

Oaklands School

Weedswood Road, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent, ME5 0QS

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Teaching is not consistently good and, as a result, pupils' progress varies across the school.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan lessons that challenge pupils and ensure they have opportunities to develop their writing skills in lessons.
- Teachers do not make effective checks on learning in lessons, so that tasks can be adapted when necessary to ensure all make good progress.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to respond to teachers' marking, to correct their mistakes.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in writing as there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their writing skills, across all subjects.
- Some pupils lack the skills to work by themselves. As a result, they go off task in lessons showing a poor attitude to learning when asked to work independently.
- Teachers and support staff do not always plan suitable activities and use appropriate resources to ensure the lowest achieving pupils stay on task and make good progress.

The school has the following strengths:

- The headteacher, with the support of governors, has quickly brought the infant and junior school staff together and ensures that all leaders and teachers are focused on improving teaching and raising achievement. This is a rapidly improving school.
- Standards and progress in reading and mathematics have risen over the last year, as a result of improvements in teaching.
- New approaches to literacy have improved pupils' reading skills.
- This is a welcoming school, where good relationships flourish. Pupils are courteous and polite around the school and play well together at break times.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive that their children are safe, enjoy coming to school and are making good progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 part-lessons, with some seen jointly with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made shorter visits to lessons to follow up on specific aspects of the school's work.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, as well as with other leaders and managers, members of the governing body, pupils and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspection team looked at the school's website and a range of documents including the school's evaluation and development plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding arrangements and work in pupils' books. They also heard pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day, their views expressed in the school's own survey and those of the 24 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Jennifer Barker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Noureddin Khassal

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The infant and junior schools were integrated as one school in September 2012, following some years of turbulence and changes of leadership. The current headteacher has been in post since April 2012. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed recently.
- The school has a children's centre on site, linked to the health service. It is managed by the governing body.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is well above average. In this school the additional funding benefits pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- A small proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good across the school by:
 - making sure teachers use assessment information to plan appropriate tasks that fully engage and challenge all pupils
 - making effective checks on learning in lessons so that tasks can be modified when necessary so all can make good progress
 - providing opportunities for pupils to share and check each other's work
 - making sure that pupils have regular opportunities to respond to the comments in teachers' marking and correct their mistakes
 - enabling all pupils to develop the skills of working well by themselves
 - developing the skills of teachers and support staff so that activities and resources are adapted to meet the needs of less-able pupils.
- Raise achievement in writing, presentation and spelling, giving pupils opportunities to improve their writing, by:
 - using writing skills more widely across subjects making more use of subject specific vocabulary
 - ensuring less-able pupils in Key Stage 1 develop their reading skills by applying their emerging phonics skills more often to work out unknown words to help them to understand text
 - extending writing tasks for the highest achieving pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 were below average in writing in the unvalidated data for 2013 and as seen in pupils' work across the school. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to write. Higher achieving pupils are not challenged to extend their writing skills. The less able who struggle with writing are given too little support, for instance, through the use of vocabulary lists and writing frames.
- In Year 1, pupils' phonics (the sounds that letters make) skills were below the national average and, although there has been some improvement, this remains too low. However, the school has identified that teachers need to plan more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills more widely using subject-specific vocabulary to ensure pupils make better progress over time.
- Pupils enter the school with skills across all areas which are below age-related expectations. However, they made good progress particularly in Reception last year and transferred to Year 1 with skills that are in line with expectations in all areas, including writing.
- Pupils are making better progress in mathematics in all year groups and standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 have dramatically improved to above the national average. This is a result of the impact of the work of senior and middle leaders in improving the teaching of mathematics across the school. Pupils are keen to talk about their progress in mathematics and are learning to apply their skills well.
- The school's development of additional daily literacy programmes and of guided reading groups is having an impact on pupils' progress in reading. This was seen in pupils' enjoyment when discussing books and authors and in their enthusiasm for reading. However, lower achieving pupils in Key Stage 1 do not always apply their emerging phonics' skills to work out unknown words, which holds them back from fully understanding the text.
- Pupils who benefit from the additional funding through the pupil premium are catching up with their peers nationally and information from the recent national tests shows that pupils are now about a term ahead of those nationally in mathematics and six months behind in English. In 2012, they were over a year behind in English and mathematics and this shows that gaps are narrowing for this group. Their progress is similar to that of all pupils in most year groups. This improvement shows that the school is tackling discrimination and is ensuring that there are equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups are making progress in line with others in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress in line with others in the school, as a result of the support provided in lessons and additional programmes. However, teachers and support staff do not always adapt tasks and use suitable resources so that activities are appropriate for these pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. Teachers do not always use assessment information well to plan tasks and activities for all groups of pupils. As a result, there are missed opportunities for pupils to use, apply and extend their skills, particularly in reading and writing.
- Teachers do not always use effective means, beyond questioning, such as the use of small writing boards, to check pupils' progress and understanding during lessons. There are missed opportunities for pupils to share and check each other's work. Consequently, misunderstandings are not always addressed.
- There are too few opportunities provided for pupils to respond to comments in teachers' marking to improve their work and correct their mistakes, particularly in writing.
- The best teaching, seen at the upper end of the school, involves effective questioning where pupils' knowledge and understanding were deepened, as shown for example in one lesson with pupils' responses to mental mathematics calculations.

- Teachers and support staff work as teams to model good relationships by sharing work in the classroom, including supporting those pupils who find it hardest to learn. Staff work well together in managing pupils' behaviour.
- Support staff and teachers confidently deliver additional literacy programmes in all years and this is having an impact, particularly on improving pupils' skills in reading.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- Pupils attitudes to learning are variable in lessons and some pupils lack good skills in working by themselves. Some pupils become restless and distracted when staff do not ensure that tasks are suitably adapted, especially for less-able pupils.
- Nevertheless, relationships around the school are harmonious. Pupils and staff say that behaviour has greatly improved, particularly since the introduction of the behaviour policy last year, which ensures that rewards and sanctions are clear to all.
- Pupils enjoy the range of activities available to them at lunchtimes and supervisors effectively manage pupils' behaviour. As a result, all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, feel safe and secure.
- Parents and carers are very positive that they feel welcomed to the school and their children are safe and enjoy their experience at the school.
- As a result of rigorous systems, including closer liaison with parents and carers, attendance is improving and is currently above average. There are fewer children who are persistently absent and the number of exclusions has greatly reduced. There have been none so far this year.
- Pupils feel safe and know about different types of bullying, including name calling, physical bullying and cyber bullying. They say that sometimes there are minor incidents, but they know that staff will deal with these effectively.

The leadership and management are good

- The good leadership of the headteacher has brought together an enthusiastic and cohesive team of leaders and managers, teachers and support staff, all focused on ambitious targets to raise achievement for all pupils. This is seen in the systematic tracking of pupils' progress, which is linked to improvements in teaching and additional programmes to support literacy. Accelerated progress in mathematics and reading is evident across year groups in this rapidly improving school.
- The local authority is impressed by the school's accurate self-evaluation and the actions taken to improve teaching and raise standards, for instance, through the coaching and mentoring of staff. Support to the school is mainly through termly visits and working with governors and leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.
- Salary progression is closely linked to pupils' progress and teachers' performance. The quality of teaching is improving, with all staff evaluating their practice in relation to the extent of pupils' progress. Leaders coach and model good practice for teachers and support all teachers, including those who are newly qualified, to improve their teaching.
- Although a few parents and carers expressed concerns about communication, the school has done much to improve this aspect of its work. Parents and carers are now more regularly informed about their children's progress. Information about the curriculum and homework is regularly updated on the school website and there is a clear structure to home learning over a given week. Any concerns brought to the attention of staff are followed up well.
- There are good partnerships with other schools and settings, including the on-site children's centre, particularly in working with families. Moderation of the Early Years Foundation Stage and children's work is undertaken with other schools. The on-site swimming pool not only provides for pupils in the school, but is also used by the local community, for example, for pre-natal and baby and toddler sessions.
- The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors, including a residential trip for Year 6 pupils.

Each class makes two visits a year, which are closely linked to their work in subjects, for instance, to Leeds Castle to support their work in history. Sports funding is being used effectively for many additional activities to improve pupils' physical fitness, for example through swimming and lunchtime activities and with opportunities to compete in activities such as athletics against other schools.

- Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural learning is developed well. Assemblies are a celebration of pupils' work and behaviour and these weekly occasions raise self-esteem, as all pupils experience success, improve attendance and promote good attitudes to learning and relationships and prepare pupils for the future world of work. All pupils are part of school teams and there are many opportunities to gain awards, including some given by governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has steered the school well through the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools and the appointment of the current headteacher. Already improved outcomes in 2013 have meant that, as one governor said, 'parents, children and staff have seen they can be winners'. Governors have a clear and strategic view of the school and of its strengths and weaknesses in teaching and achievement, and where it needs to improve. Training in understanding data is ongoing and ensures governors are well informed and can challenge the school effectively. Governors' responsibilities are closely linked to planned visits to the school and the school improvement plan. Governors have a good overview of performance management and ensure that teachers are suitably rewarded for the good progress of pupils. Governors ensure that safeguarding is secure. The school is financially secure and governors are aware of how funding is spent on those eligible for the pupil premium, including the improving outcomes for these pupils.

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	118437
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	428819

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	440
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Wozencroft
Headteacher	Joy Callan
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 October 2013
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