

Oasis Academy Lord's Hill

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135628
Local Authority	NA
Inspection number	361462
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2010
Reporting inspector	John Kennedy HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	715
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Caveen
Principal	Mr Ian Golding
Date of previous school inspection	NA
School address	Fairisle Road Lords Hill Southampton SO16 8BY
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Registered childcare provision	Lord's Hill Pre-School
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	17
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	15 March 2007

Age group	11-16
Inspection date(s)	15-16 September 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. There are three lesson periods in every day and during this time inspectors visited 31 lessons and support sessions and observed 29 teachers. They observed an assembly and a tutorial period, held meetings with staff, governors, students and spoke with some parents of children at the pre-school. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at its development plan, analyses of students' progress, safeguarding documentation and other policies and some of the students' records. They evaluated questionnaires from 132 parents and carers, 65 staff and a representative sample from 100 students.

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

- The impact of leaders in improving teaching and learning for students with special educational needs and /or disabilities, especially those defined as requiring school action plus.
- How successful the academy has been in improving attendance and reducing persistent absenteeism.
- The quality and impact of the curriculum in raising levels of attainment.
- How effective the governing body is in holding the academy to account and meeting its statutory responsibilities.

Information about the school

Oasis Academy Lord's Hill, sponsored by Oasis Community Learning, opened in September 2008, following an accelerated merger and the closure of Millbrook Community School and Oaklands Community School. The academy is using the same buildings as its predecessor schools pending the development of new accommodation that is expected to be ready in September 2012. The academy moved to a single site in September 2010 after two years on split sites. It provides education for students in Years 7 to 11 and it manages sessional day-care provision for children aged just under three years and from three to five years. It also offers a range of extended services for the students, their parents and carers and the local community. The academy has a specialism in arts with business and enterprise. Its mission is to raise standards of achievement and engage the wider community through the promotion of effective innovative practice.

The academy is smaller than the average sized secondary school. Two fifths of the students have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and this proportion is well above that found nationally. The majority has behavioural, emotional or social difficulties or moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is almost double the national average. A small number of students are looked after by a local authority. The academy holds the Arts Mark gold and International School awards and achieved Health Schools Status in July 2010.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Oasis Academy Lord's Hill is a satisfactory and significantly improving academy. In the two years since it opened, it has made rapid strides in closing the gap between outcomes for students and those of their peers nationally. It has ensured that all aspects of provision are good. As a result, the majority of students make good progress in their learning. Many students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. However, other students, especially some defined as requiring school action plus, are not doing as well as they are capable of, because they struggle to engage with learning.

Attainment is low but improving sharply. Students are making up lost ground in a relatively short space of time from prior underachievement and low attainment. This is exemplified, for example, in the unvalidated GCSE results for 2010 which show an increase of 14 percentage points in the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grades which include English and mathematics. Similar and significant improvements can be seen in almost every other key measure. A very large majority of students taking the specialist subjects of GCSE art or drama gained higher grades. Most students taking BTEC courses and all those on Young Apprenticeship programmes gain accreditation. The academy's own assessment data, inspection findings and evidence from modular tests and examinations already taken indicate that the current Year 11 cohort are on track to continue this steep improvement.

Students benefit from teaching which is mostly good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that there is sufficient focus and suitable activities to meet the range of abilities and needs. In the minority of lessons where teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not make best use of time and miss opportunities to involve students more actively in their learning and independent thinking. Some students become restless, and are passive in their learning. In a few lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop and consolidate their literacy and oracy skills. Support provided by teaching assistants is mostly effective, but there are occasions when teaching assistants miss opportunities to check on and support the quality of students' learning.

Robust systems to manage and tackle poor attendance are having positive impact. Attendance levels improved by three percentage points last year. The number of persistent absentees has almost halved. The attendance of looked after children is high. However, challenges remain and there is a small and decreasing minority of students, particularly in Key Stage 4, whose attendance remains obstinately low.

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Most had entrenched patterns of absenteeism before they joined the academy. The academy is rightly confident that the good practice it is adopting and the effective partnership work with primary schools should pay dividends over time. This is reflected in the high attendance of the Year 7 cohort last year and the more positive attendance picture in Key Stage 3.

Inclusion is at the heart of the academy's vision and evident in its work. Staff go the extra mile to engage students through a highly flexible and broad range of personalised learning pathways. A considerable number of students experience significant barriers to learning because of their personal and home circumstances and the academy is mostly successful in helping them overcome these disadvantages. Its promotion of community cohesion through local and global engagement is exemplary.

The academy is well led by the Principal and his team of leaders and managers, with equally valuable support and challenge from the governing body. The academy is tackling the challenges it faced in its first two years with considerable success and there are marked improvements in most outcomes for its students. Management systems are robust and rigorous. The quality of monitoring and evaluation enables leaders to have an accurate grasp of strengths and weaknesses. These factors, coupled with the trend of steep improvement, points to good capacity to sustain this further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
 - enabling students to have more opportunities to develop literacy and oracy skills
 - helping students, especially those who have behavioural or emotional needs, to develop good learning habits
 - providing more time for students to be actively involved in their learning, developing their ideas and independence
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are consistent in the ways they support learning.

- Improve attendance levels in line with the academy's target of at least 92% for the coming year by:
 - raising levels of attendance among students, particularly those in Years 10 and 11
 - improving the attendance of students defined as requiring school action plus
 - sustaining above average levels of attendance among students in Key Stage 3
 - reducing further the proportion of students who are persistently absent.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may

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receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most students enjoy school, want to do well and apply themselves to their learning. A high level of enjoyment and engagement was evident in some lessons. For instance, in a hospitality lesson the students were riveted and highly enthusiastic about the task of making scones. Visible enjoyment, total engagement and a sense of achievement was palpable in an animal care lesson where students were practising skills in handling and restraining a small animal. In some lessons, a few students show less developed learning habits and struggle to remain focussed and attentive. Some are half-hearted workers and passive listeners and are content with the answers provided by others. In most lessons, the quality of learning is good and students show their eagerness to succeed, as shown in a mathematics lesson where the class were engrossed in solving problems using squares and indices.

Students have a good understanding of what helps them learn. The majority are making rapid strides in relation to their starting points and this includes students who are looked after, those who speak English as an additional language and students with moderate learning difficulties. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities who attend regularly also make good progress. Slower progress, for example in science and particularly for boys at school action plus, is directly linked to poor attendance. One member of staff commented, 'They are not here for us to help them'. Rigorous monitoring, accurate assessment and targeted interventions are effective in ensuring that students are given extra support to keep them on track in meeting or exceeding their challenging targets.

Students have a good understanding of how to adopt safe practices and this is reinforced through the curriculum and the work of the safer schools police officer who is highly valued. Students indicate that they know who to go to if they witness or experience bullying. They are proud of the academy and what it contributes to local, national and international communities and they play no small part in this work, for example, through European projects and visits to countries such as Cyprus and Estonia and exchange visits for some families to Romania and the links they have, for example, with Mozambique. This work has been recognised by the International Schools award. They also contribute to the everyday life of the academy, for instance, with the contribution Year 10 students make to the sex and relationships programme for younger students.

The competency-based curriculum plays a strong part in preparing students for the next stage of education, training or work, and in helping them to develop transferable life skills. The strong emphasis on helping targeted students to improve their reading and writing skills and the significant rise in the proportion gaining a high GCSE grade in information, communication and technology also equip students well for their futures. Past students speak with gratitude about the work of the

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academy and how it prepared them for the next stage of their lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

There is a positive ethos and rapport between teachers and students. Confident and skilled teachers have a good understanding of where students are in their learning and this is reflected in the quality of their planning. Where teachers are teaching new classes, they structure the activities effectively to enable them to assess students' starting points. In the best lessons, teachers are very effective in getting the balance right between keeping the pace of learning brisk while using questioning and other assessment skills to motivate students, check on progress to ensure that no one is left behind and that the more able are extended. Teaching assistants provide individual support which is responsive to need and not constrained by lesson planning. Paired and group work is used constructively to promote students' understanding and help them develop reflective skills.

The well thought out and personalised curriculum is responsive to students' needs and interests. It is inclusive in catering for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The extensive personalised learning programme, with its broad range of on- and off-site programmes, is successful in engaging most students, some of whom experience significant barriers to their learning. The specialism plays a strong part in curriculum development with the academy as a lead for the Creative and Media Diploma and as a driver for effective partnerships with local schools. The popularity of the specialist subjects is reflected in strong uptake and positive

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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outcomes for students, and this is endorsed by the Arts Mark gold award. The business and enterprise aspect of the specialism is not as well developed as the arts.

The well-organised personalised learning department provides a range of bespoke support to students, delivered by skilled staff and enhanced by strong partnership arrangements with other providers and external agencies. Transition support is effective. Raising attendance is given very high priority. This is evidenced in rigorous monitoring of trends, and the wide range of initiatives to try and engage with students and their parents and carers. This includes targeted support and when necessary legal action. Partnership work with feeder schools ensures that a consistent approach is being taken to working with families and this is having a significantly positive impact on the attendance of younger students. The academy is particularly successful in keeping some students in education, particularly those with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties who might otherwise be excluded. Behaviour is getting better and students comment positively on this change. A few parents and students indicate that while behaviour is improving, there remain some inconsistencies in how it is being managed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers share a clear, aspirational vision which is strongly communicated to staff. As a consequence, the staff are galvanised and pull in the same direction with a determination to raise standards and consolidate the academy's community role as a centre of excellence for arts and a hub for learning and community cohesion. Rigorous monitoring is being enhanced, largely through continuous professional development and the increased capacity of middle managers. Managers effectively address key areas of weakness and build on existing strengths. Teaching which does not meet the academy's high expectations is being firmly challenged and teachers are provided with targeted support where necessary.

The promotion of equality of opportunity and inclusivity is central to the academy's vision and practice and this is particularly evident in the attention given to reducing the educational gaps for those who start off as the most disadvantaged and whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable. This same quality of attention is given to safeguarding students and this is reflected in the rigorous training and guidance for staff and the clarity with which they know what do if any concerns arise.

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Community engagement and cohesion are cornerstones of the academy's work and the quality of this aspect of its work is outstanding. Students describe the academy as 'a big family'. The academy's reach extends beyond the local area through, for instance, involvement with the Oasis global family and the development of wide-ranging international links. The Oasis Youth Theatre, nationally acclaimed for its performance on the issues raised by human trafficking, is an example of the impact of partnership working to promote a more cohesive and moral society. The academy's work as the hub for extended services enables it to provide a range of facilities, programmes and activities that bring children and families together and strengthen families, including those from minority groups within the community. These activities promote learning together, open up employment opportunities for some and also encourage social interaction.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's needs are met so that they are challenged appropriately and are engaged in their learning, especially in free play and in the outside environment. This helps them develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. They demonstrate good skills in managing their behaviour, understanding dangers and in learning to socialise and share with others. They respond well to the effective care, encouragement and nurture that adults provide and consequently they are happy, confident and safe. Some find it difficult to express their views and opportunities to develop numeracy, problem-solving, communication and language skills are not as extensive as other aspects of learning. The pre-school holds limited data to demonstrate progress in learning from the children's starting points. Inspection evidence indicates that children make satisfactory progress. Care and guidance are

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strengths in the provision, exemplified in the careful attention shown to a distressed child on the first day at the pre-school. Care is also evident in the quality of provision to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents indicate they are happy with the pre-school and daily communication with them is good. Records are well kept and relevant policies are up to date. Planning covers all areas of the curriculum but there is insufficient attention paid to monitoring and evaluating how individual children are developing in their learning. Provision for children aged less than three years meets registration requirements. Leaders continually evaluate practice and seek to understand strengths and limitations in provision. This is reflected in the development plan which identifies the right areas for further improvement and correlates closely with inspection findings.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are positive about their children's experience at the academy. Some raised concerns about a few areas, particularly the academy's management of unacceptable behaviour and the quality of communication with them. Inspectors find, while acknowledging that the academy needs to address these points, it has developed a wide range of strategies for engaging with parents. Behaviour is improving and this is reflected in the significant decrease in the number of fixed term exclusions. While most parents and carers believe that the academy keeps their children safe, a few indicated concerns about bullying. Inspectors find that there are few reported incidents and evidence from the academy indicates that these are dealt with effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oasis Academy Lord's Hill 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 132 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 715 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	22	78	59	17	13	5	4
The school keeps my child safe	25	19	94	71	4	3	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	21	75	57	15	11	4	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	20	77	58	18	14	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	29	22	84	64	2	2	7	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	15	78	59	19	14	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	17	77	58	21	16	1	1
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)	23	17	81	61	11	8	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	19	82	62	14	11	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	16	77	58	18	14	7	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	10	81	61	20	15	5	4
The school is led and managed effectively	20	15	81	61	17	13	5	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	23	80	60	9	7	5	4

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



17 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Oasis Academy Lords Hill, Southampton, SO16 8BY

Thank you for the welcome you gave us. We learnt a lot from listening to you and observing you at work. The academy has come a long way in a short space of time. We find this to be a satisfactory but greatly improving academy. Most of you make good progress in your learning and standards and levels of attendance are rising rapidly. You benefit from a rich and varied curriculum that is carefully designed to meet your needs and interests. We are impressed with how well most of you work in lessons, for example in a hospitality class where we enjoyed the scones you made with such care! The staff go out of their way to take good care of you, especially those of you who are struggling to do well.

The academy does a lot of work with others to make local and international communities better places and this aspect of its work is excellent. Your specialism in arts gives you great opportunities to get involved in art, drama and media and you put this to good effect with the productions and other activities you get involved in. The Principal and his staff do a good job and this can be seen in the improved teaching. However, there is more that can be done to raise standards further. We have asked the academy to give priority to the following:

- to give you more opportunities to develop your written and speaking skills, become more actively involved in your lessons and in the ability to work independently
- to help those of you who struggle in lessons to become good learners
- to improve levels of attendance, especially in Year 10 and Year 11, so that your attendance will be as good as it is elsewhere in the country.

You can play your part by making sure you attend regularly, and come to lessons ready to learn and determined to make the best of your time at Lord's Hill. We wish you every success.

Yours sincerely

John Kennedy
Her Majesty's Inspector

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