

Inspection of Oaklands Primary School

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

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 July 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at this school. They talk positively about their learning. Pupils appreciate all the interesting and different subjects they are taught. They are keen to learn and they engage actively in lessons. Pupils respond well to their teacher's advice. Pupils value how much all adults care about them and understand their individual needs. Pupils and adults show mutual respect.

Pupils are polite and thoughtful. They like to be able to mix at breaktimes with pupils from other year groups, especially on the field. Older pupils act as good role models. Younger pupils enjoy the attention and care older pupils show them. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere around school. Pupils know there are rules and routines, and follow these well. The respect pupils show each other means that bullying is very rare. Pupils are in no doubt that adults would address it if it did happen. Pupils know they are safe.

Pupils of all ages benefit from regular access to outdoor learning. They like the dens and the campfire they have on site. Pupils like to play on the large climbing frames. They also enjoy sports clubs and look forward to the residential trip in Year 6.

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

Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Leaders have continued to develop an ambitious curriculum from Reception upwards. Leaders have ensured that curriculum plans in most subjects help teachers know what to teach and when. Teachers also regularly check what new knowledge pupils can remember. Teachers are getting better at adapting learning to meet the needs of their class and to address misconceptions.

Leaders have ensured that teachers deliver the new phonics programme well. Teachers frequently check what sounds pupils know and how fluently they are reading. Leaders are adept at identifying pupils who need extra help. These pupils get effective and timely support. As a result, any pupils who fall behind in reading quickly catch up. Older pupils read a range of texts and are fluent and independent readers. Leaders have recently established a new approach to reading for key stage 2. Some staff are still getting used to this to ensure all pupils get the detailed knowledge leaders intend.

In a few foundation subjects, leaders have not ensured that there is enough time to deliver the amount of curriculum content they have planned. This means that teachers cover this subject knowledge at a superficial level. Teachers are also not clear what specific prior learning in these few subjects needs recapping. This limits how well pupils can relate new learning back to what they already know in these curriculum areas.

In Reception, adults intervene sensitively in children's play to deepen understanding and language development. Children can demonstrate they have retained key knowledge across a range of curriculum areas that they will need in Year 1.

Staff provide tailored support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have clear systems in place to ensure pupils with SEND have appropriate support to access the curriculum alongside their classmates. Staff follow advice from external specialists, where required. As a result, pupils with SEND learn, develop and achieve well.

Pupils behave well. The very youngest children take turns and concentrate on their learning. Pupils treat each other with respect. There are few incidents of unkind behaviour. If it does happen, leaders address it appropriately. Pupils undertake their learning with enthusiasm and determination. Pupils who need additional help to focus are supported by skilled adults. Pupils can easily share concerns with the pastoral team. This means these pupils can settle successfully into lessons.

Pupils are ready for life in modern Britain. Pupils understand equality and apply this in how they conduct themselves. They reflect deeply on societal issues and show a mature appreciation of individual liberty. Pupils participate in sports festivals. They take on roles and responsibilities. Some pupils are sports leaders or selected as class captains or to stand on the eco-council.

Staff like working at the school. They receive regular professional development. Staff appreciate how leaders consider their well-being.

Governors fulfil the role of 'critical friend' well. They work closely with a local authority adviser. They carry out statutory duties effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils have trusted adults to talk to if they are worried. They are taught about how to stay safe online, about healthy and safe relationships and about road safety. Leaders ensure all statutory checks on adults who work in school are in place. Staff have regular safeguarding training and know how to report concerns about pupils or adults. Leaders respond to all concerns promptly and refer as necessary to external agencies. Governors provide effective oversight of safeguarding, including for the most vulnerable pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, leaders have planned a curriculum with a lot of content to cover. Teachers are not clear what key knowledge to focus on in the time given and so cover these subjects at a superficial level. This means pupils are not developing enough depth of knowledge in these subjects. Leaders need to review these curriculum subjects to clearly ascertain what pupils need to know. Leaders then need to be clear that the time given to teach this knowledge in depth is manageable.
- In some foundation subjects, leaders have also not explicitly identified the exact prior learning pupils need to build on. This means, in these subjects, pupils are not making connections with what they already know. This limits how well they can achieve the detail of knowledge leaders intend. Leaders need to ensure that prior learning is explicitly signposted in these subjects. Teachers must then check that pupils can recall securely this prior learning before teaching pupils something new.

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

Unique reference number	117261
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10268057
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Elin Gillard
Headteacher	Thomas Hassan
Website	www.oaklands.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 April 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Currently, the school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school care.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the pastoral leader, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and physical education. For the deep dives, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' workbooks

and spoke with teachers and support staff. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors also looked at a range of pupils' work from across the curriculum.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector spoke to the school improvement adviser and also read their visit reports.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of meetings of the governing body and the school's own self-evaluation and school development plan.
- The inspectors looked at the arrangements for safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks. The inspectors spoke with leaders and staff about the systems and processes to support safeguarding and the safeguarding ethos in the school.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including 77 free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the school gate. Inspectors considered the 24 responses to the staff survey. They also spoke to a range of staff during the inspection. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke to several pupils from different year groups during the inspection.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michael Scott

Ofsted Inspector

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