Inspection of Oaklands Infant School

Vicarage Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9PH

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	**Outstanding**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Early years provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Cath Williams. This school is part of Bridge Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Mark Farmer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Margaret Wilson.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Oaklands Infant School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Oaklands Infant School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at Oaklands Infant School. Warm and supportive staff ensure pupils are well cared for. The school's ambitious curriculum offers a range of learning experiences to help pupils understand their place in the community. Pupils rise to the school's high expectations and achieve well. From the early years, children are ready to learn. They become curious and confident individuals who persevere when faced with challenges.

Pupils behave well. When in the classroom, they demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils listen to instructions and follow them diligently. They take pride in knowing the Oaklands behaviour code. However, this positive behaviour is not consistent outside of the classroom.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Strong positive relationships help pupils feel safe and settle into the school quickly. From Reception, children learn to ask for help when they need it.

The wide range of opportunities on offer within the curriculum help pupils build their knowledge of the wider world. They learn how they can make a difference. Pupils enjoy participating in activities such as raising money for charity and visiting elderly residents as part of their community award.

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

The school has implemented a well-designed curriculum. From the early years, children develop the knowledge they need to build on previous learning. Leaders skilfully review and adapt the curriculum to meet the changing needs of the school's intake. This includes pupils with lower starting points who go on to achieve highly. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Pupils are confident when accessing their learning. They are curious and like to ask questions. From Reception, this is fostered and encouraged. Staff use clear language to explain learning so pupils know what is expected. The school introduces new words and their meaning in each lesson. This supports pupils, including the most disadvantaged, in grasping and applying language quickly. Staff have strong subject knowledge. They use effective questioning to check pupils' understanding. They adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs. This supports pupils to master key knowledge and skills.

The school's phonics programme is well-developed. Staff teach this with consistency, ensuring pupils have the best opportunity to learn to read. Pupils accurately use their phonics knowledge in their reading and writing. Staff quickly identify pupils who are not keeping up with the programme. They put in place support to ensure pupils catch up and keep up with their peers. From Reception, a love of reading permeates through school. Children vote for the story they would like at the end of the day. The reading curriculum enables pupils to become confident, fluent readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from high-quality learning. Staff are highly skilled at recognising pupils' needs and adapting the support as

required. Staff break down key knowledge so pupils with SEND can progress quickly to work on the same learning as their peers. Pupils who access 'the Lodge' provision thrive in this supportive, well-considered environment.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They like playing with their friends and taking part in playground games, especially dancing on the outdoor stage. The school has a secure oversight of pupils' attendance and high expectations of pupils to attend well. The school effectively supports families in improving attendance when needed. As a result, attendance is high and persistent absence is low.

Pupils recognise it is 'their job to learn'. Their behaviour in the classroom is exemplary. However, this does not continue when pupils leave the classroom. On occasion, when pupils do not follow the Oaklands code, they are not consistently corrected by staff around and about school. In these situations, some pupils do not make the right choices.

The well-developed personal development offer ensures pupils become well-rounded individuals. They learn that their voice matters. School trips and experiences ensure pupils make connections with their learning. They learn about other religions and cultures and understand and value why it is important to respect differences.

Staff value the professional development opportunities that help them to support pupils even more effectively. Parents commend the school on the nurture and care staff show to pupils.

Governors and trustees know the school well. They ask detailed questions to ensure the school is providing a high-quality education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not consistently make sure pupils follow the school's high expectations for behaviour outside the classroom. This results in some pupils not upholding the high expectations for behaviour they routinely follow when in class. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to consistently address any behaviour not in line with the school's high expectations.

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	146210
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345508
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Wilson
CEO of the trust	Mark Farmer
Headteacher	Cath Williams
Website	www.oaklands-inf.essex.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Bridge Academy Trust.
- Oaklands Infant School converted to become an academy in September 2018. When its predecessor school, Oaklands Infant School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding for overall effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the governors, including the chair of governors, and the chair of trustees to gather information about the school.
- The lead inspector met with the CEO.
- Deep dives were carried out in early reading, mathematics, computing and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about 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 inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also spoke to some parents in person.
- 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

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Debbie Rogan	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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