



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

OAKWOOD SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Oakwood School

Full Name of School	Oakwood School
DfE Number	306/6088
EYFS Numbers	EY240944 and EY393699
Registered Charity Number	1053810
Address	Oakwood School 59 Godstone Road Purley Surrey CR8 2AN
Telephone Number	020 8668 8080
Fax Number	020 8668 2895
Email Address	enquiries@oakwoodschoo.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr Ciro Candia
Acting Chairman of Governors	Mrs Ella Leonard
Age Range	2½ to 11
Total Number of Pupils	167
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (70 boys; 97 girls)
Numbers by Age	2½-5 (EYFS): 44 5-11: 123
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 167
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Debbie Morrison
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	23 Nov 2010 to 24 Nov 2010

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in October 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Oakwood School is a co-educational day school with a Catholic ethos for pupils aged from 2½ to 11. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision consists of the lower nursery class for the youngest children, who then transfer to the upper nursery class, and subsequently to the Reception class. The school is one of two Catholic preparatory schools in south London owned by a charitable trust known as PACT (Parents, Children, Teachers); this school was founded in 1996 in a large Victorian building surrounded by one acre of grounds in Purley, Surrey. Since the last ISI inspection in 2006, the building has been extended to increase accommodation for nursery-aged children, and the outdoor learning area has been enlarged.
- 1.2 The school asserts that parents are the primary educators of their children, and that it exists to help parents raise their children to become competent young men and women who will live their lives by noble Christian principles and virtues, with a strong emphasis on personalised education and the development of the whole person. The aim is to provide an all-round education and educate pupils intellectually, socially, morally, physically, culturally and spiritually to the highest possible standards. The school strives to use the best methods and resources available, endeavouring to create an atmosphere that is relaxed but purposeful.
- 1.3 Currently 167 pupils attend the school, including 44 in the EYFS. Pupils are admitted without sitting selection tests, but any pupils admitted to the school aged 5 and above are assessed to ensure that they will benefit from the curriculum provided. The ability profile is very broad, with pupils' average ability above the national average. Pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Most live near the school and come from Catholic households, some are of other Christian denominations and a small number are from non-Christian families. The majority are white British, but a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds is included. Although eighteen pupils do not speak English as their first language, all are fluent in English so support is unnecessary. The school has identified twenty-one pupils with learning difficulties, but they do not require any specialist learning support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 Pupils' achievements are excellent, fulfilling the school's aim to educate children to the highest possible standards using the best methods and resources available. Pupils apply their knowledge and skills most effectively and often succeed in work that would be expected of those at least a year older, for example when studying decimals in Year 5. Pupils are highly articulate, and listen carefully to adults and to each other. Logical and independent thought is often evident, for example in a Year 1 English lesson when discussing imaginative ideas for a story about a bear's birthday party in outer space. The vast majority of pupils go on to their first choice of senior school, often achieving academic or sports scholarships to highly academic independent schools where places are in great demand. Pupils participate in the Primary Mathematics Challenge and, in the last two years, have received silver and bronze awards. The cross-country, football and netball teams have all been successful in local tournaments, and individual pupils have achieved commendable results in music or speech and drama examinations and in national drama and Christmas card competitions.
- 2.2 This analysis uses the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at age 11 have been consistently excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make exceptional progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Scrutiny of written work and discussions with pupils confirm this. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They clearly enjoy their lessons, and work well both individually and in groups or pairs. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils participated keenly in pairs in a game to reinforce mental arithmetic, using a calculator to check the answers. On completing the game, one pair used their initiative to devise a variant on the game to make the optimum use of the remaining time. In a Year 6 art lesson, pupils demonstrated their positive attitudes to work when working with great care and determination to create ink drawings of still life.
- 2.3 The curriculum for all pupils is good, with some excellent features. Literacy and numeracy have due emphasis. Spanish is taught throughout the school from EYFS and Latin in Years 5 and 6. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) is combined with character development and is based on an understanding of Christian virtues. It is integral to the curriculum and the ethos of the school. An excellent range of well-attended extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils, and all pupils are involved in at least one drama production each year, broadening their educational experience. Effective links with the wider community are well established through participation in joint events with other local schools and with schools in Spain and Mexico, enriching pupils' understanding of these countries.
- 2.4 Overall, the quality of teaching is excellent. Pupils benefit greatly from enthusiastic teaching. The best teaching at all levels is dynamic, knowledgeable, challenging and inspiring. Management of pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good. Use of praise and the generous award of house points inspire pupils of all abilities to attain high standards. Often staff appeared to enjoy lessons as much as their pupils. All the pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their teachers help them to learn and that they are given help when they have problems

with their work. Teachers know their pupils very well as individuals and carry out thorough assessment of their progress. Pupils' work is regularly and thoroughly marked, and encouraging comments abound. The best marking also includes comments explaining to pupils how they could improve their work, and what their next short-term target should be, but this is not universal.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.5 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent, in accordance with the school's aim to lead children to aspire to noble Christian principles and ideals. Pupils develop a detailed understanding of Christianity, in keeping with the school's Catholic ethos. The Oratory, with the Blessed Sacrament, is a facility welcomed by many pupils and staff for private prayer and quiet reflection. The various faiths of non-Christian pupils are respected and welcomed, and Year 6 pupils study the other major world religions in the summer term. Pupils clearly link moral and spiritual values. The school's core values are prominently displayed around the school, highlighting the importance of virtues. Pupils reflect on issues in the wider world and recognise their place as world citizens. They know right from wrong and take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils' social development is excellent. They show a sense of responsibility towards each other, both in the classroom and at play. Older and younger pupils relate well to each other, and senior pupils enjoy accepting responsibility for looking after and setting an example to younger children. The school council gives elected pupils opportunities to express and share their views and has enabled enhancements to the school environment. Charitable giving flourishes, for example with the annual Lenten collection for local and national charities. Pupils' cultural development is developed by a range of activities, visits and special studies, resulting in detailed knowledge and understanding of their own culture and that of others. African drumming and dance workshops have taken place, and pupils have contributed to a cultural newspaper together with pupils from an Italian school.
- 2.6 The school provides excellent support and guidance for its pupils, in accordance with its aim to support children's overall development, while recognising each pupil as an individual. The headmaster greets every pupil personally as they arrive at school each morning. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 value the support and guidance provided by their individual tutors, with whom they meet regularly. Unacceptable behaviour is a very rare occurrence, and is dealt with speedily and effectively. Pupils show awareness of bullying, but say that it is virtually non-existent at their school. All necessary policies are in place, reviewed regularly and are understood and implemented by all. The safeguarding of pupils is treated as being of the utmost importance, and pupils say that they feel safe at school.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.7 The governors' oversight of the school is excellent, with their commitment and support contributing to the successful implementation of the school's aims. The governors have a vision for the strategic development of the school, and some of the governors who founded the school are still members of the board. The fact that most governors are parents of former or current pupils at the school gives them particularly keen insight into many facets of school life. Governors come from a range of professions, and this helps them to discharge their statutory responsibilities for child protection, recruitment and matters of health and safety effectively.

- 2.8 The quality of leadership and management of the school is excellent at all levels of responsibility. The members of the senior management team work very well together, providing a strong sense of purpose and enabling the smooth and efficient day-to-day organisation of the school. Clear educational direction is provided, as is reflected in the high standards of the pupils' achievements and their excellent personal development. Staff morale is high, and all are committed to the ongoing success of the school. Appropriate care is taken over staff appointments. Classrooms are light and airy, and they are well equipped with a wide range of resources. Outside space is limited and on a steep incline, but the available areas are attractively laid out and imaginatively used. Games lessons take place on the pitches and courts of a local rugby club or on site.
- 2.9 The school recognises parents as the primary educators of their children, so excellent links with parents are at the centre of much that is done. Parents are welcome to bring their children into school in the morning, and staff are always available at that time to discuss any urgent matters. Reports are thorough and constructive. Parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the school in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and inspection findings supported this. Every parent who responded thought that the school is well managed and that they are encouraged to be involved in its life and work. The school's website and regular online newsletter are highly-informative, and valued by parents. An annual tea party for grandparents helps to promote a good understanding between generations, and pupils were enthusiastically preparing for this at the time of the inspection. The school has appropriate procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints, but no formal complaints have been made in the past year.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Build on existing good practice to ensure that in addition to praise, marking consistently includes advice for improvement.
 2. Develop the facilities for information and communications technology throughout the EYFS to enhance learning and to add variety to teaching strategies.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding. Children's needs are met in a warm, stimulating environment, fulfilling the school's aim to provide an all-round education, so that children develop into adults who live by Christian principles. Practitioners give high priority to welfare and safeguarding so that children feel safe and secure. Staff have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision having identified areas for improvement. The setting has maintained its high standard and has implemented the recommendation from the last Ofsted inspection.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Adults are highly committed to safeguarding children's welfare. Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure staff are suitable and appropriately qualified. All policies and procedures including risk assessments are efficiently implemented. Effective links with external agencies offer additional support and expertise. An excellent partnership with parents recognises them as the first educators. The parental questionnaire and conversations confirm overwhelming support. Leaders have a clear vision for the future and a strong commitment to improvement through self-evaluation. Staff are highly committed to inclusive practice through their many multi cultural activities in which differences are seen as cultural enrichment. Effective use is made of a wide range of good quality resources.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The quality of provision throughout the EYFS is outstanding. Adults have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum, enabling children to learn basic skills effectively. Children needing extra help are closely monitored and supported well. Knowledge of children's interests, and on-going observations and assessments enable staff to match activities to individual needs. A wide variety of very good quality resources enhances learning, although facilities for ICT are limited. Practitioners provide frequent opportunities to use the very well equipped covered, outdoor classroom. They actively promote welfare and safety through warm, caring relationships, enabling children to feel safe and secure. They are particularly sensitive to the needs of those aged under 3. Good hygiene routines such as hand washing help to reduce cross infection and promote good health.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.4 Outcomes for the children aged under 3 and for those aged 3 to 5 are outstanding, providing them with a firm foundation for further study. Children enter nursery with age-related expectations in most areas, though their ability is slightly lower in knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of the EYFS, they have made rapid progress in all six areas and have particularly strong skills in speaking and listening, and numeracy. They show high levels of independence, curiosity,

imagination and concentration, enjoy their learning and are developing the habits of good learners for the future. They show an excellent awareness of the wider world in their role play. Children's personal development is strong. They accept responsibility as monitors willingly, are well-behaved, and respect each other by listening and waiting patiently to speak. Relationships with teachers are strong so that children feel safe and secure. The under-threes are gaining confidence, as was seen in their Nativity play rehearsal, and the older children are proud of their achievements in speaking Spanish. They know how to stay safe and lead a healthy life.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 4.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Complaints since the last inspection

- 4.6 Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the acting chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr David Bunkell

Mrs Penny Forsyth

Mrs Valerie Goode

Reporting Inspector

Former Head, IAPS school

Early Years Lead Inspector