

The Oaklands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103194
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355336
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Anthony O'Malley HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Penny Wagg
Headteacher	Adrian Davies
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 17 lessons, observing 10 members of staff. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and two members of the governing body. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers in the playground. They observed the school's work and looked at safeguarding procedures. They scrutinised internal assessment and tracking data, special educational needs and inclusion documentation, and analysed questionnaires from 18 parents and carers, 107 pupils and eight staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective are strategies to improve writing skills?
- How successfully is the school meeting the needs of the high number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- How effective is the school's monitoring and support for individual teachers?
- Are the school's targets for improvement sufficiently ambitious?
- How effective are the school's actions to improve attendance?

Information about the school

Following a change in admission numbers, the number of pupils attending the school has decreased since the previous inspection. The school roll is now average in size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Just over half of the pupils have White British backgrounds. Other pupils are from nine different minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is more than twice the national average. The proportion of pupils attending the school with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also well above average. A breakfast club, managed by the governing body, runs daily. A new headteacher and two new assistant headteachers have been appointed in the last two years.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school has successfully tackled a recent history of inadequate achievement. When children enter the Nursery, most have skills and experiences that are below those expected. They make satisfactory, although uneven, progress and, by the end of Year 6, attain average standards. The improvement is a result of stronger leadership and management, careful tracking of pupils' progress and improved teaching.

A particular strength of the school is its care and support for pupils who face challenges in their lives. These pupils benefit from expertise within the school and, when necessary, from a wide range of specialists and support agencies. For example, through working closely with the education social worker, the school has halved the rate of persistent absence. Other significant strengths include the pupils' good understanding of how to live healthily and their growing awareness of the wider world through the curriculum's focus on international matters.

The improved attainment is most evident in reading and mathematics. In writing, efforts to raise attainment have been less successful, particularly for boys. Factors contributing to this are the lack of opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across the curriculum, or to develop their ideas in speaking and listening activities before beginning written tasks. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and, as a result, pupils make good progress in only a minority of lessons. This is a less positive picture than the school's own evaluation of teaching. Records kept by the school of its monitoring activities show that observers give insufficient attention to the quality of learning taking place in lessons. Typically, teaching does not offer enough challenge to ensure good progress. This is because the activities set do not consistently take into account the information the school has about the pupils' earlier learning and achievements. For example, the school identifies a high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, when they work in class with their peers, teaching takes little account of their individual needs. Consequently, additional support provided by trained teaching assistants is essential to ensure that these pupils make the same satisfactory progress as the others. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make satisfactory progress. However, they do not have opportunities throughout the day to develop their learning and skills outside the classroom.

Leadership and management at the school are satisfactory. While evaluations of teaching and learning are too generous, other judgements made about the school's strengths and weaknesses are secure. There are now rigorous systems in place to monitor the progress that pupils are making and these enable leaders and managers to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils. There have been significant improvements in a number of other areas since the previous inspection. For example, the school site and building are much more secure and new equipment has made the playground an exciting place for

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pupils to play. These developments, and the improvements in achievement and attendance, demonstrate the satisfactory capacity of the school's leaders and managers to continue to move the school forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise achievement, increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to 70%, by the end of the summer term 2011, by:
 - using assessment information to match work to pupils' abilities and needs in all lessons
 - ensuring that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have opportunities throughout the day to learn outside the classroom.
- Raise standards in writing, particularly for boys, by:
 - ensuring pupils have opportunities to share and discuss their ideas before beginning writing tasks
 - providing motivating opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Increase the impact of monitoring and evaluation activities by ensuring:
 - lesson observations focus on how successfully pupils are learning
 - leaders and managers observe lessons where pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive additional support.
- Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

All pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, achieve satisfactorily. The improving outcomes in English, mathematics and science are evident in pupils' work in lessons and in their books. In mathematics, strategies such as 'Mathletics', and marking that helps the pupils understand how well they are doing and their next steps in learning, are paying dividends. Pupils' confidence and mental agility have increased and their attainment at the end of Year 6 has risen significantly. In reading, over half of the pupils attained the highest level in national tests in 2010. However, strategies to improve standards in writing have not been so fruitful. Teachers choose resources and topics to try to spark the pupils' interest in writing. However, the skill with which teachers use these resources varies from class to class and results in the uneven progress of pupils.

Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well when lessons are stimulating and engaging. For example, in preparation for writing a biography of a classmate, pupils had to think of questions that would help them capture a range of details about their subject. The pupils had plenty of opportunities to share their ideas about questions that would encourage interesting answers. Pupils' engagement was high and they were keen to use the 'flip-videos' to record their interviews. The lesson was a good preparation for the writing task they were to complete later in the week. Effectively tailored small-group and one-to-one support for pupils at risk of underachieving also have a positive impact. As a result, pupils

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with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, now make at least satisfactory progress.

Pupils feel safe and secure at school and have a good awareness of how to stay healthy. They take responsibility in many ways, for example, through the school council, where they have helped choose new playground equipment, as playground mediators and assembly monitors. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are good. Throughout the school, pupils mix well and adults take great care to manage effectively those who have challenging behaviour.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The best teaching involves purposeful activities that engage pupils. Activities such as a 'bug hunt' or chewing disclosure tablets to learn about dental hygiene capture pupils' interest and make them keen to learn more. Learning is also good where lively discussion and opportunities for cooperative tasks successfully reinforce teaching points. However, in too many lessons, there is a lack of active engagement and challenge in learning. Instead, pupils are required to sit and listen for too long, or have little opportunity to show initiative or work independently because of too much adult direction. At other times, pupils of all abilities work at the same task. For example, in one class everyone worked towards the same learning objective in a mathematics lesson because planning did not take into account their earlier experiences in the subject.

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The school rightly focuses on developing literacy and numeracy skills. However, curriculum planning does not consistently build on pupils' earlier learning and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning about the world, its cultures and history, through the International Primary Curriculum. They also speak positively about the wide range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits.

A caring ethos underpins all of the school's work. The breakfast club is popular. It provides a safe environment and contributes to the improvements in attendance and punctuality. Staff and pupils get on well together and the school has good systems, such as playground mediators, and exciting rewards for good behaviour and attendance, which help pupils to feel valued, happy and secure.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have successfully increased progress and raised pupils' attainment following a period of underachievement. They are increasingly ambitious about the future of the school. For example, while this year's improvement plan sets targets in comparison with schools that also serve disadvantaged communities, the three-year plan sets targets in relation to national averages.

Procedures for evaluating the school's work and holding staff accountable for pupils' performance have added rigour to the drive for improvement. They include close tracking of pupils' progress and regular observations of teaching. To secure more good teaching, leaders have provided support for teachers, targeted at their individual areas for development. However, the school has been too generous in its evaluation of the impact of this support. Only in a minority of the lessons observed were pupils making good progress.

Appropriate training ensures that all staff have the skills and expertise required for keeping pupils' safe. All safeguarding requirements are in place. The security of everyone on the school site has benefited from improvements made following the appointment of the headteacher. The school knows its pupils well, especially those most at risk; good provision involving external professionals and intervention programmes is in place.

A number of measures taken by leaders and managers have promoted equal opportunity and tackled discrimination. For example, the school has worked well with local partners to organise on-site training for parents in areas such as English as an additional language, basic English and mathematics skills, and parenting courses. Imaginative marketing has

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increased the involvement of families who are often reluctant to attend events at school. The improved systems for tracking pupils' progress have helped eliminate most of the gaps in attainment between different groups. However, the performance of boys in writing remains well below that of girls in a number of year groups.

The school has a thorough understanding of the different groups it serves and monitors closely the impact of its action plan to promote community cohesion. Achievements in this area include visits by religious leaders to the school that are helping pupils understand and respect the different faiths in the United Kingdom.

The governing body fulfils its statutory duties satisfactorily. It has a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Reports from link governors provide updates on the school's progress towards its priorities. New appointments have strengthened the governing body's ability to hold the school's leaders and managers to account for the school's performance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Despite satisfactory teaching, a minority do not reach all of the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy or in personal, social and emotional development. This reflects their lower-than-expected skill levels, in these areas, on entry to the Nursery.

Effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants provides children with an appropriate level of support for their individual needs. Children make satisfactory progress in their learning because lessons have a clear structure and there is a good range of interesting resources. However, activities do not consistently take into account the children's wide range of abilities, particularly those of the higher attainers. Staff record

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each child's progress in 'Learning Journey' diaries and these give a comprehensive picture of progress. The outdoor area has undergone an exciting transformation recently. It offers plenty of potential for exploration and purposeful play across all of the areas of learning. However, at present, planning does not give outdoor learning sufficient emphasis and opportunities to consolidate and extend learning, particularly through investigative work, are missed.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The newly formed leadership team has conducted a thorough review of practice, identified areas for improvement and initiated changes in practice. It is too early to see the full impact of these changes. However, children now have more opportunities to choose activities that interest them and assessments made of children's attainment and progress are more accurate. Safeguarding procedures are secure and all staff are suitably trained. Relationships with parents and carers are good. Staff meet with them before their children join the school and this ensures that staff have a good understanding of children's individual circumstances and needs.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are happy with the school. Almost all consider the school well led and are pleased with the quality of teaching and the progress their children are making. Inspectors found that leadership, teaching and learning, and pupils' progress are satisfactory. A small number of parents and carers shared their concerns about how the school deals with behavioural issues. Inspectors looked into the matter and found the procedures to be appropriate and behaviour good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Oaklands Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 18 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	67	6	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	72	5	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	8	44	9	50	1	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	50	6	33	2	11	1	6
The teaching is good at this school	9	50	9	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	44	9	50	1	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	50	8	44	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	8	44	9	50	1	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	50	8	44	1	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	44	7	39	2	11	1	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	33	8	44	4	22	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	50	8	44	1	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	44	9	50	0	0	1	6

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



14 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Oaklands Primary School, Birmingham, B27 7BT

You may remember that I recently visited your school with two other inspectors. I would like to thank all of you for making us so welcome and being so polite and helpful. We had the chance to talk with many of you and it was pleasing to hear how much you enjoy school. You like your teachers and helpers, and you always try to do your best. Yours is a satisfactory school. Here are some of the good things we saw.

The standards of your work are rising and you are all now making better progress.

You feel safe in school and have a good awareness of healthy living.

You are very well cared for at school.

In order to ensure the school continues to improve, I have asked the school's leaders and managers to:

- increase the amount of good teaching so that you all make good progress
- help you to become better writers by encouraging you to talk about your ideas before you start writing and making sure you have plenty of opportunities to practise your writing in many different subjects
- check carefully on how well you are learning when they observe lessons, including those led by teaching assistants.

Your headteacher, the staff and the governing body want the school to continue to improve. You can help too by making sure you come to school as often as possible and by working hard all the time.

Thank you once again for being so helpful.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley

Her Majesty's Inspector

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