

# Oughton Primary and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133323
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	360485
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Thompson

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	180
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Jane Mainwaring
<b>Headteacher</b>	Wendy Sims
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Mattocke Road Hitchin, Herts SG5 2NZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The team observed 12 lessons taught by eight teachers. Inspectors held meetings and discussions with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a representative sample of pupils' work, some policy documents and school reports. They scrutinised questionnaires returned by 20 parents and carers, 67 pupils and 22 staff.

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

- Actions taken to raise the attainment and accelerate the progress of middle and higher ability pupils.
- The extent to which the senior leadership team, governing body and staff share a common ambition to bring about improvements.
- The extent to which pupils are challenged in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average sized school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The majority of pupils have a White British heritage with others mainly from Black Caribbean, African and Asian backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is well above average. The number of pupils that the school is able to admit has been reduced and there is now a single form entry each year. A children's centre is located in the grounds of the school and forms a common area for those children under five years of age. The school has gained Healthy School status, the Basic Skills award and the Hertfordshire's Quality Standard in the Foundation Stage.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It serves a complex community that presents it with many challenges. The school is successful in providing a secure, happy and stimulating environment in which pupils are encouraged and supported to learn to reach their full potential. It has much improved since the last inspection. All staff have been involved in providing a new and exciting curriculum based on themes, and in improving attendance, behaviour and pupils' attitudes. The school's promotion of equal opportunities is good and teaching has improved. As a result, the progress made by pupils is now good. The obvious success that leaders have had, their rigorous and accurate self-evaluation of what needs to be done, and the challenging targets that they have met are evidence that the school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. The provision is managed and led exceptionally well. Children enter the Nursery class with much lower language and social skills, and emotional development than expected for their age. Teachers use their deep understanding of how young children learn to inspire and help them to make outstanding progress from their various low starting points. The care, guidance and support that children receive in these early years are exceptional. As a result, outcomes at the end of the Reception Year are improving quickly and securely, and are close to average.

Oughton Primary and Nursery School is an exceptionally caring school, and places the excellent guidance and support it provides at the heart of its work. It enables pupils from many different backgrounds to make the best of the opportunities it provides. Many of the staff provide excellent care for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable in order to help and encourage them to learn. As a result, pupils are happy and eager to work together and with their teachers. They enjoy coming to school because they know that it provides for their needs extremely well and that they are safe. One parent said, 'My son moved from another school in September and started in Year 2 unable to read or write. He has made fantastic progress which has raised his confidence and self esteem. He has been inspired by the curriculum especially the recent knights' topic. The school has made a real effort to identify his interests'. Pupils contribute to school and outside community activities well.

Senior leaders have a very clear vision and ways to continue to improve the education the school provides. They communicate their vision and high expectations to the staff exceptionally well. Morale is very high and belief in what the school is doing is evident at all staff levels. Senior leaders have identified that the quality of teaching is too variable in Years 1 to 6, ranging from satisfactory to outstanding, and they consider that the proportion of outstanding lessons is too low. They are also seeking ways to increase the

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involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning. Inspection outcomes agree with the senior staff on both these matters.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding lessons by:
  - increasing the expectations and challenge for all pupils
  - providing extra challenge for the most able pupils in order to enhance and extend their learning
  - developing lesson planning to enable teaching assistants to provide more effective and independent support in lessons.
- Increase the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning by:
  - seeking to involve them more in the work of the school
  - identifying ways they can more effectively support their children's learning at home

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

The attainment of pupils on entry to Year 1 has improved and is now close to average. As pupils progress through the school they acquire knowledge, develop understanding and practice skills well and sometimes very well. Lesson observations and school data show that attainment is rising in most lessons and the quality of learning is steadily improving. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs/or disabilities varies from year-to-year but is generally high. With the help of outstanding targeted support, these pupils make good and sometimes exceptional progress from their various low starting points. They are closing the gap between their attainment and that expected for their age. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds make the same good progress. The attainment of the more-able pupils at the end of Year 5 is above average. A small minority of pupils enter the school at times other than usual and make the same good progress as other pupils. Pupils engage well in lessons and their learning and progress are good. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson pupils were seen learning very well about the waterproofing properties of different samples of materials to select those best suited to keeping their teddy bear dry in the rain, and in a Year 4 English lesson, pupils were seen learning about word endings well. In both these lessons the teachers were using their knowledge to inspire pupils to learn and used questions to challenge them. Achievement is good for all groups of pupils.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They reflect well on their experiences in sport and other activities, and are sympathetic to the feelings, values and beliefs of others. They develop an appropriate awareness of the history and culture of the society in which they live and of cultures different from their own through their participation in activities with pupils from different backgrounds at other local schools. Some develop this understanding through their family's links in other countries. The implementation of the school's code of conduct and behaviour policy is very effective and, as a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. They play an active part in school life through the school council, raise funds for charities and participate well in Christmas

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activities which involve many others from outside the school. The use of targets and rewards has been effective in improving attendance and, as a result, it is satisfactory. Their good and improving reading, writing, mathematical and information and communication technology skills, together with the ability to work collaboratively, prepare pupils well for the future.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good or better in the majority of lessons. When teaching is at its best, pace and expectations are high and teachers use their knowledge to inspire and encourage pupils to learn. Effective dialogue and questioning are used to challenge pupils' understanding and judge when it is necessary to reinforce what is being learnt. A good range of teaching styles and information and communication technology resources are used in lessons to improve learning and enjoyment. As a result, in the best lessons, pupils show considerable interest and make good progress. Marking and assessment are good and all work is corrected to show pupils how they may improve their work further.

Teaching assistants focus their support on groups of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils who find learning more difficult in order to help them to make good progress. Pupils in these sessions were eager to learn. On a few occasions, in weaker lessons, low expectations, pedestrian pace, and dialogue between teachers and pupils that lacks inspiration leads to less effective learning. In these weaker lessons pupils

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are not sufficiently challenged, particularly the more-able, and the contributions made by the teaching assistants not sufficiently planned to enable them to work independently and effectively.

The curriculum has been developed on themes and matches the needs and interests of pupils well. The curriculum is well organised, imaginative and provides many unusual opportunities to learn. The curriculum adds significantly to pupils' personal development and enjoyment and pupils say they enjoy the new style of curriculum and learning. Some of the distinctive features include cross-curricular links between literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, weeklong studies of mathematics, science, and health and social education, and days devoted to other special topics. All statutory requirements are met. The good range of extra-curricular activities is enjoyed and attended well by pupils. Activities include work in the school's allotment, curricular-related lunchtime clubs, and physical activities and sports on the school's extensive playing field. Some of these activities are provided in partnership with outside agencies and the children's centre.

Pupils are known as individuals and treated exceptionally well according to their individual needs. Staff work very effectively to help promote the emotional and social well-being of pupils and have a very clear understanding of their needs. Well-targeted arrangements result in significant improvements in attitudes, behaviour and achievement. One parent said, 'My son has autism. I have been amazed at the support he has received from the staff. His social skills and emotional development have been helped no end. I am extremely grateful for what the staff have done'. Support work is particularly effective when establishing links with families of vulnerable pupils. Pupils are helped to make confident and well-informed choices about their future. As a result, they develop very good self-esteem and say they feel well supported at school. There are good transition arrangements between the school and the receiving secondary schools, with pupils undertaking visits to their next school during Year 6.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders have high expectations and share a strong common drive to achieve improvements with other staff. All are focused effectively on improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum to help pupils achieve their full potential. Planning is based on rigorous tracking and accurate data. Variations in the performance of different groups of pupils are evaluated and appropriate actions taken to close the gaps. Challenging targets are set, regularly reviewed and achieved.

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Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and have effective ways to monitor performance. They review the behaviour, attendance and anti-bullying policies regularly. Governors frequently visit the school and have effective links with the staff and pupils. The governing body provides good support, challenges managers, and contributes to discussions on strategy effectively. It fulfils its responsibilities well and has a clear view on what needs to be done to develop the school further.

Rigorous checks are carried out on all newly-appointed staff and good central records kept. The school has clear policies for health and safety. Safety checks are carried out by appropriate external authorities and any recommendations they make are acted upon. Staff have been trained in child protection and regularly undertake risk assessments. The school engages well with outside authorities to support the safety and well-being of the pupils.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the complex community they serve based on a good analysis of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic circumstances in their locality. They promote community cohesion both in the school and the local community well. Pupils from many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds work in harmony together and engage in many activities outside the school. The school works with the children's centre as a focus for helping to bring families in the locality together.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Very good use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The outdoor areas are used to help develop children's physical and social skills effectively. Activities are very well planned and there is an excellent balance between activities chosen by children and those led by teachers. Teaching assistants make an outstanding contribution to children's learning and enjoyment. A very good system for

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tracking children's progress is used to inform the planning of lessons and activities. Vulnerable children are identified at an early stage and given outstanding targeted support. Leaders work very well together and ensure that children's welfare needs are met exceptionally well. Staff are skilled at promoting very positive attitudes and ensuring that all children are engaged and included. Early Years Foundation Stage staff work well with outside agencies to support the learning and well-being of the children. Safeguarding procedures are good and given a high priority.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

The response of parents and carers to the questionnaire was below average. Almost all parents and carers who responded overwhelmingly support the school and said that they were happy with their children's experience at the school. A very small minority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire raised concerns about their children not making enough progress, and that the school did not take account of their suggestions and was not led and managed effectively. The inspectors looked into all these matters and could not find any evidence during this inspection to endorse the concerns raised.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oughton Primary and Nursery 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 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	60	8	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	70	6	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	60	8	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	55	8	40	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	50	10	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	45	11	55	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	50	10	50	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	40	10	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	45	11	55	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	30	13	65	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	30	13	65	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	50	9	45	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	45	11	55	0	0	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



31 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Oughton Primary and Nursery School, Hitchin, SG5 2NZ**

My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school and welcomed the opportunity to see you at work in your lessons. We judged your school to be good, which means that it does most things well - especially the way you learn in the Nursery and Reception Years and the way you are cared for and kept safe. We know that you, and your parents and carers, value these things too.

The headteacher and other adults that run your school have made many good changes. They have provided you with a school that is a good and happy place in which to work, and a new programme of lessons to make your learning more exciting and enjoyable. Your class teachers are also helping you to improve your learning through good teaching.

There are still things that could be better. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to do the following things to help you.

Challenge you a bit more in your lessons.

Provide those of you that find lessons too easy with extra exciting things to do in lessons.

Seek ways to help your parents and carers to support you when you learn at home.

Ask your parents and carers to become more involved in work of the school.

I know that the adults that lead your school are keen to do these things and you can help them by always working hard, listening to what teachers say about how to improve, and doing your best work. I thank you for your valuable help and assistance during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Thompson

Lead Inspector

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