

Inspection of The Oaks Community Primary School

Rochester Drive, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 9EX

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a real sense of community at The Oaks. Pupils are warmly welcomed by staff when they arrive each morning. Pupils are supportive of each other, and they are well cared for by staff. This is a school where everyone is valued.

Pupils are polite and welcoming. They value staff's recognition of their achievements and positive behaviours. Pupils work hard in lessons. They enjoy solving problems with their classmates. At breaktimes, pupils are well supervised by staff and they have plenty to do. Pupils said that there is occasionally some bullying in the school but they trust staff to make it stop.

Leaders have high ambitions for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum has been designed to raise pupils' aspirations. However, some pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge in some subjects. These pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities that enhance their school experience. The school ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in sporting activities. There are a wide range of educational visits. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to visit London, theatres and attend a careers fair.

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

Overall, the school has designed an ambitious curriculum for pupils that aims to raise their aspirations. The knowledge that pupils will learn has been identified. However, in some subjects, the most important knowledge that pupils should learn has not been prioritised. This makes it harder for teachers to design learning that helps pupils to build on what they know already. Where this is the case, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills.

In response to low outcomes in mathematics and reading in 2023, the school has prioritised improving the delivery of the curriculum. For example, the school has worked with specialist advisers to provide training to improve teachers' understanding of how best to deliver the reading and mathematics curriculums. This has resulted in improvements in pupils' knowledge and skills, including those with SEND. However, the standards achieved by some pupils remain too low.

The school has prioritised reading. Recently, additional phonics sessions have been added each day. This is helping pupils, including those who find reading more difficult, to catch up and read with greater fluency and confidence. Pupils enjoy reading and being read to by their teachers. They spoke enthusiastically about the books that they have read, and they readily recommended books for others to read.

In some subjects, improvements in the implementation of the curriculum, including in the early years, are at an earlier stage. In these subjects, assessment information does not support teachers to focus sufficiently well on what is most important for pupils to know and remember. Some gaps in pupils' knowledge are missed and some misconceptions are not identified. As a result, some pupils' knowledge does not build successfully over time.

Weaknesses in some pupils' spelling, handwriting and grammatical understanding hampers the quality of their written work. In turn, this hinders how well these pupils progress through the curriculum in many subjects. These pupils are not as well prepared for key stage 2 as they should be.

Staff ensure that the additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly when they join the school. Staff work closely with outside agencies and parents and carers to ensure that pupils receive the help that they need. The support that the school provides to pupils with SEND enables them to access the same curriculum as their peers. However, due to weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum, some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should.

Pupils' behaviour contributes to a calm and positive atmosphere in the school. Most pupils take pride in their learning. Clear routines ensure that the school runs smoothly. Staff are skilled in providing support for pupils who need more help to manage their emotions so that they can successfully return to lessons.

Most pupils attend school regularly and on time. Staff work closely with parents to overcome any barriers to good attendance. The school's actions to reduce absence are comprehensive and they have been successful for many pupils.

The school has prioritised pupils' wider development. There is an extensive range of clubs available to pupils to enable them to explore and further their talents. Pupils have opportunities to take part in physical activity and a wide range of sports. They also enjoy learning about people from different cultures. Older pupils are proud of their work with staff to improve the facilities in the playground and to provide a memorial for their previous headteacher.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school and the community that it serves. They are aware of the school's strengths, and they know what needs to improve. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support to the school.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the actions of leaders to help them to manage their workload and to support their well-being. They value the training that they receive to help them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school is in the process of finalising the content in the curriculum, including in the early years, to meet pupils' needs. This means that teachers lack clarity about the most important knowledge that pupils should learn. This hinders pupils, including those with SEND, from building a secure body of subject knowledge over time. The school should ensure that the curriculum in these subjects focuses on the most important knowledge that pupils need so that they can build their knowledge successfully.
- In some subjects, the school's assessment information does not enable teachers to identify misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge sufficiently well. As a result, some pupils' knowledge does not build successfully over time. The school should ensure that teachers are equipped to use assessment procedures consistently well to remedy any gaps in pupils' knowledge swiftly.
- The school has not addressed some pupils' weaknesses in spelling, handwriting and grammatical understanding sufficiently well. This hinders the quality of these pupils' writing in English and other curriculum subjects. The school should ensure that these weaknesses are swiftly addressed in the early years and key stage 1 so that pupils are suitably prepared for the demands of key stage 2.

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	134249
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10321407
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	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenni Ogden
Headteacher	David Wearing
Website	www.theoak.cheshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has been through a period of significant trauma and challenge. This includes the bereavement of the previous headteacher in July 2023. This has had a significant impact on the school community.
- Following a period of interim leadership, a substantive headteacher started work in the school in April 2024.
- The school does not currently use an alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This is the first routine inspection that 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, other staff and a representative of the local authority. They met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from key stages 1 and 2 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with subject leaders and pupils. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work in art and design, design and technology, English, and science.
- Inspectors discussed the school's development priorities and the organisation of the curriculum with senior leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including safeguarding records, records of meetings from the governing body, school policies and reports from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through meetings and informal discussions.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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

Keith Pullen, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Elizabeth Hulse

Ofsted Inspector

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