

Oaklands Infant School

Vicarage Road, Chelmsford, CM2 9PH

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2013

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher's calm determination to raise pupils' achievement inspires all staff to teach high quality lessons.
- Subject leaders are trained very effectively so they make a strong contribution to school improvement. They are highly skilled teachers who provide models of high quality practice from which others can learn.
- Governors make a major contribution to the school's development. They plan long-term, ask challenging questions and make sure the headteacher has the resources to secure the improvements the school wants to see.
- The school has the capacity to build on its successes and continue to improve. Staff and governors have a very clear understanding of the school's qualities and what is required to improve further.
- High quality and imaginative teaching motivates pupils and leads to their rapid progress and high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- High quality teaching in Reception in a very vibrant environment both inside and outdoors gives the children a very firm foundation for learning in Years 1 and 2.
- Topic themes provide pupils of all ages with many memorable experiences. This results in rapid progress and high levels of motivation.
- The school's success in achieving equality of opportunity is shown by the outstanding progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Pupils rise to the challenge by trying their hardest and persevering at all times.
- The pupils' pride in the school is shown by their excellent behaviour, manners and their respect for others. The new behaviour code makes a strong contribution to the school's exceptionally positive climate for learning.
- Pupils with particular behaviour needs are managed well and supported so they are fully integrated into school life.
- As a result of the firm line taken to reduce absence, attendance has risen and is consistently above average.
- Many activities support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures and have a clear sense of right and wrong.
- Teachers' marking of writing gives clear guidance on how well pupils are doing but does not always require responses to their suggestions about how work can be improved further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, all of which were seen together with the headteacher. All phonics (the sounds that letters make) groups were also visited.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, members of the governing body, including the Chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 65 responses to the online parent questionnaire Parent View.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. The inspector also took account of the 31 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector also listened to pupils in Year 2 read.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- A quarter of the pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. This figure has risen in the last few years and is now broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school receives the pupil premium for a small proportion of the pupils. This is extra government funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average and falling.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs has risen to an average level with an increase in the number of pupils identified with autistic spectrum disorder.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop marking that encourages pupils to respond to teachers' comments so feedback on how to improve is immediate and followed through.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils are very well prepared for learning at junior school and beyond by the end of Year 2. Through high quality teaching in all year groups, they make rapid progress from levels of development expected for their age on entry. The results of Year 2 assessments are consistently high. Almost all pupils reach, and many exceed, the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Children quickly settle into the Reception classes because the strong focus on their personal development and adults encouraging them to collaborate, show initiative and be independent. Pupils quickly acquire key skills such as reading and writing. Children enjoy learning letter sounds to support their reading and can quickly write simple sentences.
- Initial reading skills develop rapidly through very well taught lessons in phonics (the sounds that letters make) to small groups of similar abilities. Pupils also benefit from regular reading at home and in school. They read fluently by using these skills automatically when tackling unfamiliar words. Pupils develop wider reading skills when researching information for their topics.
- Pupils' writing is creative and interesting and often in a neat joined script by the end of Year 2. Pupils prepare extended pieces of writing in a range of styles including in their topics. Pupils' outstanding progress in mathematics is based on their accurate calculating and very secure mental arithmetic skills. These are further developed by being regularly applied to solving problems and to practical activities. Their enquiry skills are also strengthened when undertaking investigations in both mathematics and science.
- The early identification of the learning difficulties of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs enables support to be tailored closely to each individual. In addition, learning support assistants working directly with pupils do so with skill and sensitivity.
- The pupil premium is being used very effectively to provide additional resources, staffing for an emotional and wellbeing programme and family support. This is leading to increased progress for eligible pupils so that the gap in attainment with others is very small by the end of Year 2.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- A key feature of all lessons is the calm and authoritative way in which teachers manage the pupils' learning and behaviour. They quickly capture and retain their interest through imaginative teaching and engaging activities. Teachers use assessment information very well to guide their lesson planning and to ensure that pupils are challenged at all levels. Many lessons are designed so that pupils can work independently and take decisions about how to approach tasks.
- Teachers display a high degree of subject expertise through their confident teaching and probing questioning. They teach key skills systematically and provide continual opportunities for the pupils to apply what they learn so deepening their understanding. They also skilfully adapt their teaching as lessons progress and pupils show how successfully they are learning.
- Additional adults are highly skilled and deployed well either in support of individuals and groups or when leading phonics sessions. Adults working with disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do so sensitively and have formed trusting relationships so these pupils grow in confidence.

- The wide variety of interesting activities in Reception draws the children in and retains their attention so that they concentrate for long periods. Learning flows freely between inside and outdoors where full use is made of the space and garden. Activities such as those to develop fine motor skills involving small construction bricks, tweezers, clay and the computer are well-planned. Adults are fully briefed and know when to intervene to move learning forward and when to let children follow their imaginations.
- Marking is rigorous and alongside other feedback provides the pupils with a clear picture of how well they are doing. Indications are given as to how work can be improved, but these do not always require a response from the pupils who then miss opportunities to take responsibility for improving their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are very keen to fulfil 'The Oaklands Code' at all times and value the praise they receive when they meet its aims. The code has high prominence around the school, having been revised by staff and pupils, and is consistently implemented. On the rare occasions when behaviour falls short of the high standards expected, pupils respond quickly to guidance from staff.
- Pupils are very aware of how to keep themselves and each other safe at all times. Pupils move very sensibly around the school and play happily together at break and lunch times. Their great kindness and consideration is shown by always trying to help someone who might be unhappy or alerting an adult to their situation.
- Bullying just does not happen as far as pupils and parents are concerned. Records also show that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are very rare. The school encourages pupils to resolve any conflicts they may have so any squabbles are soon over.
- Pupils of all ages are very keen to do well in lessons, which as a result flow undisturbed. They concentrate hard because they want to learn and please their teachers. Children learn to work together and discuss ideas in Reception and build on these excellent collaborative skills as they move through Years 1 and 2. They show great independence in selecting resources and deciding on lines of enquiry, such as by asking questions about what they want to learn in each topic.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the pupils and the school. She is continually striving for excellence and searching for ways in which to raise the pupils' achievement so they can meet their challenging targets. She has a very strong and well-trained team around her, all sharing this commitment and working to ensure that no pupil is left behind.
- The headteacher uses formal processes for managing the performance of teachers very effectively. She checks teaching quality rigorously and sets targets to increase pupils' progress. Only those teachers who do so successfully are rewarded with pay increases. Carefully tailored training and support from subject leaders is leading to consistently good teaching with much that is outstanding.
- Topic themes are the main context in which learning takes place. Learning such as in the current topic on 'Hospitals' is stimulated by both organised trips and visitors coming in to school to share their experiences. At the end of the topic there was an assembly for Year 2 pupils to share what they had learnt with their parents. Topics never stay the same as they are constantly revised or

new ones added. The 'Forest School', inventively created in such a small site, adds greatly to the pupils' experiences of learning outdoors.

- Pupils gain many first-hand experiences into similarities and differences between their own and others' cultures. They celebrated Diwali by preparing food, making up a dance and watching a Hindu mother performing the ceremony. An Eid assembly was followed by many activities including Reception children acting out a pilgrimage.
- New sports funding is being used to enhance the school's existing high quality provision for physical education. Spending on more specialists to support lessons and provide clubs and active play at lunchtimes is increasing pupil skill levels. Further spending on transport to sports competitions is already leading to greater pupil participation and enjoyment.
- The school is strongly committed to working in partnership with parents in the development of their children. Regular workshops help parents understand how their children are taught and how they can support them at home such as by hearing them read daily. The school has also worked with parents so they understand how to keep their children safe around new technology.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this outstanding school, although it has remained close enough to understand its qualities so that they are maintained.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors hold the headteacher to account and continually challenge the school to do even better. They are thoughtful and strategic as shown by their careful consideration of the local authority's request to expand. Their high level of expertise is based on regular training, including in understanding assessment data and frequent school visits. They are quite clear about how well the school is performing. Through careful financial management governors have been able to maintain their priority of high staff levels. Governors are fully involved in allocating additional funding such as the pupil premium and evaluating its impact. Governors are very thorough in checking that safeguarding policies are implemented.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114882 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 425360 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 149 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Robert Wiseman |
| Headteacher | Cheryl Allard |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 November 2008 |
| Telephone number | 01245 352166 |
| Fax number | 01245 347098 |
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