

# Oaklands School

Weeds Wood Road, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent ME5 0QS

## Inspection dates

26–27 January 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Not all of the school community has got behind the new headteacher's clear vision for the future.
- Frequent changes of teaching staff have frustrated leaders' efforts to improve the school.
- There is not enough good teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that outcomes for pupils are good overall.
- Not all teachers demand that pupils do their best in all of their work. They check what pupils already know and can do, but do not always use this information to make sure that work is not too easy or too hard.
- Most teachers write helpful things on pupils' work to show them how to improve. However, they do not always check that pupils follow their advice.
- Adults' questioning does not always challenge pupils to think hard.
- The skilled team of teaching assistants are not used well throughout lessons in some classes.
- Leaders' checks on school systems, including those policies relating to safeguarding, are not always rigorous.
- The use of additional government funding is helping disadvantaged pupils catch up in some year groups, but not all.
- Pupils with special educational needs do not make consistently good progress.
- Pupils, parents and staff have very mixed views about whether behaviour is good, especially at playtimes. There is a widespread feeling that it should be better than it is.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils like their teachers and enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is improving.
- Safeguarding is effective and pupils feel safe.
- There is some strong teaching in each key stage.
- Leaders know where teaching is good and how to improve weaker practice.
- Governors are committed and taking action to improve the effectiveness of the governing body.
- The standards pupils reach at the end of each key stage have risen since the previous inspection.
- Children do well in the effective early years provision because they make good progress over time. This prepares them well for Year 1.
- Leaders are working hard to involve parents more in their children's education in lots of different ways.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to secure consistently good learning and progress, especially in Years 2, 3 and 4 by:
  - making sure that adults have high expectations of all pupils
  - using checks on what pupils already know to set work that challenges them and keeps them focused, especially the most- and least-able pupils and boys in particular
  - using a greater range of questions to really probe pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding, including the most-able pupils
  - ensuring teaching assistants are always used effectively throughout lessons
  - insisting that pupils transfer their improving spelling to their free writing, taking care with handwriting and presentation, especially boys
  - checking that pupils use the feedback they are given to improve their work.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders and managers, including governors, to improve the school's effectiveness securely to good by:
  - building support for a shared school vision
  - making sure that pupil premium funding is used to help disadvantaged pupils to catch up in all years
  - making checks on the effectiveness and impact of strategies, systems and policies more rigorous, including those relating to safeguarding
  - sharing the strongest teaching in all key stages, including the early years provision, to lift the practice of others
  - ensuring that the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs are well met so they make good progress
  - checking that pupils have developed a secure understanding of e-safety from participating in the workshops taking place during the inspection
  - evaluating the difference made by additional funding for sports.
- Raise the overall confidence levels that pupils, parents and staff have in the recent changes to behaviour management and anti-bullying strategies so that they succeed in leading to the necessary improvements.
- Lift overall attendance and reduce the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent by ensuring that the tighter actions and procedures taken this academic year are sustained.

The planned external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### requires improvement

- Although there have been some improvements since the last inspection, these are not consistent and secure enough to lift the school's overall effectiveness to good. There has been a change of headteacher and a high turnover of teaching staff since the previous inspection. A significant lift in pupils' outcomes in 2014 has not been sustained.
- Leaders have not used additional funding for disadvantaged pupils well enough. Over time, gaps between their achievement and others in school and nationally have not closed consistently. This year, well-trained mentors have made a big difference helping younger pupils to catch up, but this support has only very recently extended to older pupils.
- The new headteacher has a clear vision of how he wants to improve the school. The local authority, governors, senior leaders, some staff and parents think that this is a change for the better. However, overall staff and parents have very mixed views about whether the school is moving in the right direction.
- The headteacher is passionate that pupils should receive a broad education that prepares them well for life. He sets a very inclusive tone and is keen that every child should be in school and do well.
- The newly created school values of ambition, perseverance, respect, self-confidence, independence and enquiry are visible throughout the school, the first letter of each spelling out 'aspire'. There are also prominent displays of key messages that pupils learn, such as 'Keep calm and walk away' as a way of reducing conflict. Promotion of British values threads strongly through the school's work. For example, pupils learn about democracy, tolerance and the importance of respecting others' choices and beliefs.
- Senior leaders know what teaching is like across the school. They identify strengths and weaknesses accurately, explain these clearly to teachers and coach them to make necessary improvements. However, regular changes of teaching staff, including during the course of the current academic year, have frustrated leaders' efforts to secure consistently good teaching.
- Leaders value the considerable support provided by the local authority. This has helped to secure improvements in the early years provision and begun to build the capacity of leaders who are responsible for particular areas of the school. However, the local authority has not challenged leaders well enough to ensure that the school's checks and evaluations of its own performance are backed up with secure evidence that improvements are consistent, embedded and impacting on pupils' outcomes. Consequently, both school leaders and the local authority think the school is further forward than it is.
- Pupils find the range of learning and subjects in school exciting and fun. Consequently, attitudes to learning in lessons have improved. A wide range of trips, visitors to the school and extra-curricular clubs provide rich, varied experiences for pupils. The 'writer in residence' skilfully engages boys who might usually be reluctant to write. Having focused on English and mathematics, leaders are now rightly turning their attention to improving standards in other subjects.
- Leaders have used additional sports funding in various ways. This includes specialist sports coaching and joining a sports partnership to provide a wider range of opportunities for pupils. Anecdotally, this has had a positive impact, but leaders have not found a way to measure this fully.
- Leaders have been creative in finding ways to get parents involved in the life of the school. During the inspection, a handful of Year 2 parents took up the weekly offer of 'Come Dine With Me' to have lunch with their children. There have been a number of parent workshops, parents are invited to the 'Star of the Week' assembly and a friends society has recently been formed. The school's own surveys of parents' views carried out in the first term of the school year were very positive.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body has restructured during the current school year. This came from a desire to scrutinise more closely the work of the school and the shared ambition to make it the best it can be.
  - Governors are committed. They know that there are things that they could do better and are taking action to address this. They have already commissioned an external review of their effectiveness.
  - The governing body has begun to ask the right questions of school leaders; for example, why the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are not closing consistently enough. Governors report that they receive much more information about how the school is performing now than they have in the past.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Child protection procedures and record keeping are thorough and well managed. Leaders and staff take account of national priorities, such as preventing extremism. This has included additional training and a review of safeguarding policies. Checks of safeguarding systems are in place, but these are not as regular and rigorous as they could be.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**requires improvement**

- While teaching is strong in some year groups, over time it is weaker in Years 2, 3 and 4.
- Teachers' expectations vary across the school and this has a direct impact on the quality of pupils' work, learning and progress.
- Not all teachers use the support of the generous deployment of teaching assistants well enough. This means that in some classes they spend too much time just observing the lesson.
- The range of questions that some teachers ask does not always make pupils think hard enough. Teachers are sometimes too ready to accept pupils' first answer, rather than prompting them to develop or extend their ideas.
- Across the school, 'cold tasks' that find out what pupils already know and can do before starting a topic have been introduced. However, teachers do not always use this information well enough to plan the lessons that follow. This means that sometimes tasks are too easy or too hard, which slows pupils' progress. The specific needs of pupils with special educational needs are not always met well enough to enable them to be able to do what they are asked and make good progress.
- The school follows a highly structured literacy programme. It is well taught by teachers and teaching assistants because they have been trained well to deliver it. Many teaching assistants transfer the skills they have learned through this training to other aspects of their work. The focus is rightly now on ensuring that pupils use these reading and writing skills to produce high-quality work with accurate spellings in all subjects.
- Strong practice in Years 1, 5, 6 and Reception Year is characterised by high expectations. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to make good use of all available learning time. Their questioning makes pupils think hard to develop and explain their answers. Teachers make sure that pupils understand the written and verbal feedback they offer and through this guide them to improve their work. They know the next steps pupils need to take in their learning very well and weave these into their teaching.
- Recent whole-school strategies to improve pupils' mathematical skills and the speed with which they can use these are an important step in the school's drive to raise standards further. Pupils regularly use the mathematics skills that they learn to solve problems.
- Reports sent home about how well each child is doing are of good quality. Parents told inspectors that recent parents' evenings with the teachers were helpful and informative.
- In response to feedback from parents, the school has implemented a new 'Prime and Practice' homework policy. There is a weekly routine established across the school with the focus on preparing pupils for learning that is coming (prime) or practising skills that they have learned. This means that homework links well to learning in class and in many cases is of high quality.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders have correctly identified that although pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, this is not as well developed and secure as it could be. Pupils were taking part in workshops to learn more during the inspection.
- The school has changed its approach to how it is tackling bullying. The range of inspection evidence shows that there is some bullying but it is not frequent. A significant minority of parents who responded to Parent View did not agree that the school deals well with bullying. Parents spoken to said that there had been issues in the past but that these have reduced. Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and are confident that the school deals with it when it does occur. School records show that staff take incidents seriously, deal with them and log them.

- Pupils mostly try hard to concentrate and do well in their work. They are proud of their school and achievements. In the classes where teachers have the highest expectations, the better quality of pupils' work reflects this. In others, the quality of handwriting, spelling and presentation is more variable, especially for boys.
- Regular circle time and planned personal, social and health education sessions promote pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils report that there are still a notable few who make the wrong choices. Some are frustrated when the behaviour of these few disrupts their learning.
- Pupils feel safe. They learn about a range of ways to keep themselves safe and healthy.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils, parents and staff gave very mixed views about whether behaviour is good enough, especially at breaktimes. Pupils say that they hear bad language or see fights more often than they would like.
- The school has clear behaviour policies and procedures. Pupils say that staff follow these consistently. However, pupils, staff and parents have mixed views about whether they work.
- Most pupils join in well in lessons. In some classes, they are very enthusiastic and show excellent attitudes to learning. However, in other classes, where the work is sometimes not interesting or challenging enough, a few pupils stop working and waste time, particularly boys. Most pupils say that behaviour is better in lessons than it is at breaktimes.
- Exclusions have fallen dramatically. The school carefully logs the use of its behaviour systems to check that the number of incidents reduces. Behaviour observed during the inspection, including during a wet lunchtime, gave inspectors no cause for concern.
- In recent years, attendance has been low, registering in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Leaders are tackling this rigorously and current attendance is significantly higher than it has been in the past. However, the number of pupils that are frequently absent is still relatively high.
- Staff have worked hard across this large school to create a bright, vibrant environment showcasing a wide range of pupils' achievements. Pupils respect the displays and tidy well-organised areas. They are friendly, polite and courteous to visitors as they move around the school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- Although standards are higher at the end of each key stage than at the time of the previous inspection, the progress of current pupils is too variable because teaching is not consistently good over time.
- The gaps between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and others in school and nationally have not closed consistently over time. For current pupils, gaps are closing up until the end of Year 3, but are mostly widening in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Standards are higher in reading, writing and mathematics than in other subjects.
- Pupils' achievement across Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics improved dramatically at the end of 2014. This was because these pupils made much quicker progress than previous cohorts did. However, this was not sustained at the end of 2015.
- Since the previous inspection, Year 6 leavers have reached at least average levels of attainment. This is partly because more pupils that started the key stage below expectations made better progress and caught up. This has given them the level of skills necessary to make a good start to their secondary education.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has similarly improved and been broadly average since the previous inspection. However, current Year 2 pupils have experienced a number of changes of teacher, which has slowed their progress.
- Outcomes for the most-able pupils have varied over time. Work does not always really stretch them or make them think hard enough. Similarly, current pupils that have fallen behind are not catching up quickly in all year groups. The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is also variable and requires improvement overall.
- Pupils make good progress learning their letters and the sounds that they make (phonics). Results of the phonics screening check in Year 1 have strongly improved since the previous inspection. Staff are rightly focused on making sure that pupils always use these skills well in their reading and writing. Pupils have positive attitudes to reading and make good use of the inviting, well-resourced library.

## Early years provision

is good

- From starting points that are often lower than those typical for their ages, children make good progress across early years provision. Their progress particularly accelerates in Reception Year, where the provision and teaching is strongest. Consequently, they are well prepared for the level of work expected in Year 1.
- The early years leader role-models effective practice. Her high expectations have created a calm and purposeful environment, which allows children to thrive. She has ensured that the provision meets the differing needs of pupils well. Strong links with the children's centre and other professionals mean that children with special educational needs are identified early and action taken to ensure that they are successfully included.
- Over time, the gap between the performance of disadvantaged children compared with their peers has fluctuated. In some years, including most recently, disadvantaged pupils have done much better than their peers have. As well as individual support in class, these children now have a dedicated mentor helping them to catch up where necessary.
- Children mix well and learn how to cooperate with each other. They behave well and respond quickly to adults' requests. Their confidence and willingness to interact and engage with others shows that they feel safe.
- The activities provided for children are inviting and have a clear focus. Nursery children enjoyed making patterns using brightly coloured blocks and cotton reels. The teaching assistant made this more fun by turning it into a game. She challenged children further by encouraging them to explain how their pattern repeated. Others enjoyed getting their hands messy in 'gloop' and 'sparkles' while a teaching assistant reinforced how to form letter shapes using their fingers in the goo.
- Without prompting, Nursery children were keen to explain what they are learning through the highly structured literacy programme. They were proud of the stars that they get and could explain that they are for learning their letter sounds and formation.
- Well-planned, taught sessions in Reception Year move children's learning on in clear, simple steps. Staff have taken the strong principles of the literacy programme and are now using these to teach children number skills too. Simple but effective approaches keep children focused, such as using dry-wipe tabards to write numbers on; turning children into number robots to make up and solve simple sums.
- Other aspects of learning are similarly well developed. The outdoor area was used well to develop children's gross motor skills playing a hockey-like game. Children played independently and showed the ability to share and take turns. This was also helping to build the confidence of children with special educational needs.
- Strong leadership means that children's transition into, through and out of the provision is very well supported. This includes staff visiting children at home, partly in an effort to build closer links with parents.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118437
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002343

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	460
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pat Wozencroft
<b>Headteacher</b>	Barry Symons
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 333820
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.oaklands.medway.sch.uk">www.oaklands.medway.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@oaklands.medway.sch.uk">office@oaklands.medway.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3–4 October 2013

## Information about this school

- Oaklands School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Nearly half of all pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding, which is much higher than the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority (disadvantaged pupils).
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those identified with special educational needs that receive support within school is well above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The on-site children's centre is managed by the governing body but was not part of this inspection.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school has recently commissioned support from a national leader of education (NLE), the executive headteacher of Davies Lane Primary School, Leytonstone. This support is at a very early stage, although Oaklands staff have already visited Davies Lane.
- The headteacher started in April 2015, after the previous inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors took account of a wide range of evidence to find out what it is like to be a child at this school and how well they are taught. This included visiting lessons, speaking to pupils and looking at their work.
- Inspectors talked informally with a wide range of parents as they collected their children from school.
- They spoke with teachers and leaders and reviewed a range of the school's documents and records.
- An inspector met with two representatives of the local authority and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 45 responses to the online Parent View survey, the school's own survey of parents and 38 questionnaires returned by staff.
- They sampled other aspects of the school's work and scrutinised safeguarding arrangements.

## Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Reid	Ofsted Inspector



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