

Oaklands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117261
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379382
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Craig Stephenson
Headteacher	Julia Hume
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2007
School address	Great North Road Oaklands Welwyn AL6 0PX
Telephone number	01438 715278
Fax number	01438 716155
Email address	admin@oaklands.herts.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons as well as small teaching groups out of class. Inspectors observed seven teachers. They met parents and carers informally during the inspection, and held meetings with the headteacher, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised samples of pupils' work, the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress, management and curriculum documentation, teachers' planning and safeguarding documents. In addition, inspectors took account of questionnaire responses from 62 parents and carers, 12 staff and 90 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How successful has the school been in raising attainment for boys and improving progress in mathematics for all pupils?
- Has good teaching and rigorous use of assessment been maintained through the recent changes in teaching staff?
- Are senior leaders and managers and the governing body rigorous and effective in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and so driving improvement?

Information about the school

Oaklands is smaller than the average primary school, and serves village communities to the north of Welwyn Garden City. The majority of pupils are White British, but a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much smaller than average and very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A smaller than average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. There are three mixed-age classes in Years 3 to 6 and in Early Years Foundation Stage there is one Reception class. The school holds Healthy School status.

During the past two years there have been a number of changes to the teaching and administrative staff, and changes to the governing body of the school. The Acorn Pre-school shares the school site but is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Oaklands provides a good quality of education. Pupils are well taught and show a positive and enthusiastic approach to learning, and as a result they make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress because their needs are quickly and accurately assessed and they receive well-targeted learning support. A significant feature of the school is the good care, guidance and support that pupils receive from staff, and so they grow in confidence. Pupils enjoy school, as shown by their above-average attendance. One pupil, typical of many, said, 'I really like my school because our teachers are wonderful and we learn lots of stuff.' Safeguarding arrangements are good, pupils know how to keep safe, and they have a good understanding of what is involved in leading a healthy life.

Children settle quickly into the Reception class and make good gains in their learning so they enter Year 1 with skills and abilities that are similar to those expected nationally. Good progress continues through the school. Careful monitoring of teaching and learning, and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress, underpins pupils' above average attainment at the end of Year 6. Pupils' attainment in numeracy has improved as a result of a focus on problem solving, but opportunities are missed to extend pupils' numeracy skills and also their information and communication technology (ICT) skills through other areas of the curriculum and in topic work. The progress made by boys has improved because themes and practical tasks are planned to appeal to boys in lessons. Pupils' social and moral development is good, as shown by their good behaviour and the strength of relationships in the school. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of other cultures, both globally and nationally, is not as well developed.

Under the committed direction of the headteacher, senior leaders and managers, priorities for improvement have been accurately identified and there is a shared commitment to continue to raise attainment and improve the school further. The members of the governing body, many new to their role, have improved their skills rapidly and share monitoring responsibilities with senior staff. They offer full challenge and are now active partners in driving the school forward. Links with parents and carers are satisfactory. They are kept soundly informed about the child's progress, and provided with useful guidance on curriculum areas so they can support their child's learning. However, they are not informed fully or on a regular basis of all changes and developments taking place within the school. Development points from the previous inspection have been fully resolved well. Strong partnerships with

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external advisors and other local schools are used very effectively to support and extend provision. Sustained good-quality teaching and the setting of clear and ambitious targets mean that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - planning more opportunities to extend pupils' numeracy and ICT skills across different subjects and in topic work
 - strengthening pupils' awareness of others from different cultures and faiths in the United Kingdom and further afield.

- Extend engagement with parents and carers by improving channels of communication to keep them fully informed of all significant developments and changes in the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They enjoy their work and discussing ideas, both in groups and with their learning partners. One pupil summed this up saying, 'Teachers make learning fun.' The successful focus on improving vocabulary and spelling is well integrated into lessons. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson pupils used a range of scientific vocabulary such as 'transparent' and 'opaque' to describe the light-conducting capacity of different materials, and then made their own suggestions such as 'reflects' to add to the vocabulary for the lesson. In numeracy, a focus on problem solving to improve the way pupils use their number skills has improved attainment in mathematics. In a mixed Year 3 and 4 class a word problem based on a football theme was greatly enjoyed by pupils, especially boys. They worked hard and showed perseverance in identifying important steps to follow in solving problems. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language contribute well to lessons because work is matched well to their needs.

The 'behaviour wheel' listing aims such as kindness, honesty and respect encapsulates moral and social values for pupils well and is at the heart of the school behaviour code. Spiritual development is fostered well in assemblies. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities in lessons, or through the range of visits and visitors that enrich their learning, to extend their understanding of other cultures and faiths. Relationships at every level are good and pupils show pride in the responsibilities they undertake through the house structure or as sports leaders. Especially valuable are the range of opportunities for pupils to befriend others as buddies. Pupils understand clearly about being safe, including through safe use of the internet. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to enjoy a wide range of sporting activities in class and in extra-curricular clubs. Healthy School status exemplifies pupils' good awareness of what is important for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' above-average attainment and their love of learning ensure they are well placed for the

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next stage of their education and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear to pupils and learning moves at a good pace. Good questioning helps teachers assess pupils' understanding, and in turn helps them to extend their ideas. Good marking provides pupils with both praise and guidance on how to improve pieces of work. Assessment of pupils' progress is rigorous and any underachievement is identified quickly so that well-targeted support can be provided. Pupils are encouraged to assess how well they are learning and they discuss with their teachers points to help them do better work. Teaching support staff are deployed well in classes and in small groups out of class. This ensures all pupils, especially those who find learning difficult, receive good support and make good progress.

The school's strategies to improve literacy and numeracy are used well by teachers and are proving successful in raising attainment. The focus on spelling and vocabulary in literacy is used consistently but opportunities are missed to extend pupils' numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects and topics. Out-of-school clubs provide good enrichment for pupils out of lessons, especially in extending their sports skills, but visits and visitors are more limited, especially in providing first-hand experience of other cultures and faiths. Pupils show great confidence in the staff who care for them, and so they confide their worries. Transition arrangements at all stages are sensitively organised so pupils are confident about moving to the next

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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stage of their learning, in school or beyond. The good care provided by the school is extended through the prudent use of a wide range of external support agencies and services.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides clear and ambitious leadership for the school. She has managed well the challenges posed by changes to the teaching staff, administrative staff and governing body over the past two years. Careful assessment of the strengths and areas of development for the school has led to the successful integration of a range of important improvements. All areas of the work of the school are closely monitored and this now involves the strong senior leadership team and members of the governing body. Incisive leadership has united staff, regular monitoring of teaching underpins good teaching across the school, and ambitious targets are set for further improvements. The governing body has a secure committee structure and offers effective challenge and support to the school in equal measure.

The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory and pupils are helped to develop an appreciation of their own community. Not enough work has been done to provide pupils with a full appreciation of their future role as national and global citizens, particularly in extending their awareness of the richness and diversity of other faiths and cultures. Effective use has been made of the strong partnerships established with local schools, local authority advisers, and the Acorn Pre-school which shares the school site, to maintain good teaching and learning and so promote pupils’ above average attainment. The school promotes equal opportunities well, ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. Pupils are known and valued as individuals, and the school is free from discrimination. The learning environment is stimulating and well resourced. The safeguarding of pupils’ welfare is good and supported by clear policies that are efficiently integrated throughout all aspects of the school. All staff receive regular update training to ensure they are alert to all safeguarding matters.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

In Reception children develop a love of learning because they are provided with a range of well-resourced and stimulating learning experiences. Less well-developed and exciting are the role play areas in the indoor and outdoor learning areas. Children are well taught and all staff provide good care for all children. They are encouraged to be independent and also to play together and share. Activities across all areas of learning are well planned and also integrate a flexible approach to take account of children’s interests. For example, observation of snails captivated children and tasks were quickly organised to help them find out more about minibeasts. One girl was watching a worm in the flowerbeds very carefully until it disappeared. With great delight she said, ‘I found a bee and then a worm, but he went and hid under a stone.’

Well-focused teaching sessions ensure all children make good progress, whatever their individual starting points. Speaking, reading and writing skills are developed progressively and there is a close focus on extending number skills. By the time children enter Year 1 their literacy and number skills and abilities are similar to those found nationally. Good leadership ensures that staff work as an efficient and energetic team. Learning flows well between the indoor and outdoor classrooms and all staff seize opportunities to engage and motivate children well. Staff monitor children’s development carefully both informally, whilst they are playing, and in learning sessions. Good links between school and home mean parents and carers are kept fully involved in their child’s development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of the parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire are pleased that their children like school, are helped to have a healthy life style and are safe. They are also pleased with the good teaching. In all other areas parents and carers were divided in their views and many expressed concerns, especially about behaviour, pupils' progress and the help they receive, how parents and carers' suggestions and concerns are dealt with, and how this reflected upon the school's leadership and management. During the inspection pupils' behaviour was good in lessons and around the school. All groups of pupils make good progress because their needs are identified quickly and they receive flexible, well-planned support. The inspection found leadership and management to be good, but noted that communication with parents and carers was one of the weaker elements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oaklands Primary School 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 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 176 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	58	23	37	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	47	26	42	5	8	1	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	7	11	43	69	8	13	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	8	38	61	13	21	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	10	16	43	69	5	8	1	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	8	13	34	55	15	24	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	29	42	68	1	2	1	2
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)	7	11	43	69	4	6	3	5
The school meets my child’s particular needs	6	10	40	65	8	13	3	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	8	35	56	12	19	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	10	26	42	16	26	6	10
The school is led and managed effectively	7	11	23	37	14	23	16	26
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	13	21	37	60	9	15	2	3

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 8 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



23 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oaklands Primary School, Welwyn, AL6 0PX

Thank you for being so helpful and polite to us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We thought the Sumo wrestling activity that we saw during a lunchtime break was very exciting; and so did you!

We were impressed to see how much you enjoy your lessons and you told us you find learning fun because teachers make your lessons interesting. You get on together and behave well. You know a lot about being safe and healthy. We found that you make good progress in your time at Oaklands and you are well cared for by all adults. You make a good contribution to your community and are learning a lot about the world in which you live. Your headteacher, other staff and the governing body work well together to make your school a happy place in which to learn.

You told us yours is a good school and we agree with you. We have suggested three things which would help to make your school even better.

- To help improve your numeracy and ICT skills we have asked your teachers to make sure they include these areas of learning in your topic work.
- More opportunities should be planned for you to learn about other cultures and faiths, both in school and also through the experiences you can gain from meeting visitors and making visits out of school.
- Finally, we have asked that your parents and carers be kept fully informed about all the new and exciting things happening in your school so they feel fully involved.

You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best at school. It was a great pleasure to visit Oaklands and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball
Lead inspector

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