

The Oaklands Primary School

Dolphin Lane, Acocks Green, Birmingham, West Midlands B27 7BT

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The trust, principal and school leadership team have taken decisive action to address areas of weakness following a decline in standards. They ensure that all pupils have every opportunity to thrive academically and personally.
- Governance arrangements have been strengthened. The local governing body knows the school well. Along with school leaders, governors have a determination and aspiration to secure the best possible outcomes for all pupils.
- Current pupils are making strong progress. Standards are rising across the school. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go before pupils' attainment reaches the national average, especially for those who are disadvantaged and/or most-able.
- Pupils benefit from a new, rich and creative curriculum that engages their interest and encourages a desire to learn.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make increasingly good progress because of the effective support that they receive.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils know that they can trust adults to help keep them safe.
- Revised approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics are effective in developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Pupils are proud of their school and generally show good attitudes to learning. Pupils have responded well to a revised strategy to manage behaviour. However, when tasks are not well matched to pupils' needs, some pupils become distracted and they do not make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have increasingly high expectations about what pupils can achieve. Approaches to teaching are, on occasions, inconsistent and this can lead to a lack of challenge or lost learning time.
- Most children in the early years make good progress from their individual starting points. The quality of adults' questioning is too variable, especially in the Nursery. This slows the development of children's language skills.
- A comprehensive assessment system is now in place. This is used effectively to provide extra support for pupils who need it.
- Parents and carers are generally positive about the work of the school. A minority feel that they do not receive enough information about their children's education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - embedding developments across all areas of the curriculum to secure stronger outcomes for pupils.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teaching across the school, including in the early years, is of a consistently high standard so that all pupils are challenged effectively and tasks are well matched to their needs
 - more pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and/or most-able, progress well from their different starting points and achieve at least the standards expected nationally.
- Develop additional opportunities to involve parents in their children's learning and the life of the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Following the last inspection, the school experienced a period of instability that resulted in a decline in the quality of teaching and learning and a drop in the rates of pupils' progress and their outcomes. This situation has been turned around and senior leaders demonstrate a drive and determination to provide the best possible education for all pupils. Actions taken by the trust's chief executive officer and, more recently, the school improvement director, alongside the principal, have resulted in substantial positive change.
- Leaders and the trust are highly ambitious for the school. The principal has high expectations of everyone and there are clear systems in place to ensure that improvements are made and targets are achieved. These raised expectations have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and the work of current pupils. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go before attainment is in line with that seen nationally.
- Middle leaders are now clear about the areas for which they are accountable. They are regularly involved in monitoring the progress pupils make and in checking the quality of teaching. They are well supported in this role by senior leaders and lead practitioners from the trust. Training for staff has a high profile. The positive impact of coaching to develop teachers' skills in interacting with pupils and setting up effective learning tasks can be seen in classrooms. Support for new or less experienced staff is particularly strong.
- During the inspection, staff spoke positively about the many changes that have taken place. They feel valued and part of a strong team. They are positive about having more opportunities to work with and learn from others, both within school and across the trust. Staff value the open and honest feedback they receive from leaders and the increased opportunities they have to access effective training.
- The leadership team has introduced a rich and engaging curriculum that has increased the use of creative and practical activities to stimulate pupils' interests and their desire to learn. This has had a particularly positive impact on the level of engagement which boys show in lessons. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils eagerly took part in drama workshops run by a professional theatre company and Year 3 pupils enthusiastically discussed who Poseidon might be at the start of their topic on Ancient Greece. Work seen in pupils' books reflects a broad range of topics, including a range of science experiments. Music provision is strong; for instance, all Year 4 and Year 5 pupils learn to play the ukulele. High-quality art work is displayed throughout the school.
- Pupils value the opportunities that the school offers them to extend and enhance their learning. Trips and visitors bring topics to life. For example, Year 6 pupils visit Royal Air Force Museum Cosford when learning about the Second World War. Pupils also benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities, including sports, music and arts-based activities.
- Leaders and staff make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance. Pupils learn about a range of different

faiths and cultures. For example, pupils explained that each year group had studied a different religion and used the expertise of pupils in their class who follow that religion to help them. As a result of these many opportunities, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- The school has secure systems in place to support pupils at the early stages of learning English and those with SEND. The inclusion manager and special educational needs coordinator provide strong leadership and high-quality training for staff. Pupils can access a range of interventions that target social and emotional needs as well as providing academic support. The impact of additional support on pupils' progress is tracked carefully. Funding to support pupils with additional needs is used appropriately.
- Historically, pupil premium funding has not been used well to support disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders are developing a new strategy and the funding is now targeted more effectively to better meet the needs of these pupils, both socially and academically. The leadership team understands the barriers to learning and the challenges that these pupils face. Maximising the progress of disadvantaged pupils is a high priority across the school.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is used effectively to improve pupils' participation in, and enjoyment of, sport. After-school sports clubs are well run and well attended. They include football, cricket, archery, boxercise and yoga. Training for staff is helping to ensure that the quality of PE teaching across the school is strong. All pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have access to swimming lessons during the year.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection were highly supportive of the principal and the changes that have taken place in school. The small number of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were more mixed. Some parents feel that they receive too little information about their children's progress and the work of the school more generally.

Governance of the school

- Over the last 18 months, the board of trustees, along with the trust's central team, has taken decisive action to bring about improvements in the quality of education provided by the school. More recently, the board has strengthened governance arrangements through the creation of a local governing body. There is a clear scheme of delegation in place and links between the local governing body and the board of trustees are well defined.
- Trust board members and members of the local governing body have a good understanding of the school's current strengths and priorities for further development. They are well informed of the rapid developments that the school has made, especially since the principal took up post. They are equally clear that more progress can be made, especially in relation to pupils' outcomes.
- Members of the local governing body have relevant skills and experience. Despite being newly formed, the governing body's meeting notes reflect an appropriate level of challenge and questioning to help maximise the impact of developments.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The trust oversees the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Ensuring that children are safe is at the heart of the school and leaders have created a culture where all staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. As a result, the school is a safe environment for pupils and they are well cared for at all times.
- All staff have regular and appropriate child protection and 'Prevent' duty training to understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. They know how to report any concerns about pupils' welfare and they are vigilant in looking out for indicators of risk or harm. Leaders also have a clear understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school.
- The safeguarding team maintains the required confidential records and, when appropriate, the team shares information with relevant external agencies. Leaders are tenacious when concerned about a pupil's welfare and follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all adults appointed to work at the school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. The curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe, for example when using the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is increasingly effective. As a result of high-quality professional development and training, staff now teach English and mathematics lessons with greater confidence and understanding. Their subject knowledge is strong. This has resulted in much higher expectations of pupils and made a clear difference to pupils' rates of progress and the quality of their work.
- Pupils increasingly engage in activities that capture their interest. There are positive relationships between adults and pupils and these encourage pupils to work hard and try their best. Teachers clearly explain to pupils what they need to do and why they are doing it. Classrooms are positive and purposeful learning environments.
- Lessons are planned well and build on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils to extend their thinking and deepen their understanding effectively. Tasks are generally well matched to the needs of pupils. These strong features of teaching are seen in many lessons. However, there is some lack of consistency across the school; where teaching is less effective, this affects the progress pupils make. There is some variability in teachers' expectations of pupils; sometimes there is not enough challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Reading has a high priority across the school. Phonics teaching is strong and this enables pupils to make good progress. Phonics sessions are engaging and pupils apply their phonics skills to read new and unfamiliar words well. Throughout the school, pupils are now reading high-quality, age-appropriate texts, and the development of pupils' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills is threaded across the curriculum.

These factors, along with a new school library, are helping to raise the profile of reading across the school and develop pupils' love of reading.

- Pupils' books from all year groups indicate that the majority are now making strong progress in writing. Teachers are not consistent in addressing poor letter and number formation, especially among younger pupils. This slows the learning for these pupils. Pupils are benefiting from opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences in English and other subjects. Pupils, especially boys, report enjoying writing more because of the engaging contexts in which lessons are set. For instance, pupils in key stage 1 wrote letters to the principal to persuade him not to extend the length of the school day!
- Pupils are now making at least good progress in mathematics. The school's structured approach to the teaching of mathematics encourages pupils to work both collaboratively and independently. This approach has made a tangible difference to the quality of pupils' work since its introduction. Adults increasingly monitor pupils' learning during lessons and provide effective opportunities for pupils to consolidate or extend their learning.
- Rigorous assessment and monitoring systems are used effectively to track the progress pupils make in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress is reviewed regularly and swift actions are taken to support any pupils who are not making sufficient progress. Senior leaders, teachers within the trust and teachers from other local schools check the accuracy of these systems when they meet to compare outcomes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have created a positive, nurturing environment that promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare and enables pupils to thrive. Each classroom includes a range of displays to support pupils' learning and celebrate their achievements. Weekly celebration assemblies acknowledge pupils' successes, whether they are for academic achievement or good behaviour.
- Pupils are polite, happy and confident. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They take a pride in their work and their school. Pupils spoken to say that the changes that have taken place since the principal was appointed are helping their learning, for example through more trips and new experiences.
- Pupils have opportunities to contribute to school life through a range of school-wide responsibilities, such as head boy and girl, house captains and school council representatives. Pupils take these roles seriously and are proud to undertake them. Pupils feel that school leaders value their opinions. These opportunities are helping to prepare the pupils well for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand what bullying is and the various forms that it may take. They say that incidents of bullying in school are rare and they are confident that an adult will deal with any concerns quickly.

- The school's breakfast club provides a calm and well-organised start to the school day. The atmosphere is welcoming and relaxed and pupils are happy to attend.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's revised approach to managing behaviour is effective and focuses on motivating the pupils to behave well. Pupils and staff understand the approach and use it consistently. Older pupils say that it encourages good behaviour and that they can now learn better. Adults actively model the high standard of behaviour expected and reinforce positive behaviour in class and around school.
- Behaviour in classrooms is generally of a high standard, with most pupils being keen to learn. Sometimes pupils lose focus or become distracted. This happens if the level or the pace of the lesson is not right for them and this can have an impact on the progress that they make.
- The number of pupils excluded from school remains above the national average. However, the school uses exclusion appropriately and as a last resort. The well-being and inclusion team tracks all incidents of poor behaviour and provides effective support for pupils who require it.
- School attendance levels remain a little below the national average but leaders have taken robust action to reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. This has improved considerably in the last 18 months. The importance of good attendance has a high profile across the school. Leaders track attendance carefully and promptly follow up any absence. They are alert to the possibility of children going missing from education and work with external agencies to minimise any risk.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Evidence in current pupils' work indicates that the great majority of pupils are now making strong progress. This is consistent across year groups and more pupils are working at the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The evidence supports leaders' views that rates of progress and outcomes are improving rapidly. However, due to historic low expectations, there is a legacy of underachievement that has yet to be fully addressed. In particular, too few pupils are reaching the higher standards expected for their age.
- Pupils' progress across key stage 2 has been poor for the previous three years and was well below that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average in 2016 and 2017. Provisional data for 2018 shows that more pupils reached the expected standard in writing and mathematics but fewer pupils reached the standard in reading. Weaknesses in reading are being addressed through a whole-school focus on developing comprehension skills.

- In 2018, attainment at the end of key stage 1 improved in comparison to previous years but remained below that seen nationally.
- Due to high-quality phonics teaching, most pupils met the expected standard in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.
- Historically, boys' outcomes have not been as strong as girls' outcomes. Adaptations to the curriculum are now having a positive impact on boys' progress, and differences between the standards of boys' and girls' work are starting to reduce.
- Recent in-school assessments for mathematics indicate that improvements are being sustained and, in many cases, further strengthened. This is supported by evidence in pupils' books.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are similar to, and sometimes better than, the outcomes achieved by other pupils in school. Attainment remains low when compared to other pupils nationally but the differences are reducing.
- Pupils with SEND are growing in confidence and are now making secure improvements from their starting points. This is particularly the case in reading. Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully, adapting support and intervention according to need.
- By the end of key stage 2, pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well in writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Many children enter the early years with knowledge and skills that are well below the levels that are typical for their age. The majority of children make strong progress from their starting points, although the proportion of children achieving a good level of development remains stubbornly below the national average.
- The early years leader, working closely with other leaders in school and the trust, adapts the curriculum and learning environment to meet children's needs and engage their interest. The early years leader has a good knowledge of the children and regularly monitors their progress. Information is shared with all relevant adults. As a result, teachers plan activities to move children's learning forward or to address any gaps in their understanding.
- Not all adults are sufficiently skilled at developing children's vocabulary through modelling correct speech or through effective questioning. Opportunities to develop children's spoken language skills are sometimes missed, especially in Nursery, and this has an impact on the amount of progress children can make.
- The teaching of phonics skills in Reception is effective. Children are taught accurately how to recognise the sounds that letters make and blend these together to make words. Leaders have addressed the need to improve children's early writing skills. The new approach is engaging children's interests and encouraging them to want to write. The children's learning journals reflect the progress that they have made since the start of term. The most able children are beginning to write simple sentences independently.

- Early years staff encourage regular communication with parents. Parents are invited to attend weekly 'show and tell' sessions to learn more about their children's achievements.
- In the past, pupil premium funding was not used effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. However, as part of a school-wide focus, this is being addressed. For example, additional interventions to support children's speech and language skills have a positive impact on children's development.
- The early years learning environment, both indoors and outside, has been improved and is now well resourced and organised. It effectively supports all areas of learning.
- Children understand and follow classroom routines. They are motivated and interested in a broad range of activities. Behaviour is good. Children make independent choices with increasing frequency.
- Relationships between adults and children are positive and children are well cared for. Safeguarding procedures are effective and welfare requirements are fully met.

School details

Unique reference number	139183
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10053335

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	434
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Alan Price
Principal	Mark Court
Telephone number	0121 706 2168
Website	www.oaklandsprimary.org.uk
Email address	enquiry@oaklandsprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Since the last inspection, it has expanded and there are now two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 6.
- The school converted to academy status in January 2013 when it joined Ninestiles Academy Trust. The trust's board of directors has oversight of the governance of the school. A newly formed local governing body supports the board members in their roles. A new chief executive officer joined the trust in May 2017 and a school improvement director, primary, was appointed in April 2018.
- The principal has been in post since January 2018.
- Just under half the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The remainder of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning English.

- More than half the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This is twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is a little higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- Nursery children attend on a part-time basis from the age of three years. Children in Reception attend full time.
- The school runs a breakfast club. The local governing body manages this provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 31 lessons or small-group sessions. A number of these observations were undertaken jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked at many examples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils formally and informally. One inspector listened to some pupils read. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and around the school, as well as in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior and middle leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of the governing body. She spoke to a representative of the board of trustees on the telephone. The lead inspector also met with the trust's chief executive officer and school improvement director, primary.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; records relating to safeguarding and attendance; curriculum plans; minutes of the local governing body meeting; school performance data; and the school's website.
- Inspectors considered parents' opinions through scrutinising 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including eight free-text responses, and a letter received from a parent. Inspectors also spoke to some parents on the first day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Catherine Crooks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Collette Higgins	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Whitcombe	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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