

Oakwood Primary School

Oakwood Drive, St Albans, AL4 0XA

Inspection dates

1–2 April 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|
| 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.

- Pupils reach standards that are consistently above average. They are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives. Reading standards are high because pupils read widely and often.
- Teachers show high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and have been very effective in motivating and enabling pupils to make excellent progress in all subjects.
- More-able pupils are set harder work, especially in mathematics, so they can achieve the higher levels. However, not as many exceed nationally expected progress in writing as in reading and mathematics.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make an excellent start in developing their reading, writing and number skills. They make rapid and sustained progress across all areas of learning.
- Teaching assistants and other adults work closely with teachers to ensure that no pupils, including those who have specific learning needs, fall behind in their work.
- Pupils say they feel very safe, and very well looked after. Their enjoyment of school and commitment to their learning are shown in consistently high levels of attendance.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they have exceptional attitudes to learning. The range of subjects and learning activities make an excellent contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is led very well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, whose high expectations are shared by all staff and governors. The expertise of staff is called upon to help improve education in other schools.
- The school's leaders and governors are well placed to maintain high standards. As a team, they have been highly successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection.
- Parents are highly positive about all aspects of their children's education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons, several of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons, at play, at lunch and as they moved around school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and different groups of people involved in the school. These included pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and members of the teaching staff. The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative from the local authority.
- During the inspection, the inspectors took into account the 91 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors reviewed the responses to the 22 staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including plans for improvement, records of the school’s checks on pupils’ and teachers’ performance, safeguarding and attendance documents, minutes of meetings of the governing body and school policies.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Fiona Robinson | Additional Inspector |
| Mike Williams | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Oakwood Primary School is larger than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. There are none in some year groups. In this school, the additional funding is for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure more pupils exceed nationally expected progress in writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children usually start in Reception with skills and understanding that are typical for their age. With expert guidance, they quickly develop a love of learning and a curiosity about the world around them. Following this very good start, pupils reach standards that are consistently higher than national averages at the end of Year 2. Across the school pupils achieve extremely well in both English and mathematics. They leave at the end of Year 6 with standards that are above average in writing and well above in reading and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection the proportions of pupils making, but also exceeding, expected progress in English and mathematics have risen and are now well above average. An increasing proportion of more-able pupils are achieving the very highest levels in all subjects. Data show that in 2013 the attainment of the most able pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 was well above average in mathematics, reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Attainment was above average in writing, although not quite as high as in the other subjects.
- Reading skills are taught very well using phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and pupils use these acquired skills successfully in their initial efforts in reading and writing. As a result, pupils achieve well in the national Year 1 phonic check. Pupils read often and widely and they have opportunities to read from a wider array of books and other materials. Older pupils read with fluency, intonation and understanding.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics. Teachers promote pupils' basic calculation skills and ensure that they can apply these skills to an increasingly complex range of problems. The good range of mathematical experiences evident in pupils' books shows that standards in mathematics are well above average. Some pupils in Year 6 are working on the higher-level tasks and work appropriate for secondary school pupils.
- All pupils have excellent equal opportunities to succeed, and gaps in progress or attainment within or between groups of pupils, including the very few supported by the pupil premium, are quickly identified and are being rapidly closed. The progress of the small number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of other groups. They are successfully helped through one-to-one support within the classroom.
- The school very effectively tracks the progress of all groups of pupils against challenging targets. Where teachers spot any pupils at risk of not meeting these targets, additional help swings into action through booster classes.
- Displayed work, pupils' books and the school's own data all indicate that all pupils are continuing to make strong progress. The current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets and attain high standards again this year. Pupils also achieve high standards in sports, art and music. Many pupils learn musical instruments to a high level.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The evidence of the rapid progress made by pupils across year groups, including the children in the Reception class, and the high standards they reach, combined with observations during the inspection, confirm that teaching is of a consistently high quality. Excellent practice is very well shared across the school and leaders provide exceptionally effective support for new staff, including those at the beginning of their teaching careers.

- A significant feature of teaching is the very positive atmosphere in almost all lessons. A strongly established sense of purpose ensures that teachers can teach and pupils can learn unhindered by distractions. At the start of lessons, teachers tell pupils what learning is intended so all work to the same end, albeit at different levels, throughout the lesson. Teachers have great knowledge of their pupils' prior learning and use this well to plan appropriate activities that help them develop quickly their knowledge and understanding.
- The marking of pupils' work is excellent in helping them to learn. Teachers' very helpful guidance is supplemented by pupils learning how to mark and evaluate their own work and that of others. The varied approaches to marking gives pupils an excellent awareness of how to do even better.
- Many lessons involve a range of different activities that engage pupils by making learning enjoyable. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson groups of pupils eagerly applied their calculation skills to the challenge of calculating the ratio of ingredients needed in making chocolate mousse with different proportions of ingredients. They enjoyed explaining their methods to the class.
- Outstanding teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage lays firm foundations for pupils' progress through the school. A lesson relating to the lower Key Stage 2 production of *Jack and the Beanstalk* saw Reception class children highly engaged and captivated by the activities provided. Carefully planned practical activities deepened their progress further. As a result, they made rapid progress in many aspects of their learning.
- Writing is taught well from Reception onwards, and pupils who struggle with their writing are being helped to achieve better in this skill because of the quality of teaching they receive. The school is working to ensure that pupils who learn particularly quickly have even more opportunities to check and correct their written work.
- The highly effective teaching evident in English and mathematics is also reflected in other subjects. For example, in a Year 6 music lesson, pupils made great strides in learning about the form and structure of musical compositions. They were eager to learn new techniques from each other when as a class they evaluated their compositions.
- Well-chosen support is provided for any pupil who is at risk of falling behind. Teaching assistants and other adults typically make a major contribution to pupils' learning and progress, both in and out of lessons.
- Teachers promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development very well across the full range of subjects. Pupils are particularly confident when working in pairs or groups, very naturally taking turns, negotiating with each other and sharing their insights and opinions.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. From the time they start in Reception, children are helped to take responsibility for themselves, one another and the environment around them. They show considerable respect for adults and each other, and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent.
- Pupils develop outstanding attitudes to learning. They are very proud of their school and think that it is outstanding. Their understanding of what they are learning helps them to develop into especially mature learners. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds work exceptionally well together. They are very well prepared to make the very best of their future education.

- Pupils' attendance is consistently well above average. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and very much enjoy their learning because of the rich range of experiences that secures their interest and desire to attend. Pupils have very good opportunities to involve themselves in musical and sporting activities including competitions.
- Pupils' behaviour in the dining hall is excellent. They enjoy healthy, nutritious school meals. They also enjoy the many extra activities provided. The school has spent a proportion of the primary school sports funding on extending the range of activities for pupils. This is increasing pupils' participation and positively helping their general health and well-being.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The premises are very well maintained. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. Their understanding of how to keep safe is developed well through the curriculum. They are well informed about the dangers of internet use, especially the issues linked to social networking sites. They have an excellent understanding of what both bullying and unacceptable behaviour look like and are totally confident in the school's capacity to deal with them effectively.
- The vast majority of parents share their children's views of the school. They are extremely positive about the way in which the school keeps their children safe, promotes their progress and develops their skills and talents. School data and the views of pupils, staff and parents confirm that the behaviour inspectors observed is typical.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The dedicated and outstanding leadership of both the headteacher and deputy headteacher has enabled pupils to achieve real success and staff to thrive. They have ensured that the range of subjects taught is exceedingly well matched to the needs of the pupils. They are extremely well supported by a confident and knowledgeable governing body and overwhelmingly positive staff, including a very effective team of administrative and premises staff, who all share leaders' commitment to helping the school to continue to improve.
- Senior leaders and subject leaders carry out their duties rigorously. They collaborate extremely well, monitoring all aspects of the school's work closely to ensure pupils do their very best. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed effectively. Appropriate data on children's progress are analysed in detail to ensure they do as well as possible.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is thorough and accurate, and the results are used to inform the next steps needed to raise standards to even higher levels. The careful coordination of teachers' planning, rigorous scrutiny of pupils' books, rigorous tracking of performance data and attentive listening to pupils' views all contribute to an effective appraisal of the quality of teaching. This system is used very effectively to link staff pay rises and promotion closely to the progress pupils are making.
- The learning activities set for pupils of all ages and abilities are very good at promoting their high achievement. Tasks are highly challenging, inspiring pupils to do as well as they can. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong across the school. Pupils enjoy high quality musical experiences and a wide range of extra activities including sport and residential visits and daylong trips.
- Celebrating pupils' achievement is given a high profile. Pupils value their invitation to the termly special 'shining stars' tea with the headteacher. This clearly illustrates the senior leaders'

commitment to knowing the pupils, raising achievement and developing mature and confident young learners.

- Responses to the online Parent View survey show that parents are very pleased with how well their children are cared for and the progress they make. During the inspection the school was humming with excitement as parents and children came to watch the exciting and highly entertaining lower Key Stage 2 performance of *Jack and the Beanstalk*.
- The school works in productive partnership with the local authority and employs external support and guidance when appropriate. The local authority provides a thorough, evaluative and accurate report on the school's performance each year, including information about progress across year groups. Oakwood is used by the local authority as a model of best practice to support other local schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is outstanding. Governors are passionate about the school. They gain an excellent understanding of performance data and the quality of teaching through regular visits. Records of governing body meetings show how they challenge leaders regularly to ensure that they maintain a high quality education for pupils. Governors monitor their own work and performance extremely well. They ensure financial resources are well managed, including the use of the pupil premium and the additional sports funding. Governors are involved in setting targets for the headteacher, and are also fully aware that teachers' pay awards are securely linked to their performance and the progress that pupils make. They make sure that action plans and the deployment of staff and resources benefit all groups of pupils. The safeguarding arrangements are closely reviewed to ensure they meet statutory requirements so pupils are safe in school. They make sure staff are well trained and clearly aware of child protection and all relevant risk assessment procedures.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 117222 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 439578 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 314 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Alison Curran |
| Headteacher | Zoë Buckley |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17 June 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01727 753930 |
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