

Inspection of a good school: Oaklands Primary School

Great North Road, Oaklands, Welwyn, Hertfordshire AL6 0PX

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 April 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Oaklands is a 'small school with big ambition' for all pupils. This is a view shared by pupils, parents and staff.

Pupils love to learn new things and are enjoying the newly implemented curriculum which is starting to help pupils know and remember more.

Behaviour at Oaklands is good. Pupils are kind and quick to help each other out. Pupils say they are safe and know who to talk to if they are ever worried about something. Pupils report that bullying does not happen here.

This is an inclusive school where everybody is valued. Pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs met well.

The wide range of responsibilities that pupils take on helps pupils prepare for the wider world. Pupils talk excitedly about their eco-council meetings. Members of the school council are involved in future plans for the 'giant tepee' in the garden. Older pupils act as positive role models to the younger children on the playground.

Many pupils and parents speak highly of the way staff in school have supported their social and emotional needs, particularly during the pandemic. They said, 'They don't know what they would have done without it.'

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

Many leaders are new in post. They have designed an ambitious curriculum which is currently being implemented. They have high expectations of staff and pupils. The curriculum is well sequenced and has started to be delivered well. Staff have good subject

knowledge as a result of ongoing training. There is a key focus on pupils learning new vocabulary and knowledge. However, pupils are not always confident to recall prior learning and make the necessary links to know more and remember more. It is too early to see the impact of leaders' intended curriculum.

Leaders have made significant changes to the reading curriculum. They have introduced a new phonics scheme. This is being used alongside other reading interventions. However, these approaches are not being delivered consistently well enough to help the weakest readers catch up. Leaders have started to review the current range of old and new systems, but leaders are not clear about what is working the most effectively. The majority of pupils receive books that are well suited to their phonics knowledge. Staff are skilled at supporting pupils to break down unfamiliar words. Pupils understand how their lessons help them improve their skills in inference, retrieval and prediction. Most pupils in key stage 2 are confident readers.

Children in early years settle into their learning quickly and are familiar with the school's routines. They have positive relationships with their teachers and enjoy the range of experiences on offer. All areas of the curriculum are well sequenced. Children have the knowledge and understanding of concepts that help them to be prepared for Year 1. On occasion, information on what pupils know in reading and mathematics lessons is not being used well enough to ensure all groups of pupils in Reception and Year 1 are taught what they need to achieve well. Leaders have planned some additional training in assessment for learning to improve this.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Staff are well supported to plan and deliver learning that ensures pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Where adaptations are required, for example personalised timetables, leaders work with external agencies effectively and appropriate specialist help is used to support pupils well.

Pupils' personal development is an integral part of the Oaklands' curriculum. Pupils have opportunities beyond the school day. These include sports, arts, dance and musical events. All pupils' faiths are celebrated, and pupils are knowledgeable about other cultures and religions. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their mental health and have a daily check-in about their well-being. Staff do not shy away from talking about sensitive topics such as extremism, war or death.

The newly formed governing body has high aspirations for the pupils at Oaklands. It has supported leaders in making changes to the curriculum. It knows there is further work to do to make sure the changes are embedded and are having the desired impact. Governors have not asked for or been provided with enough information about vulnerable pupils. Therefore, they have not scrutinised this provision in the same detail as they have with other aspects of the quality of education.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that the embedding of the newly introduced curriculum, assessment and early reading may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders appropriately record and follow up on concerns and re-refer cases if they still want further outcomes. They are tenacious and resilient to get help for their pupils. Action is taken to make sure pupils are safe.

Staff have all received up-to-date training on how to keep pupils safe. They are confident in recording concerns and following and understanding the policies and procedures.

Staff know pupils well. Pupils spoken to understand how to keep themselves safe online and physically. They use the worry box in their class if they need to or alternatively talk to an adult in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The newly introduced phonics programme and other programmes are not being used consistently well to improve the fluency of the weakest readers. Leaders must review the current range of programmes being used to help pupils catch up. Leaders must ensure all staff are confident to deliver the reviewed plans as leaders intend, and that this is closely supported and monitored by leaders.
- The newly designed curriculum introduced across the school, including in early years, is well sequenced and has started to be delivered well. It is too early to see the impact of this curriculum yet. Currently, pupils are not always confident to recall prior learning and make the necessary links to know more and remember more. Leaders must continue to monitor the implementation of the curriculum to ensure pupil can better link their learning to know and remember more.
- Assessment in reading and mathematics is not always used effectively to plan appropriately matched learning for the youngest pupils in early years and Year 1. Leaders must deliver the planned training on assessment for learning so this can be used by teachers to better inform the sequence of learning delivered for all groups of pupils.
- Governors do not ask for enough information about vulnerable pupils. Therefore, they are unable to ask enough probing questions about them. Leaders must provide this information, particularly about attendance, behaviour and safeguarding, so that these areas are scrutinised and leaders are held to account for all areas of their school improvement work.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2011.

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	117261
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10200099
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elin Jane Gillard
Headteacher	Tom Hassan
Website	www.oaklands.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- The special educational needs coordinator and the key stage 2 leader have been in interim leadership posts since January 2022.
- The majority of the members of the governing body are new. The chair was elected in October 2021.
- At the time of the inspection, leaders do not use 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 leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the senior leadership team and the school improvement partner. The inspector also met with the chair, the vice-chair and four other members of the governing board.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Other aspects of the curriculum were scrutinised to give the inspector further evidence for the quality of education.
- The inspector spoke to parents on the morning of the second day of inspection. The inspector spoke to pupils in the playground and the lunch hall. The inspector visited the breakfast and after-school club.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the school's single central record, considered the safeguarding policy and spoke to staff and pupils. The inspector looked at case files and discussed a range of safeguarding records with the designated safeguarding lead.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation regarding special educational needs, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector considered 69 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 69 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. The inspector reviewed 22 responses to the online staff survey and 76 responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Isabel Davis, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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