

Inspection of a good school: Oaklands School

Whitehall Road, Evington, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 6GJ

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 February 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at Oaklands School. Staff know the pupils, and their unique needs, very well. Everyone is highly ambitious for all pupils to fulfil their potential. This ambition is reflected in the school's motto: 'Building foundations for fulfilling futures'.

Parents and carers are strong advocates for the school. They feel well informed and fully involved in their children's education and care. Many praised the dedication of staff and the significant improvements they have seen in their children's development since joining the school. As one summed up: 'I finally feel excited for my child's future.'

The school's approach to 'positive behaviour support' ensures that pupils engage calmly and happily with their learning. If pupils occasionally struggle to regulate, skilled staff step in quickly to provide support. Pupils clearly communicated that they like school and that teachers are kind and keep them safe. Pupils expressed their understanding of the meaning and importance of being kind to everyone. Positive relationships are at the heart of the school.

Pupils progress well because the curriculum is highly personalised to their needs. They enjoy the 'ASH Fridays' when time is devoted to arts, sports and hobbies. These activities enrich the curriculum and nurture pupils' talents and interests effectively.

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

The curriculum has been extremely well planned and developed over time. Pupils are carefully placed in one of the four curriculum pathways according to their communication and interaction needs. This includes the youngest children in the early years foundation

stage. Highly trained and skilled staff teach the school's eight areas of learning within the pathways. These include 'traditional' aspects such as literacy, mathematics and science, alongside others such as independence and life skills and emotional regulation and well-being. Leaders and staff work highly effectively in teams to continually develop and refine the curriculum content, in their weekly meetings.

Pupils' learning is constantly being checked through the school's own 'OPAL' learning ladders assessment programme. This means that staff precisely track each pupil's steps of progress, however small, to plan their daily activities. The system ensures that everything naturally connects to the targets in each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan.

In 2023, following an expansion of the school building, an exciting new pathway was introduced: the 'nurture' pathway. This caters for pupils who are at the earliest stages of development and engagement. These pupils have significant communication needs. The nurture curriculum has been meticulously planned, based on leaders' research, and offers an innovative approach to learning. There are clear early signs that this approach is having a significant impact on pupils' learning and engagement. For example, the daily 'continuous provision' sessions offer a wide range of safe sensory experiences designed to engage pupils with their environment. Pupils' responses to this provision are highly positive.

The other pathways are equally well matched to pupils' needs. For example, the most able learners in the 'cherry' pathway confidently apply what they know in mathematics. They show resilience in their learning. The standard of work in pupils' books is high. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements in mathematics.

Reading, and communication in its broadest sense, are at the heart of the school. They run as a thread through all of the eight areas of learning. All pupils are encouraged to develop a love of books. They enjoy choosing from the local library or from books in school. Pupils use a range of communication methods and devices with increasing skill and confidence. They are ably supported and encouraged by skilled staff teams. Some pupils learn to read by means of phonics. They can apply their phonics knowledge to read from books that match the sounds they know.

The school promotes pupils' broader personal development very well. There is a growing range of extra-curricular activities provided for pupils. Visits and visitors enrich the curriculum and provide a vital 'window' to the wider world. These include visits to the local church and a celebration of Chinese dancing. Regular 'big days' provide a focus for themes such as science and religious education. Pupils also develop awareness of, and respect for, a range of cultures. These themes are promoted through the school's new 'diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging' policy.

Governors are highly ambitious for the school. They have regular contact with staff and pupils to assure themselves of the provision. Governors are well informed and provide strong support and challenge for leaders. Staff morale is high. Staff, including those who are in the early stages of their career, praise the support given for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The nurture pathway is in its first year of existence. The school is in the process of reviewing and refining the nurture curriculum. Early signs indicate that the provision is highly effective. The school should ensure that this addition to the school's curriculum provision is embedded so that pupils are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

[funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	130353
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10268902
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Robbins
Headteacher	Sarah Osborne
Website	www.oaklands.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Oaklands School is a community special school in which the majority of pupils have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, and all have significant communication and interaction difficulties. Many are non-verbal. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with several members of the local governing body, including the chair.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and reading, mathematics, and emotional regulation and well-being. For each deep dive, inspectors met with pathway leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed some pupils read to a member of staff they know.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum and visited lessons in some other areas of learning.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and at other times around school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Christine Watkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jackie Stirland

Ofsted Inspector

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