

# Oaks Academy

Oak Tree Avenue, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9AX

**Inspection dates** 4–5 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Since the academy opened, achievement has improved. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders thoroughly check the quality of teaching and know how well teachers are meeting their targets. As a result, teaching is good and improving.
- The headteacher is uncompromising in her drive to make the academy as good as it can be. She has dealt with weak teaching effectively.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because adults encourage children to talk about the activities they are doing and ask interesting questions.
- All leaders and governors know the strengths of their academy very well, and what is needed to make it even better. They send a clear message to pupils, staff and parents about the high standards they expect.
- Behaviour is good. Poor behaviour has been tackled effectively because all staff manage behaviour in the same way. Pupils all know what is expected of them and how misbehaviour will be dealt with.
- Pupils develop a good knowledge about how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Staff, parents and pupils agree that the academy provides a safe and caring environment in which pupils can learn.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. Pupils do not always know precisely how to improve, either through the marking of their work or through the targets they are given.
- Achievement in writing lags slightly behind other subjects because pupils do not always write enough in subjects other than English.
- Leaders do not know enough about how well different groups of pupils are learning so that they are able to ensure all groups of pupils make rapid progress.
- Some pupils do not attend regularly enough.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, some observed jointly with the headteacher, and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's checks on the quality of teaching, its plans for improvement, governing body minutes and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and the middle leader, a representative from the academy chain and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the 20 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke to pupils about their work. They observed playtimes and lunchtimes.
- There were 17 responses to Parent View, the online survey of the view of parents. Inspectors considered these as well as the academy's own survey, and also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Joanna Toulson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Oaks became an academy in April 2012. It is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust. The headteacher was appointed in January 2013 and since her appointment, there has been a significant number of changes in staffing.
- It is smaller than the average-sized school. Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who receive extra help in class is over three times higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who need more help than this or who have a statement of special educational needs is similar to the proportion found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are at risk of not doing as well as others and for whom the academy receives additional funding, is more than double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join the academy during the course of their primary education is higher than that found nationally.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The academy runs a breakfast club.
- The academy does not make use of any alternative provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all pupils make rapid progress by:
  - ensuring teachers' marking sets specific targets which make clear the steps they need to make to move their learning on
  - providing opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in all subjects
  - ensuring all pupils attend regularly and arrive at school in good time.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - using the information about the achievement of individual pupils to evaluate how well different groups of learners are performing so that support can be swiftly given to those who are falling behind.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Since the academy opened, achievement has improved markedly and pupils now achieve well. They join the academy with levels of skills and knowledge which, for many, are below those expected for their age, particularly in their speaking and listening skills. They make a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress across the academy is good and in 2013 pupils reached average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils enjoy reading and use the well-stocked library to choose a different book each week. Daily reading sessions, together with well-taught phonics (the sounds that letters make) help to secure pupils' good achievement in reading.
- Pupils are confident in using their mathematical skills. For example, the most able pupils in Year 2 have to think and work hard but are able to add large numbers accurately. Year 4 pupils are able to accurately construct cubes from flat pieces of paper. In Year 6, all pupils regularly solve challenging problems, for example by using fractions.
- The focus on encouraging pupils to talk about their work before writing is raising standards in writing. However, although achievement in writing is good, it lags slightly behind reading and mathematics, because pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills in different subjects.
- The academy provides well for pupils of all abilities. The most able pupils are given work which is at the right level and are encouraged to do as well as they can and so they make good progress. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress because teachers plan tasks for them which are well adapted to their needs, and because teaching assistants use imaginative and interesting ways to help them be successful.
- The relatively high number of pupils who join the academy at other than the normal times settle quickly and are helped to make up any lost ground. As a result, these pupils also achieve well.
- The academy has a positive effect on the learning of pupils eligible for additional funding, by providing individual support in both English and mathematics. Academy leaders check the progress of these pupils. As a result, in 2013, there was no appreciable difference in the attainment of those eligible to receive the additional funding and other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This demonstrates how well the academy promotes equality of opportunity.
- Achievement is not outstanding because teaching is not resulting in pupils making rapid progress.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching is allowing pupils to make up for previous gaps in their learning. Pupils have good attitudes to learning because teachers plan activities which maintain pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Pupils are proud of their work and this is reflected in their books, which are very neatly presented.
- Lessons start promptly. Teachers emphasise important vocabulary and show pupils how to speak in full sentences to make their meaning clear. This is helping pupils to develop good speaking and listening skills and to become confident when talking to adults.
- Teaching assistants receive good training and so they work well with pupils and support teaching effectively.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn well because adults know the children's needs and plan activities that will interest them. For example, during the inspection they were making a caterpillar with glue and water and talking about the story of '*The Hungry Caterpillar*'.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, teaching is not yet outstanding because marking does not consistently give specific guidance to help pupils make rapid progress, nor do pupils always act on the advice given. Pupils are given a long list of targets but do not always know

precisely which one they should be working on at any one time and this sometimes slows their learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Behaviour has been transformed since the academy opened because everyone understands the rules and staff share a common approach to make sure the rules are followed. The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils, staff and parents agree. Pupils move around the academy sensibly and hold the door open for other pupils and adults. They return quietly and sensibly to class after play. During lessons, they make no fuss when moving from one activity to another. Pupils told inspectors that they are happier now that pupils behave well.
- Pupils are polite and friendly. Those from different backgrounds get on well with each other and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The academy fosters good relationships. Pupils are kind to each other in lessons and socialise well in the playground. Playtimes are very well supervised with adults helping pupils to play skipping and ball games.
- The academy's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is good. There is an evident sense of care in the academy and pupils are adamant that if they have any concerns, adults will always take the time to listen to them and sort things out. Members of staff trained in paediatric and general first aid are always on site. Appropriate checks are made when visitors enter the academy and security codes on doors help to keep the site safe and secure. Pupils told inspectors they feel safe in the academy and parents agree.
- Pupils know how to avoid risks when using the internet and understand some of the different forms that bullying can take, including name calling. They are able to explain how to keep safe when near roads.
- Breakfast club gives a good start to the day for the pupils involved, and gives an opportunity for pupils to play and enjoy a healthy breakfast before lessons start.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because although the rate of attendance is improving, a few pupils do not attend regularly or arrive in good time.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership. She has established a leadership team who share her determination to make Oaks Academy the best it can be. She has taken firm, swift action to eradicate weaknesses, especially in the quality of behaviour and teaching. As a result, Oaks Academy now provides a caring environment in which pupils feel safe and behave and learn well.
- Leaders at all levels, including the middle leader and governors, have an accurate view of their academy and how it is performing compared to all schools. They have correctly identified its strengths and what remains to be done. Plans for improvement are well informed and clear.
- Senior leaders, the middle leader and governors check the quality of teaching thoroughly. Observations of teaching focus closely on how well the pupils are learning and any development points are quickly followed up to make sure that practice continually improves. Teachers are set targets which are linked to how well pupils do. Teachers' pay is linked to how well these targets are met.
- Good support is provided by the Academy Trust to share expert knowledge and this has helped to ensure that teaching has continued to improve, despite the high turnover of staff.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by special events, such as 'Book Week', and charity events, such as 'Jump for Heart'. A rich programme of visits both locally and further afield provide experiences that pupils might otherwise not have. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their theatre visit to see '*The Lion King*' as well as the whole-school visit to the seaside last summer. These experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The additional funding to improve pupils' physical activities is used well. Swimming lessons for

Key Stage 2 pupils have been introduced and a specialist teacher teaches physical education throughout the academy and provides training for teachers. Pupils' participation in sport has increased with a variety of after-school sports clubs. Girls told the inspectors that they were proud to have taken part in their first ever football tournament and that they feel healthier now that they are taking part in more sport.

- Effective safeguarding systems meet statutory requirements and staff are appropriately trained.
- Leaders check the progress of individual pupils, but are less secure in their knowledge about how well different groups are achieving. They have not secured enough outstanding teaching for pupils' achievement to be rapid enough, and that is why leadership and management are good rather than outstanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a good understanding about the academy, including the quality of teaching and achievement, because they receive detailed information from the headteacher. They know how well the academy is doing compared to other schools nationally. They are supportive of the headteacher and her staff but also provide appropriate challenge. They understand how targets are set to reward teachers and make sure that teachers' and the headteacher's performance is appropriately checked.
  - Governors know how the additional funding to support pupils who are at risk of not doing well is spent and the impact that this is having on how well these pupils achieve. They have successfully used the additional sports funding to create more sporting activities and better teaching of physical education.
  - Governors take advantage of the training provided by the Academy Trust to develop their skills. They use their different areas of expertise to support the academy. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and make sure that procedures to keep staff and pupils safe in the academy are robust.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137881
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	399910

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	126
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christopher Dobson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debbie Biggenden
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 755960
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