

Inspection of Oakwood Primary School

Oakwood Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 0XA

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

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

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 10 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are positive about their experiences at this school. They appreciate that leaders listen to their views. Pupils influence decisions through the school council and pupil surveys. This includes contributing to the behaviour policy, improving recycling facilities and selecting lunchtime activities. Adults empower pupils and, in return, there is mutual respect for everyone. Pupils like the many 'golden' rewards available and are clear on behaviour consequences. Pupils behave well, from early years upwards.

Pupils are proud of their learning. Many pupils achieve highly here, especially in reading and mathematics. Pupils know that staff have high expectations of them and also that there is help when needed. They like the trips they go on to broaden their understanding of topics they are studying. However, pupils would benefit from learning in more depth in some wider curriculum areas and in writing.

Pupils understand how to manage their own personal safety. They learn about first aid. Pupils take on leadership roles to keep the school tidy and organised. Older pupils act as 'reading buddies' to younger pupils. There are several clubs they can attend, such as clubs for football, art and coding. Pupils learn to play the violin and enjoy school performances. They develop into polite and well-rounded young people.

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

The new leaders have quickly and accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers know what to teach, and when, in each subject. They also have good subject knowledge. In reading and mathematics and grammar, pupils do very well in national assessments by the end of Year 6. However, in a few curriculum areas, there is not enough depth or detail about what pupils need to learn. Links to previous learning are not always explicit. This limits how consistently well and in what depth pupils secure knowledge in a few foundation subjects and in writing. Leaders have a clear plan to move this forward.

Teachers do check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. Pupils receive feedback on how to improve their work. In some instances, though, pupils are set work that is not ambitious enough. This means that pupils are not always able to extend their learning further, especially when working independently.

Reading is a strength. Pupils are encouraged to read a wide range of texts that they may not normally choose for themselves. This broadens their literary understanding and appreciation. It also exposes them to rich vocabulary. Younger pupils follow a systematic phonics programme so that most pupils are fluent readers by the end of Year 2. Pupils who struggle with reading receive support. However, there are a few pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), that are not catching up quickly enough in reading. This is because their interventions are not always precisely linked to the gaps in their phonics knowledge.

Overall, pupils with SEND are provided for well. They have their needs identified swiftly and the school provides the appropriate support. Each pupil with SEND has targets set which are regularly reviewed and specialist advice sought. Where targets are precise and provision is closely matched to these targets, pupils with SEND make progress. There are a few pupils with SEND where this is not consistently the case and so they do not achieve as well as they could.

Recent changes in early years provision are having a positive impact on children. Children can turn take, sustain concentration and are articulate. They are skilfully supported in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics and so are ready for Year 1. However, sometimes staff miss opportunities to deepen children's knowledge or fill gaps when they engage in more independent learning activities. This means they do not always achieve what they are fully capable of.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They like coming to school and attendance is high. Through their personal development curriculum, pupils understand about respecting difference. This results in pupils who are understanding of the feelings of others. Pupils focus in lessons. Learning is not disrupted. If it is, this is swiftly dealt with. The behaviour policy is still new, but pupils, parents and staff recognise that rewards and consequences are more consistent and fair.

Pupils have a strong understanding of why discrimination is wrong and the importance of respecting cultures and religions. They have a developing sense of key British values, including democracy and the rule of law.

Governors know the school well. They have the necessary expertise to hold leaders to account and fulfil their statutory duties. The school is mindful of staff well-being and workload. Staff are positive about working here and the training and support they receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some inconsistencies in how well pupils are learning the curriculum across the school. This means pupils are not securing the level of detailed knowledge leaders intend in a few foundation subjects and in writing. The school needs to ensure that all staff are clear on curriculum content and expectations in these areas. Subject leaders then need to check that all pupils are learning these parts of the curriculum in the depth intended and are making the connections to prior learning.

- In some instances, pupils are not provided with meaningful learning opportunities, including in early years. This limits how well pupils deepen and extend their understanding. The school needs to ensure these pupils are set work that is suitably ambitious, so they fully achieve what they are capable of.
- For a few pupils with SEND, the provision in place is not sufficiently aligned to their specific needs. This limits how well these pupils can access and learn the curriculum. The school needs to ensure that targets and support for these specific pupils are precisely matched to their needs.

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	117222
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345176
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	318
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Jacky Elliott
Headteacher	Anna Thompson
Website	www.oakwood.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 April 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up the role in April 2024. She was previously the deputy headteacher. The new deputy headteacher has been in post since June 2024, as has the early years leader.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 judgment 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.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teaching staff.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, computing and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspectors spoke to leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, look at pupils' work and spoke with teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors also looked at a range of curriculum documents from other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body for the school, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation, school improvement plan, governing body minutes and school improvement adviser visit notes.
- The lead inspector spoke with the school's improvement adviser from the local authority.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses gathered through Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, which included 138 free-text comments. There were 30 responses to the staff survey. No pupils answered the pupil survey. However, the inspector spoke to several pupils from different year groups during the inspection, along with a range of staff.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jason Howard	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Petrou	Ofsted Inspector

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