

Oakdene Primary School

Low Grange Avenue, Billingham, Stockton On Tees, TS23 3NR

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school's motto of 'learning for life' is embraced by pupils, teachers, leaders and governors.
- The school is a joyful, hard-working and happy place, where pupils have fun, learn well and make rapid progress, both academically and socially.
- Pupils achieve extremely well. From starting points which are generally well below those expected for their age, pupils make excellent progress. This is sustained through to Year 6, so that by the time pupils leave school, they reach standards that are above average.
- The school provides outstanding support for disabled pupils, for those who have special educational needs and for those whose circumstances make them at risk of not doing as well. 'Little Acorns', specialist teaching for those who need extra help, is an example of this.
- Teaching is exciting and stimulating. The work teachers set helps pupils to learn well, whatever their ability. Much teaching is of outstanding quality. The school leadership is focused on ensuring that all of the remaining good teaching becomes outstanding.
- The curriculum is exceptional. Through careful planning, teachers find ways of firing the imagination of the pupils. The use of outside space to make learning exciting, for example, through 'forest school' is highly effective.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from imaginative activities which help them learn extremely well.
- Pupils behave very well. They are thoughtful and caring towards one another and have a strong sense of belonging to the community. They have a love of learning.
- Leadership and management are exemplary. The headteacher is visionary. Under her leadership, all members of staff have a thirst to improve their school for the benefit of the pupils in the area.
- Systems to check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are excellent. The plans put in place as a result of the findings are precise and effective. As a result, the school continues to improve further.
- The governors hold the school and individual teachers rigorously to account for pupils' performance and the quality of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors had meetings with senior staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, and the school improvement advisor.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school’s improvement plan; the school’s own evaluation of its work; the school’s data for tracking pupils’ progress; the work pupils were doing in their books; and the school’s documentation relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors observed teaching in 21 lessons and listened to pupils read from different year groups. They observed assemblies, playtime, parts of lessons, and small-group work.
- The headteacher attended some of the meetings with the inspectors and conducted a joint observation with the lead inspector. Feedback to the member of staff by the headteacher was observed by the inspector.
- The inspectors took into account the responses to the school’s own surveys, as well as the 23 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also talked to parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anne Firth

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is nearly double the national average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs who are supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The proportion of pupils who do not start school in the Nursery or Reception classes, but join school later, is well above average. The proportion of pupils who leave school before finishing Year 6 is also above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has achieved the following awards among others: Inclusion Quality Mark (Gold); Investors in People (Gold); and Artsmark (Gold).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a higher proportion of teaching is outstanding through raising pupils' aspirations even higher by:
 - increasing the challenge across subjects for those working at the highest levels
 - ensuring that marking in mathematics is as good as that in literacy
 - ensuring that pupils are given even more opportunities to work things out for themselves in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The achievement of pupils is outstanding and continues to improve. All of the parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire rightly regard their children as making rapid progress, and lesson observations during the inspection confirm this. Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Most children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills well below those typically found in children of their age. Specifically, their communication skills and their physical, emotional and social development are well below that which is typical. Both teachers and teaching assistants focus on the individual needs of the children. As a result, they make excellent progress overall in both Nursery and Reception classes, especially in numeracy and their understanding of the world around them.
- Despite the rapid progress made in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils start Year 1 with skills that are below average due to the very low starting points in the nursery. Teacher assessment in Year 2 and inspection evidence confirm that pupils continue to make excellent progress in Key Stage 1 and reach standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Outstanding progress continues through Key Stage 2 due to expert teaching and an exciting and imaginative curriculum. As a result of this, pupils' attainment has been above the national average in English and mathematics for several years. A greater proportion of Year 6 pupils reached the expected standards in their tests than the national average. Occasionally, the most-able pupils are not given work which stretches them enough, and as a result, they do not always make the best possible progress. The work in current pupils' books and lessons shows a similar picture.
- The school provides outstanding support for disabled pupils, for those who have special educational needs and for those whose circumstances make them at risk of not doing as well. Specialist classes have been created, including the 'Little Acorns', to help pupils individually. As a result, they make excellent progress.
- The standards reached and the rate of progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those known to be eligible for free school meals were in line with those of other pupils in school in 2012. Nationally, there is a gap between the standards of these groups, and this shows that the school is effectively promoting equality of opportunity.
- Pupils who do not start school in Nursery or Reception classes, but join school later, make outstanding progress from their starting points. Sometimes there is not enough time, however, to reach the same standards or make as much progress as others who did start the school at the beginning of their education.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Younger pupils are making rapid progress with their knowledge of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) and they apply these very well to work out new words. Pupils develop well as readers through the school, so that in Year 6 they attain standards which are above average in reading.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Pupils say that lessons are interesting and fun and that teachers do their best to help them learn. Inspectors agree with them. The themes teachers choose are inventive, and the contexts they use are exciting.
- Inspectors observed imaginative approaches in classrooms which sparked the pupils' imagination and helped them make excellent progress. In Years 1 and 2, both 'Bruce the Bear' and 'Bjorn the Bear' were used within 'creative workshops' which developed independence and investigation skills. Pupils were in role as scientists in the Arctic recording temperatures, filling in results and making insightful comments about climate. They developed their understanding in an

entertaining and exciting way.

- Teachers bring learning to life by making extensive use of visits and visitors. A recent visit to 'the national centre for children's books' was being used to develop an interest in reading. The outdoor learning space is used well to keep pupils interested in school. In one lesson, Year 4 pupils were learning about Indian cultures, and enjoyed an ancient war ritual, basket-weaving, discussions about signs and symbols, and cooking bananas on an open fire. They were able to discuss the risk assessment for these activities with inspectors and knew how to stay safe.
- Such exciting themes and approaches are combined with excellent classroom teaching. Respectful relationships and the way teachers organise their classrooms help pupils to learn well. Teachers plan their lessons to make sure all pupils are given work that gets the best out of them. Teachers ask pupils very searching questions to get them thinking and to see how much they have understood. They expect the best from pupils, whatever their ability. This includes pupils with special educational needs.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is also excellent. The wide variety of interesting activities planned for children helps them to develop their skills. Inspectors observed phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) being taught effectively. The outdoor space is used very well by the children.
- Numeracy and literacy are taught very well. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils showed an excellent understanding of grammar, and produced some very impressive descriptions of Africa. Marking in literacy is very helpful and shows pupils how to improve.
- In a Year 4 numeracy lesson, pupils investigated the Fibonacci sequence to great effect, working independently of the teacher. Occasionally, however, pupils are not given the opportunity to work things out for themselves when they could have been. Marking in mathematics is not as effective as in literacy in showing pupils how to improve.
- Teaching assistants are very committed and deployed well in school. They make a striking contribution to learning, and are keen to have a positive impact.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils are extremely courteous to each other and to adults. They are orderly, respectful and polite. They enjoy coming to school and are proud of their school. They have very positive relationships with each other and with adults.
- Attitudes to learning in lessons are exceptionally positive. Pupils listen well to others. They confidently share ideas and contribute well when discussing their work. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn how to take turns and listen to others well.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and are often given the opportunity to reflect upon their friendships, opinions, behaviour and beliefs.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and they say they feel very safe in school. They also have an awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, about which they have few concerns. They know that any incidents will be dealt with quickly and effectively by the school. Where there is any unkind behaviour, for example, name-calling, pupils say this is dealt with promptly by adults.
- A few pupils find it more difficult to behave well. Systems and processes have a positive impact on their behaviour over their time at school. As a result of focusing on social and emotional aspects of school life, their behaviour improves rapidly. The school has not needed to exclude any pupils as a result of this.
- The impact of 'Little Acorns' in promoting pupils' good behaviour and emotional health, in addition to meeting learning needs, is excellent, including for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- As a result of enjoying school, pupils' attendance is above the national average and improving, and pupils arrive to school and lessons on time.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is inspirational. Together with her senior team and the governing body, she has a very clear view of how successful the school can be and has very high ambitions for the pupils in her care. Improving the school for the benefit of the pupils is at the heart of everything the school does.
- There is a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching, and on ensuring that the curriculum is innovative and exciting. The curriculum is first class. This ensures that the imagination of the pupils are captured. The wide variety of visits, visitors, clubs and topics support the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
- The school's procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and the progress that the pupils are making are very strong. Advice given to teachers to help them continue developing their skills as teachers is very good and as a result, the quality of teaching continues to improve.
- The programmes that are put in place to help teachers improve their performance are excellent and use expertise from both within school and from the wider teaching community. Ideas about teaching and improving schools are shared with others. Some of these ideas are so good they have been shared with educational advisors to the government.
- Senior leaders have used performance management and the appraisal process to identify areas for development and highlight strengths in teaching. As a result, teachers currently at the school meet the Teachers' Standards comfortably. They understand that advancement up the pay scale is closely linked to pupils' achievement.
- The school is at the heart of the local community. It reaches out to parents through the termly open mornings, and through 'stay and play' in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The school's procedures for checking that pupils are safe are in line with what is expected and give no cause for concern.
- The local authority provides light touch support to the school.
- The track record of the headteacher and the leadership team in raising standards, and the way in which the quality of teaching is checked, indicate that the school has the ability to carry on making improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement for the school, including how good the quality of teaching is. They support the headteacher, and ensure she is challenged to keep the school improving. Not only do they have high expectations of the teachers, they also ensure that their own performance is checked so that they are the best governing body they can be. They have a good understanding of the progress the pupils are making. They track the impact of the pupil premium funding. They ensure that the training and the performance of teachers are managed well so that salaries and promotion generally reflect performance. They are committed to giving teachers further access to training to keep their skills high.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131409
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	403630

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emma Radcliffe
Headteacher	Elizabeth Bramley
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2008
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