

# Inspection of a good school: Oaklands School

Weedswood Road, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent ME5 0QS

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

## Outcome

Oaklands School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to welcome visitors to their joyful school. Everyone plays their part in helping this community to thrive. Pupils are ambassadors for subjects and aspects of school life, such as anti-bullying. The 'junior leadership team' assist with running the school. Their achievements include writing the pupil-friendly behaviour policy. Staff frequently welcome parents into school to share experiences with their children, such as painting and cooking.

The school's methods of 'consistently calm adults' and 'together everyone achieves more' are well-embedded. Relationships between staff and pupils show trust and understanding. If pupils make mistakes, they embrace chances to put things right themselves. This has led to a warm and inclusive culture across the school.

Outdoor learning and swimming lessons take place onsite for all pupils every year. The farm and allotment are successfully educating pupils about growing food through first-hand experiences. Trips are meaningfully planned. When learning about World War Two, pupils visited reconstructed war-time trenches to understand what life was like for soldiers.

Pupils love the running track and wide range of sporting opportunities. They are thrilled to welcome schools from across the trust for competitions, such as the action-packed cricket festival that took place during the inspection. Music is also a high priority. Pupils learn instruments such as guitar, piano and violin.

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

The curriculum is ambitiously planned with precise knowledge, skills and vocabulary. Strong teamwork, training and communication ensures that there is strong subject knowledge across the teaching team. Leaders work effectively with parents to identify support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Timely assessments detect where pupils need targeted help. Staff help pupils with practical

resources, sensory support, visual aids, catch up sessions, pre-learning and sharply focused revision activities. No pupil is left behind; there is high aspiration for all.

The phonics programme is delivered well. As a result, pupils achieve highly with early reading. Well-trained adults lead small groups, using precisely-matched texts to ensure that children start decoding words successfully from early years onwards. Teachers use frequent assessments to identify gaps and assign catch up sessions. This additional support for individual pupils is adapted to focus on the exact sounds needed through constant practice. As they move through the school, pupils develop fluency and understanding in their reading and an enthusiasm for books.

Teachers are ambitious for all pupils to master number skills and real-life mathematics to prepare them for the modern world. Pupils solve real-life investigations involving time, measurement, managing budgets and converting currencies. Pupils can explain methods clearly and use the language modelled and planned by teachers. 'Re-activate' revision activities and same day catch up sessions help pupils to remember their learning. In Reception, children name 3D shapes by identifying properties using impressive mathematical vocabulary. Number work in Nursery gives children a flying start. The caring early years team have high ambition. They launch the school's relentless focus on practising and securing reading and mathematical talents to help all pupils, including those with SEND, to achieve well.

Leaders aspire for pupils to become skilled historians by using artefacts, analysing sources and making comparisons. However, this ambition is not always embedded in lessons as some pupils find it hard to recall and connect knowledge. In some lessons, pupils remember the activities, not what they have learned. In older years, the model is implemented more effectively. For example, pupils recall extensive knowledge about the plague and World War Two.

Behaviour is positive in lessons and at playtimes. Pupils proudly meet the high expectations shared across leaders, trustees and staff. This consistency ensures success for pupils who need help to manage their emotions. Pupils understand that some of their peers require sensory breaks to help them to be ready for learning.

Wider opportunities are impressive. There is a diverse range of clubs to ensure that there is something for everyone. Pupils can access many sports and creative activities, such as drama and knitting. Staff run activities free of charge, so nobody misses out. Leaders are tireless to ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit from the offer. Breakfast club and free playtime porridge ensure that all pupils enjoy healthy food to fuel them for their day of learning.

Pupils love learning about different faiths and cultures. The carnival celebration brings everyone together so pupils can showcase and share their learning about different regions of the world.

Trustees and governors show deep understanding and care for their community. They provide strong support and challenge to promote school improvement. The inspirational headteacher leads by example. Teachers are unanimous in their praise for school leaders.

Staff are highly motivated, supported and proud. Parents say the school goes 'above and beyond' to give children 'an amazing start to lifelong learning'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe and identify trusted adults who help them with any worries. Well-designed curriculum content helps pupils to develop understanding of healthy relationships and online safety. Teachers prepare older pupils for secondary school by teaching them about issues such as substance misuse.

Training is regularly updated to ensure that all staff understand and follow rigorous safeguarding processes. Leaders follow up concerns by making referrals for specialist support. Communication is strong and records are kept well. Staff provide pastoral care to vulnerable families, including workshops to help parents manage children's emotions.

Leaders are diligent when recruiting adults. With strong support from trustees and governors, robust processes are always followed.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some foundation subjects, curriculum implementation does not fully match the aims and ambitions of the curriculum design. As a result, pupils do not always know and remember their learning across all subjects. Teachers should design lesson activities with greater precision to ensure that learning in every subject is retained in pupils' long-term memories.

## **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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2018.

## 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148117
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268530
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	451
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	John Norley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Barry Symons
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.oaklands.medway.sch.uk">www.oaklands.medway.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school joined the Westbrook Trust in 2020.
- Oaklands Schools converted to become an academy school in September 2020. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school offers nursery provision, a breakfast club and after-school care, all led by school staff.
- The school currently does 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.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, history and mathematics. The inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read and observed catch-up interventions to learn how staff provide extra support to pupils.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders, teachers, support staff and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCo).
- The inspector met four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector met with the chief executive officer and the chair of trustees.
- To evaluate safeguarding, the inspector studied documents and records, including the school's single central record and child protection referrals. The inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspector considered the responses to the staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text responses.
- The inspector talked to pupils to learn their views about the school.

### **Inspection team**

Scott Reece, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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