' progress. Staff use a wide range of standardised tests on a regular basis, for example to measure pupils' progress in reading, spelling and numeracy. They share and discuss the information methodically to ensure that all staff have a thorough understanding of pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. The school arranges high quality intervention that is based on this firm evidence. For example, teachers plan 'greater depth challenges' that are effective in inspiring pupils who are more able.

Pupils with specific or complex needs receive high quality individual support on a regular basis that is personalised to their needs, for example to develop their speech and language skills. The school works closely with a wide range of professional specialists, including an educational psychologist and occupational therapists, to plan suitable programmes.

When planning other intervention and support activities, staff provide a flexible and responsive programme for all pupils. These activities are adjusted on a weekly basis and tailored to meet individual pupils' immediate needs. For example, support may be provided short-term because a pupil has difficulty with a particular aspect of their work. These robust arrangements for providing additional learning support have a notable impact on raising pupils' standards.

The school's provision for supporting pupils' personal, social and health education is of a very high standard. The well-planned curriculum covers a wide range of up-to-date and relevant topics, including a structured programme for age appropriate sex and healthy relationships education. Visitors from the police and fire service reinforce pupils' understanding of personal safety and community responsibilities. In their lessons, pupils learn about the importance of healthy eating and having healthy life-styles. This is reinforced through the school's extensive provision of fruit snacks and nutritious lunches. Regular visits take place from speakers such as a dentist visiting the nursery to talk about cleaning teeth.

The focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an important aspect of the school's work. It has a key impact on pupils' relationships, their understanding of their heritage and the need for tolerance of each other's differences. There are many examples of how the school develops pupils' understanding of other people, for example through visits to different places of worship and also charity projects that centre on disadvantaged people in societies across the world. Visitors to the school also enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of the nation's history and its public services. For example, older

pupils have learnt from a World War 2 veteran about his experiences as part of the Remembrance Day commemoration.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

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| <b>5: Leadership and management</b> | <b>Excellent</b> |
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The quality of leadership and management within the school is outstanding and is enhanced through the strong support and challenge arrangements of the proprietor.

The headteacher provides the school with compassionate and credible leadership. Working together, the senior leadership team are successful in promoting a clear vision and shared sense of purpose across the whole-school community. This vision encourages both pupils and staff 'to be the best they can be' in all aspects of school life. Throughout the school, staff show an exceptionally strong commitment to the school and to meeting its aims.

The proprietor provides the school with highly effective support. The structures and processes that the proprietor has in place to support the school and hold it to account are extensive and robust. Activities such as the regular visit from the proprietor's assistant director of education, routine reporting to the central safeguarding sub-committee meeting and an annual health and safety audit help to ensure that the proprietor fulfils its role particularly well. These responsibilities are carried out successfully through balancing the different support, challenge and critical friend roles sensitively, while ensuring that legal responsibilities are met and outcomes are high.

The school's inclusive and open leadership model is a particular strength. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities thoroughly and lines of accountability are clear. Over the last three years, this effective team working has enabled the school to manage major change projects successfully. Through staff working collaboratively and flexibly, high standards have been maintained and minimal disruption has occurred as the school increased pupil numbers by 40% and built a new nursery facility.

The school's comprehensive and robust performance management procedures successfully contribute to monitoring standards, improvement planning and identifying the professional development needs of all staff. For example, for teaching staff, senior leaders collect a wide variety of useful first-hand evidence to evaluate teaching over time rather than one-off events. A planned range of monitoring activities across the year are recorded on the 'Teacher on a Page' record sheet, including observations, drop-ins, work scrutiny, pupil feedback and evaluation of achievement. This information is used effectively to inform staff professional development needs, as well as self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Staff have a rich and extensive range of opportunities to support their professional learning. These opportunities include school-based training and mentoring, school-to-school collaboration or visits within the proprietor group of schools. Staff can



access a wide range of courses, including leadership, subject and wellbeing courses, and have opportunities to gain further qualifications.

Combined with the school's robust performance management process, arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning draw on a wide range of first-hand evidence. This evidence includes regular surveys and follow-up actions on the 'voice' of the parent, pupil and employee. Senior leaders also analyse performance data rigorously across a series of assessment measures and the proprietor also analyses this against its group of UK schools. This information is used effectively to make realistic judgements about the quality of provision that the school provides and its impact on pupils' standards. The information is also used well to identify priorities in the annual improvement plan and three-year business plan.

The school's budget links suitably to its strategic priorities, and annual and three-year improvement plans. The headteacher, business manager and proprietor monitor the budget robustly.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

## About the school

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 and since 2007 it has been owned by Cognita, a worldwide group of independent schools.

Over the last three years, the pupil roll has increased by about 40%. Currently, there are 218 pupils on roll, 68 of whom are in the nursery and reception classes. There is little difference in the total number of boys and girls although this varies in year groups across the school.

Most pupils live in the Swansea area and a few travel from surrounding rural areas including from Carmarthen. About 30% of pupils are from minority-ethnic backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language and a very few pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language.

The school offers additional learning support to about 11% of pupils. Seven pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

Estyn last inspected the school in June 2011. The current headteacher has been in post since 2001.

The school aims that it 'encourages children to be the best they can be through challenge, differentiation and support in a safe and nurturing environment'.

## Appendix 1: Summary table of inspection areas

|                                            |                  |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Standards</b>                           | <b>Excellent</b> |
| <b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b> | <b>Excellent</b> |
| <b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>   | <b>Good</b>      |
| <b>Care, support and guidance</b>          | <b>Excellent</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>           | <b>Excellent</b> |

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

|                                                 |                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Excellent</b>                                | Strong, sustained performance and practice                               |
| <b>Good</b>                                     | Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement          |
| <b>Adequate, needs improvement</b>              | Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement |
| <b>Unsatisfactory, needs urgent improvement</b> | Important weaknesses outweigh strengths                                  |

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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.

We used this inspection to pilot developments to the common inspection framework, the inspection process and the inspection report format. We will review these arrangements and make any changes required before introducing them nationally in September 2017.

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:

Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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