

Inspection of a good school: The Oaks Infant School

Gore Court Road, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 1GL

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

Outcome

The Oaks Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say they love being at school. Staff put pupils at the forefront of all they do. The school ethos is welcoming and nurturing. Pupils are happy and safe. Kindness is a core value, brought to life by everyone, and this shines through this school community. As one parent said, 'This is such a lovely school that always puts the children and their families first.'

Staff have high expectations of pupils. Pupils try their best and behave very well. The school's 'Learning Wood' principles help pupils understand learning values by assigning them to animal characters. Pupils enjoy referring to these fictitious animals and see the importance of having a positive attitude, being focused and finding things out for themselves. Learning is exciting here for pupils, and it is a wondrous place to be.

Pupils get on with each other well and there is no unkindness. They said, 'We are a really friendly school'. Pupils are confident that should there be any friendship issues between them that they couldn't fix themselves, staff would quickly sort the matter out.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about The Oaks Infant school and say they feel very fortunate that their child attends this school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Trustees, local governors, school leaders and staff are determined to provide the best education they can. Staff have nothing but praise for their senior leaders and how they support them to grow as teaching professionals. As one member of staff said, 'We have a passion to provide pupils with the best opportunities.'

Leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum to make sure it is ambitious and builds pupils' knowledge and skills well. Staff have a great interest in how pupils learn and follow latest research evidence. While leaders have developed new subject plans in detail, there has not yet been enough time for them to be implemented in full.

The teaching of reading is a strong aspect of this school. Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme to enhance this area of the curriculum further. Staff carefully select books at the right level for each child. This helps them to gain confidence by applying their phonics skills and becoming more fluent readers. Staff keep a close eye on all pupils, helping any that fall behind to catch-up quickly. Pupils listen attentively to their teacher reading to them, and many feel that story time is a highlight of their day.

The mathematics curriculum is developed well. Staff enthuse and engage pupils in learning mathematics. Pupils apply their understanding by solving real-life problems. The vast majority of pupils achieve well in mathematics. A small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have difficulties keeping up with their understanding in mathematics. This is because sometimes they need smaller steps to help them grasp their next piece of learning.

Children get off to a flying start in Nursery and Reception. The inspiring environment provides interesting hooks and stimuli for all areas of their learning. Staff encourage creativity and ignite children's interests and embed early learning. Key stage 1 staff build on this firm foundation and make sure that pupils continue a love of learning.

An example of an area of the curriculum that has recently been enhanced is physical education (PE). Pupils especially enjoy dance, with one pupil declaring, 'Everyone loves to dance here.' Leaders have matched the PE curriculum to national curriculum expectations and beyond by including additional experiences. For example, pupils enjoy taking part in sports such as boccia, a ball sport played in the Paralympics. In addition, leaders plan for every child to be able to ride a two-wheeled bicycle by the end of Year 2.

The wider curriculum includes many opportunities to develop wider pupils' personal skills, such as self-confidence and empathy. There are a large range of clubs and activities to support pupils' interests. The school develops the whole pupil, ensuring that they are prepared well for their future lives.

The school identifies and supports pupils with SEND to make substantial progress towards their personal targets. The vast majority of pupils with SEND are provided with exactly the right support so that they thrive across the curriculum. Parents of pupils at The Acorn Centre, the school's specialist provision for pupils with speech and language difficulties, praise the staff for the support their children receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff are well trained in safeguarding matters. All staff have pupils' welfare at the centre of their work. They are alert to safeguarding issues and know how to report any concerns. Leaders respond quickly to any safeguarding matter and keep meticulous records of actions that they take.

Pupils are made aware about how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders make sure that required checks are made on any adult who works with children at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have planned an exciting and relevant curriculum in all subjects. Leaders should continue to embed the teaching of these well-developed plans. In particular, they should make sure that teaching always identifies exactly what pupils already know, especially in mathematics. They should then ascertain the small steps, if needed, to support all pupils, especially those with SEND, to make progress by learning and remembering more.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Oaks Community Infant School, to be good in February 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144870
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10203162
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Stewart
Headteacher	Lyndsey Wood
Website	www.theoaksinfantschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Oaks Infant School converted to become an academy in August 2017, joining the Potential in Everyone Academy Trust (PiEAT). In June 2021, PiEAT merged with a local multi-academy trust, The Village Trust. The newly merged multi-academy trust is called Our Community Multi-Academy Trust and includes 10 schools.
- When its predecessor school, The Oaks Community Infant School, was last inspected by Ofsted, in January 2016, it was judged to be good.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND on the school site, The Acorn Centre, for children with speech, language and communication difficulties. There are spaces for 12 pupils, and it currently has eight pupils on roll.
- The school has nursery provision.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinators, subject leaders and other members of staff. She also spoke with the chair of the multi-academy trust, two further members of trust staff and the chair and vice-chair of the local governor monitoring committee.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Various other subject curriculum documents and plans were reviewed.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector viewed the school's website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding leader and deputy, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with trustees, trust staff and governors.
- The inspector spoke to parents and staff to gather their views. The inspector looked at 72 responses to Parent View, including 50 free-text responses. The inspector also considered 39 responses to the survey for staff.
- The inspector spoke to a large number of pupils throughout the inspection. She also looked at the responses to the pupils' questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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