

Oakfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108329
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	377736
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2012
Lead inspector	Derek Neil

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Dixon
Headteacher	Matthew Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Derek Neil
Lesley Richardson

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed eight teachers in 19 lessons or parts of lessons. These included two joint observations with the acting headteacher. Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils; with the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor; and with school staff, including senior and middle managers. They had informal discussions with some parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school development plan and assessment information. They analysed 109 parental questionnaires. They also looked at Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but insufficient responses were recorded.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized junior school. Almost all pupils are White British and none is in the early stages of learning English. The percentages of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and of those with special educational needs are well below average. The ratio of boys to girls is higher than in most schools.

The school meets the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has gained numerous awards including the Healthy School award, the Eco Award Silver, the Artsmark, and the Activemark. There have been several recent staffing changes. At the time of the inspection the school was led by an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher while the governing body consulted on the possibility of federating with the neighbouring infant school. Two other full time staff were on long term leave of absence. The privately managed on-site childcare provision is subject to a separate inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. The temporary staffing arrangements have not seriously affected its overall effectiveness. Strong support for staff newly in post and a commitment from all to do their best for pupils have ensured that the school has maintained its quality during this period.
- While the governing body has been consulting on organisational change the school has been well led. Accurate self-evaluation and sound planning for improvement have underpinned its continuing success. School leaders recognise that further planning and preparation are needed once the outcome of the consultation is known.
- Pupils make good progress from above average starting points to attain high standards by the time they leave the school. This represents good achievement. Although attainment in writing dipped slightly in 2011, the school has taken prompt action to remedy the situation. Data about pupils currently in school and inspectors' scrutiny of their work indicate that attainment is beginning to rise again.
- Teachers plan well-constructed lessons that give pupils a range of exciting activities, enabling them to learn well and make good progress. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers provide helpful guidance on how it could be improved. A minority of teaching is no better than satisfactory; in these lessons the most able pupils are not challenged enough.
- Pupils behave well and are safe in school. They are polite and show respect to adults and to each other. They report that there is very little bullying and that it is dealt with appropriately by staff when it occurs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Amplify current efforts to improve achievement in writing by:
 - increasing the level of challenge in those lessons that are no better than satisfactory
 - helping pupils to eliminate careless technical errors in their written work.
- Develop leadership and management by:
 - increasing the support for teachers so that all lessons are good or better
 - preparing leaders and governors for new roles and responsibilities.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment in English and mathematics is high. Pupils leave the school with very good reading skills. They are fluent and confident readers who thoroughly enjoy books. They approach unfamiliar words with relish and have good skills to enable them to read accurately. Although attainment in writing dipped in 2011, it remained, nonetheless, above average. School leaders' prompt action to tackle the small decline has ensured that pupils currently at the school are on track to reach high standards in national tests. Pupils' writing is characterised by a rich vocabulary, clear and imaginative expression, and extremely neat and well formed handwriting. Spelling and punctuation are generally accurate but occasionally an otherwise good piece of work is marred by careless spelling or punctuation errors.

Pupils say they learn a lot in lessons and their parents and carers agree they make good progress. Inspection evidence bears this out. In class, pupils concentrate well and try their best to succeed. Their very good attitudes to learning are illustrated in the great pride they take in the presentation of their written work, and the way they assiduously undertake individual and pair work, often with minimal direct supervision. Although overall progress for the most able is good, in those lessons where teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high, their interest and progress wane. Pupils with special educational needs learn well and make good progress because they receive effective support from teaching assistants in class and well-targeted additional tuition in short sessions outside the classroom. For example, those who join the school with weak reading skills do intensive work to reinforce their understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics). Although some groups of pupils in some year groups achieve better than others, there is no pattern to this. For example, in 2011, girls achieved less well than boys in English, partly because of a preponderance of dominant boys in that year group, but the school has ensured that this achievement gap has been closed.

Quality of teaching

Much of the teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Such lessons are planned in considerable detail and are carefully constructed to build up pupils' skills and understanding through a variety of well-designed activities. Highly efficient organisation ensures that these lessons proceed as planned, with no time lost when activities and the organisation of groups are changed. The work is well tailored to provide a suitable challenge for all abilities, and

learning proceeds at a good pace. Teachers strike a good balance between the time explaining work and asking questions of the whole class and the time when the pupils are working individually or in groups. Exciting activities and lively teaching enthuse the pupils. A game in a French lesson, for example, when pupils interviewed classmates to find their allocated partner gave everyone an enjoyable reason for speaking the language. In English, a brainstorming activity to list words ending in the 'shun' sound greatly enlivened a session on spelling. Relationships are very good and behaviour is managed well. Teachers contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, for example by building up their confidence, their positive attitudes to work and their aspirations for success.

Some lessons are satisfactory. In these the teacher does not provide enough challenge for the most able pupils, or does not check closely how well all the pupils are learning throughout the lesson.

Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers provide clear explanations about how it could be improved. Mostly pupils respond to this advice, but very occasionally the teacher does not insist on their correction of spelling or punctuation errors. The curriculum is very well planned to enable teachers to extend pupils' essential skills, knowledge and understanding at the correct level and across all subjects. This good quality of whole-school planning has contributed considerably to the effectiveness of recently appointed teachers. The very large majority of parents, carers and pupils rightly believe that teaching is good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils feel safe in school and their parents and carers concur. Pupils report that bullying is rare and are satisfied that staff deal with it effectively when it occurs. There is very little name calling and this tends to be of a minor nature, largely related to games at playtime. Pupils know not to use abusive terms because, as one put it, 'it hurts people's feelings'. Staff take great care to protect pupils. They supervise them very closely as they move about the difficult site; for example, pupils are systematically escorted up and down the various staircases when going to assembly and to the yard. Pupils act safely in class and, although their play on the sloping yard is at times boisterous, it is seldom dangerous.

Pupils behave well in and out of lessons. They are courteous at all times and show respect for adults and for each other. Their conduct in class greatly supports learning, and lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. The very large majority of parents, carers and pupils agree that behaviour is good. Pupils' adoption of the school's values is reflected clearly in the way that packed lunches are stored outside the building ready for lunchtime. When asked what prevents pupils taking food from classmates' boxes or before the appropriate time, pupils were horrified at the very idea. Such dishonesty would never happen, they argued, 'because everyone's sensible and we all know this would be wrong'.

Attendance is high, and pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons. The school promotes good attendance and has achieved considerable success with some persistent absentees.

Leadership and management

The school has made good progress with the recommendation in the previous inspection report, notwithstanding the recent dip in the standard of pupils' writing. Self-evaluation draws on a wide range of evidence to identify accurately the school's strengths and areas to improve. The latter are dealt with fully in an ambitious development plan. This is primarily designed to improve achievement, and includes appropriate actions to raise attainment in writing. Imaginative staff development has contributed to improvements in teaching and in staff's skills in areas of the curriculum which are new to them. For example, the focus on writing has led to an emphasis on improving pupils' understanding of phonics, so staff have developed new skills to make sure these sessions are successful. The school has also provided effective training for the staff who hold temporary leadership and teaching roles, though further support is required to eliminate the lessons that are only satisfactory. Nevertheless, high attainment has been sustained, reflecting the school's good capacity to improve.

The school has good relations with most parents, who appreciate the attention that managers pay to their concerns, such as the efforts to minimise the risk from traffic at the school gate. However, a very small minority of parents do not feel their concerns are heeded or that communications are effective. The school has many ways of keeping parents informed of developments but leaders acknowledge that there is always room for improvement. Governors know the school well and have a good range of experience and expertise to bring to the role. They have a sound rationale for the proposed federation, recognise that the interim arrangements have presented the school with some challenges this year, and fully understand the need to prepare for new roles and responsibilities once the period of uncertainty is over.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets pupils' needs effectively, and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A strong point is the way it develops pupils' creativity in a variety of innovative ways. For example, the school's drive to raise standards in reading included a competition for pupils to produce photographs of themselves reading a book in an unusual place, and pupils' responded with wit and enthusiasm. School leaders analyse assessment data thoroughly and study the relative progress of different groups. This enables them to take action when any group of pupils appears to be achieving less well than expected, and to make sure that all groups are on track to attain higher levels than in previous years. The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination; its values are reflected in the way pupils of different genders and ethnicities work and play happily together. Its arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are effective.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakfield Junior School, Gateshead NE9 6JH

Thank you for welcoming my colleague and me so warmly into your school when we visited recently. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play, talking about your school with you and your teachers, and looking at your work. Now I want to share with you what we found.

You go to a good school. It has many strong points. Staff take good care of you; I understand why you say you feel safe there. The teachers often give you interesting activities in lessons. You behave well and look after each other. You make good progress and your attainment is high. Your exercise books are extremely neat and beautifully presented; you clearly take great pride in your work. Your reading is very good; many of you told us how much you enjoy books. Your exhibition of photographs that show pupils reading in unusual places was lovely. My favourite was the boy in the pigsty! I was also impressed by your understanding of what it takes to achieve your goals, and by how many of you rose to the headteacher's challenge to learn how to juggle.

There are a few things that would make the school better. I have asked the staff to continue with the work they are doing to make sure you make more rapid progress in writing. You can help by trying not to make mistakes with your spelling and punctuation. I have also asked the school to make sure staff and governors are well prepared for the new roles they might have in the future.

Thank you again for helping me so much. It was a pleasure to meet you. I wish all of you the very best.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil
Lead inspector

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