

Oakwood Infant & Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114722
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357594
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Nichola Perry

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Prior
Headteacher	Carol Carlsson Browne
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fourteen teachers were observed in 21 lessons. Two assemblies and three break and lunchtime sessions were also observed. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor who leads on safeguarding, subject leaders, the special educational needs co-ordinator, the support worker for vulnerable children, the designated person for managing the single central record, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books and displays, and at documentation, including the school development plan, assessments, records of pupils' progress, teachers' planning, and safeguarding and welfare arrangements. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and scrutinised 77 parents' and carers' questionnaires and 44 staff questionnaires.

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

How effective have the school's actions been in improving attendance?

- Is the school maintaining the improving trend in progress and attainment?
- How effectively do the curriculum and teaching challenge and motivate all groups of pupils to fulfil their potential?
- Is assessment information being used as well as it can be so that pupils make more rapid progress?

Information about the school

This much larger-than-average primary school, comprises of twelve single-age classes in Reception and Years 1 and 2 and two classes for part-time attendance (morning and afternoon sessions) for 104 children in the Nursery. The school mainly serves its local community, with a few pupils being admitted from outside the local area. Many children and their families face challenging circumstances and experience significant social and emotional needs. Fifty-nine families are supported by the support worker for vulnerable children and nine families are supported by the family liaison worker. Although sixteen pupils arrived in Year 2 last year, after the start of the year, the school population is generally stable. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly higher than the national average. Numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are broadly average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is higher than nationally. The very large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. There is a lower than average proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of speaking English.

The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs. It has been awarded Healthy Schools status and re-awarded Basic Skills.

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

2

Main findings

Oakwood is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Behaviour is exemplary throughout the school. Relationships and care are excellent. The headteacher, well supported by the newly appointed deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, is providing effective leadership. The governing body is led well and its members are knowledgeable, very supportive and challenging to the performance of the school. Together, school leaders work as an effective team, striving to improve all aspects of pupils' learning and their personal development. All groups of pupils are valued highly and treated with respect as individuals.

Pupils are friendly, confident and polite. They get on very well with each other and work together happily. They are very accepting of others who are less fortunate than themselves or who are different in some way. These aspects contribute strongly to the calm and purposeful atmosphere evident throughout the school and the effective inclusion of pupils in all groups. The pupils demonstrate a good appreciation of how to keep themselves safe and why they need to eat sensibly and take regular exercise. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because it is given a high priority throughout the school. Although improving year on year, attendance is low and remains an ongoing issue for the school. The strong partnership with most parents and carers and the excellent care and support have had a significant impact on reducing unnecessary absences.

Good teaching and in-class support encourages pupils in all groups to become positive learners who achieve well and make good progress. The well-enriched curriculum is contributing effectively to pupils' good learning because it increasingly focuses on developing specific skills across all subjects. Attainment has risen because initiatives to improve pupils' skills have had a positive impact in all year groups and contributed well to improving rates of progress. For example, the school correctly identified the need to improve pupils' writing skills. In this they have had partial success, but as yet pupils do not always practise these skills in other subjects. In addition, there is limited focus on the higher ability pupils now coming through the school, as a result of significantly improved provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Though targets for many of the pupils are challenging, expectations are not always high enough for pupils who are capable of the higher levels. Teaching is sometimes too restrictively structured and lessons do not always take full account of current pupils' prior learning.

School leaders and the governing body have an accurate understanding of the school's performance and have been effective in raising achievement. Continuing improvement since the previous inspection has been achieved as a result of effective development planning, thorough and accurate self-evaluation and a relentless determination to improve. This demonstrates that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment in Years 1 and 2 and accelerate pupils' rate of progress, particularly in writing, by:
 - using assessment information more accurately so that planned activities focus closely on pupils' prior learning
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do thereby avoiding unnecessary overly-structured teaching for more able pupils
 - providing more opportunities for all pupils to practise their writing skills in a range of contexts.
- Improve whole-school assessment procedures so that:
 - senior leaders are better able to set more challenging targets for pupils now coming through the school
 - all teachers have a more secure understanding of what assessment information is telling them and how it can better be used.
- Ensure attendance continues to rise by focusing support closely on those pupils and families whose attendance remains low.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment by the end of Year 2 is broadly average and this represents good progress from pupils' low starting points. Pupils enjoy their learning and demonstrate very positive attitudes in lessons. For example they learnt very well in one particularly good lesson where their motivation and enjoyment, albeit at the thought of using chocolate buttons, was very evident. They learnt to create a 'fair test', and their learning was brought alive by an imaginative teaching style and the creative use of resources, including relevant cartoon excerpts. Skilfully guided by their teacher, they quickly identified a range of well-thought-out possibilities of what needed to be done and how, and what the outcomes might be.

Girls and boys make similar progress in lessons, as do those from different ethnic backgrounds. Although teaching and expectations have not yet completely adjusted to larger numbers of higher ability pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress. In all year groups effective assessment and focused interventions are having a positive impact on improving their attainment. Effective induction ensures that pupils new to the school are warmly welcomed, assessed quickly and well supported so that they make good progress. Pupils' satisfactory basic skills, strong personal skills and rapidly improving attendance mean they are satisfactorily prepared for the future.

The quality of artwork around the school is very good and contributes strongly to the delightful displays throughout the school. The quality of singing is also good. Pupils' well-developed personal skills and the good progress they make in reading, writing and mathematics means that they are being well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider communities. They contribute regularly to national and international charities and pupils from the Nursery upwards learn how to become independent, for example, through acting as 'special helpers' around the school.

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Although quite new, the 'Question Crew' is providing them with opportunities to learn how to share their views, take turns and discuss concerns. Pupils recognise that there are religions and cultures that are different from their own and they demonstrate excellent knowledge of life and culture for the people of Ghana, where the school has a well-established contact.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	4
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?

Teaching is good overall and leads to good achievement across all aspects of pupils' learning and development. Teachers and in-class support staff relate very well to the pupils and use questioning astutely to motivate, challenge and support them effectively. There is a good focus on subject-specific language and basic skills development through activity-based learning. This helps pupils develop their thinking and investigative skills. Marking and ongoing feedback are effective in informing pupils how well they are doing and encouraging them to do their best. In satisfactory lessons seen, expectations of what pupils can do were not sufficiently high and, because teaching was sometimes over-structured, opportunities for more challenging independent work were missed.

The curriculum focuses well on basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology so pupils learn basic skills effectively. There are many good examples of teachers making meaningful links across a range of subjects so that learning is very relevant to pupils. However, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to

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practise their skills. This is particularly the case in writing. It is clear from pupils' books that, due to good teaching, most pupils are confident and enthusiastic writers. However, too often, pupils are not consistently producing sufficient writing of a high enough quality and therefore pupils are not yet seeing themselves as 'writers'. This is preventing more pupils from attaining at the higher levels.

From their first day in the Nursery, pupils' pastoral care is very good indeed. Pupils throughout the school appear very happy and they certainly say they are happy, feel safe and well cared for. Pupils new to the school in any year group settle very quickly due to the highly effective induction arrangements. No pupil or group is disadvantaged within the school. Needs are identified rapidly and support, including excellent use of external professional advice and support agencies, is arranged where necessary. Wide-ranging work is undertaken with the many pupils and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. As a result, parents and carers feel well-supported by the school and better able to meet their children's learning and emotional needs. Work with families of many of the persistent absentees has been strikingly successful, though a small but significant number have yet to respond. A very wide range of incentives have also been used to improve attendance, which was very low.

Pupils have access to a wide range of extended provision activities, including a newly formed breakfast club, which provides a welcoming and nutritious start to the day, and after school clubs. Almost all of the activities are over-subscribed, with waiting lists. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about them, in particular the multi-sports club. This provision is monitored very closely by the school and places are prioritised for vulnerable children and those with low attendance. This has proved to be a positive strategy leading to improved attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has ensured a school environment where children are happy and keen to learn. She shares a clear vision with staff and governors and is dedicated to helping pupils in all groups achieve their potential in all aspects of their social, emotional and academic development. This has been particularly successful for those who might otherwise be disadvantaged. The very recent appointment of a deputy headteacher and the re-structuring of the senior leadership team have had considerable impact on the quality of leadership within the school.

Governance is good. The governing body has high expectations for the school and governors evaluate their own and the school's performance well. They ensure all

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safeguarding, child protection procedures and training requirements are met and take account of good practice. School improvement plans identify appropriate areas for development with clear actions to bring about change. Subject leaders are developing their roles well and they are increasingly focused on raising attainment within their subjects. However, not all have a full understanding of what assessment information is indicating and how it can be used. Good monitoring of teaching and learning takes place ensuring that pupils experience good teaching for the majority of their time.

The school has good links within the local community, and a strong and well-planned partnership with the school in Ghana. Pupils show a good understanding of the multi-cultural nature of the United Kingdom for their age because the school uses the changing nature of the school population to best advantage. School leaders have recently established a link with a school in a contrasting United Kingdom locality.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Effective leadership has ensured that there has been very significant improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. Children enter the Nursery with levels of knowledge and understanding much lower than expected in all areas of learning. The excellent provision in the Nursery ensures that children make rapid progress, particularly in their social, emotional and communication skills. They quickly become happy, confident and independent, and very eager to learn. Children enter Reception with levels of knowledge and understanding still below expected levels. The Reception classes build effectively on this very good start so that children make good progress and enter Year 1 with attainment levels close to those expected. In past years where progress has been satisfactory, pupils have entered Year 1 with below average attainment.

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All adults support children's welfare consistently well so personal development is very good. Behaviour is outstanding due to the very high expectations of all adults. There is a strong emphasis from the start that children will learn to take responsibility for their own actions, make choices about their learning and behaviour and learn how to be independent. These aspects provide a strong base for their future learning. Support for children who find learning difficult is good and the school is vigilant in accessing additional help for those in need. Relationships with parents and carers are strong. They are regarded very much as partners in their children's learning and development and are kept well-informed about their progress. Planning covers all areas of learning fully and ensures that there is equal access to indoor and outdoor learning. There is a very strong focus on developing speaking, listening and communication skills so that children rapidly develop socially. Key areas for questioning are clearly identified on all planning. Teaching is good overall, but stronger in the Nursery. In Reception teaching is good, but occasionally work on letters and sounds lacks variety and challenge and so children lose interest. Assessment, including ongoing assessment, is thorough and effective so that adults gain a secure knowledge of all children's stages of development. Progress is carefully recorded in the well-established learning journals. Nursery and Reception staff work increasingly closely together so that the provision is close to becoming a dedicated Early Years Foundation Stage Unit in readiness for the single-age entry point in September.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned a questionnaire was below average. Those who returned questionnaires are highly satisfied with what the school provides for their children. The overwhelming majority are extremely positive about all aspects of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakwood Infant & 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 347 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	69	24	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	66	25	32	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	48	62	27	35	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	62	26	34	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	68	22	29	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	58	29	38	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	62	27	35	1	1	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)	39	51	36	47	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	60	30	39	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	51	34	44	1	1	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	51	35	45	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	60	28	36	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	68	23	30	2	3	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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">■ 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.



11 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakwood Infant & Nursery School, Clacton-on-Sea. CO15 2AH

We thoroughly enjoyed our recent visit to your school. Thank you so much for talking to us and helping us find out all about your school. We enjoyed watching your lessons and also coming out to see you on the playground and in the field. We really loved the 'hump' in the field where you can roll down the hill - as long as you don't get stung by the nettles! We think you go to a good school. It's a really happy and friendly place to go to every day. There are lots of good things about it:

You all try very hard and make good progress in your work.

Your behaviour is excellent and you love coming to school.

All the adults in the school really care about you and support you extremely well so you feel very safe.

Your parents and carers are very pleased with the school and get on really well with all the staff.

Your headteacher and the senior teachers know lots about you and have good ideas about how to improve your school.

We have asked your headteacher and other teachers to look at how they can make your school even better. The most important things are listed below.

We would like your teachers to give you more challenging work, especially when you get a bit older in Year 1 and Year 2, because we think you can do this.

We want your teachers to make sure that you all practise more writing in all the subjects you learn at school so that you get even better at it

We would like the few of you who stay off school when you don't need to, to come to school more often. You can really help with this!

Yours sincerely

Nichola Perry

Lead Inspector

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