

The Oaks Primary School

Bells Lane, Druids Heath, Birmingham, B14 5RY

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teachers set activities that are sometimes too easy or too hard for pupils and therefore pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils do not have enough chances to work on their own and think for themselves.
- Marking does not always tell pupils what they have done well and the next steps to take to improve their work.
- Lessons sometimes go on for too long, resulting in a slowing of pupils' learning.
- Leaders do not check on pupils' progress regularly enough and so do not take swift enough action to speed up their progress.
- The governing body is not sufficiently involved in checking performance, for example how well the extra money available for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has affected their attainment.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher has quickly identified strengths and weaknesses in the school's work and the school improvement plan points out the key priority of making sure all teaching is good.
- Children get a good start to school life in the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result of good teaching, these children make good progress.
- Pupils know how to keep safe and say they feel safe in school. Parents agree with this view.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have mainly good attitudes towards their learning.
- Staff are eager to improve their teaching skills and are willing to take advice and learn from each other.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons of which three were joint observations with the executive headteacher. Pupils' work in books was also analysed with the executive headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, two members of the governing body, middle managers, parents, groups of pupils and the local authority's School Improvement Officer.
- There were no parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). However, leaders had very recently administered their own survey of parents' views and the 32 responses to this contributed to the inspection evidence. Staff did not complete the Ofsted questionnaire on this inspection.
- A number of documents were analysed including the school development plan, school self-evaluation, the school's data on the current progress of pupils, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Lois Furness, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Brenda Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Oaks is a broadly average-sized primary school.
- Although the majority of pupils are White British, a steadily increasing proportion of pupils are from different minority ethnic groups. A few pupils are learning English as an additional language.
- A well above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils at school action is above average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The before- and after-school clubs are managed by the governing body but the on-site pre-school provision is managed privately and is inspected separately.
- This year there have been leadership changes due to the long-term illness and death of the substantive headteacher. During the summer term an acting headteacher was appointed and, from September, an executive headteacher is leading the school until a new substantive headteacher is appointed.
- Three new teachers have joined the school this September.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is at least good and that there is an increased proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - matching work in lessons to pupils' different abilities so that all make good progress
 - raising teachers' expectations of the amount of work pupils can cover in a lesson
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to plan work and think for themselves without adult involvement
 - marking providing clear guidance about the good features of work, how to improve and time is given for pupils to make the improvements identified.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management and its impact on teaching and on pupils' achievement by:
 - updating at least termly the records of each pupil's progress so that leaders can promptly identify any underachievement and take swift action
 - carrying out regular scrutiny of pupils' books to check the work that pupils are doing is enabling them to raise their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics
 - agreeing precise targets with staff that will improve their teaching skills and providing any necessary training to help them to achieve these performance targets
 - sharing detailed information on pupils' attainment and progress and the quality of teaching more regularly with the governing body to improve their ability to hold the school to account.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make the same good progress they make in Nursery and Reception consistently through Years 1 to 6.
- Children start school in Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age in most areas of learning and well below in language and literacy. Good teaching and carefully planned activities makes sure that children make good progress over time. At the end of the Reception Year, Children's attainment is average in most areas of learning apart from in their language and literacy skills, which are below average.
- By Year 6, attainment is average in English and mathematics, and the proportion of pupils making expected progress from the end of Year 2 is similar to that found nationally in both subjects. However, the school's tracking data shows that progress is not even throughout the school in reading, writing or mathematics. Data shows that progress accelerates in Year 6 due to teachers providing specific work for individuals or groups of pupils.
- By the end of Year 2, attainment has fluctuated over time, being either broadly average or below average over the last three years. As the 2012 test results show, attainment in reading and mathematics is rising but writing standards remain low. This attainment shows that from pupils' starting points in Year 1, progress requires improvement.
- Pupils' work in books show that pupils take a pride in their work and, in the main, work is well presented. In some classes, for example in Year 6, there is a good range of work and progression in knowledge and skills is evident. In other year groups there is less evidence of work matching precisely the range of attainment within the class.
- Reading by Year 6 is broadly average and, in 2012, an increased number of pupils attained Level 5 in reading. However, pupils do not all say they enjoy reading, although most sustain good concentration during class reading sessions. Early reading skills are developing well and, by the end of Year 1, a slightly above-average proportion of pupils have a secure understanding of how to link together letters and the sounds they make to read simple words.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress similar to that of their peers. This is also the case for pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those pupils who receive additional government funding. At times, the progress of these groups of pupils accelerates to good when they receive additional one-to-one support or specifically targeted group work.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Almost all teaching observed requires improvement. Although there was no inadequate teaching observed in the inspection, neither was any outstanding teaching seen.
- In too many lessons, the same activities are given to the whole class, especially at the start of the lesson. Lesson introductions and some of the follow-up activities are pitched at the middle ability pupils, so the most able find them too easy and the least able struggle to complete their tasks unless they have adult support. Also the rate of learning is sometimes too slow and teachers rarely inform pupils of how much work they are expected to complete in a lesson.

- In the Nursery and Reception classes teaching is consistently good. In these classes, a wide range of activities are offered that interest children and ensure that they make good progress. Good attention is given to making sure children make choices for themselves and develop enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers routinely share with pupils what it is they should be learning and the criteria against which they can measure how well they have succeeded. This is a strength of teaching throughout the school. However, the marking of pupils' work does not always link closely to these success criteria. Although at times useful feedback is provided, especially in writing, pupils say that they are not always given time to respond to the comments made by teachers when they mark their work.
- Another strength of teaching is the opportunities pupils have to share ideas and talk through their answers with each other. This was seen in Year 4, as pupils discussed enthusiastically the three consecutive numbers which when added together would total 15. Oral responses from Year 2 pupils enabled the teacher to sensitively correct pupils' spoken language for example, 'We were...' instead of 'We was....'
- Relationships are good as all adults use praise well to encourage pupils to try hard with their work and to promote good behaviour. This is successful and, in almost all lessons observed, there was a calm working atmosphere with pupils willing to ask and answer questions. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to plan and organise work for themselves.
- Teaching assistants ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium are involved in lessons. However, at times they intervene too quickly and, consequently, pupils do not persevere if they get 'stuck' with their work. Senior leaders are aware of this growing dependence and are using the additional adults to provide support for pupils who are not achieving as well as they should.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour around school and in lessons is typically good. On the few occasions where pupils are off task or daydreaming, it is usually when they are given work that is too difficult or too easy for them.
- Discussions with pupils show they are positive about the behaviour of their friends. As one pupil said, 'The behaviour of most pupils is good all of the time and the behaviour of all pupils is good most of the time!'
- The school's own parental survey of behaviour shows that the vast majority of parents agree that behaviour is good. They say children value the weekly good-behaviour assembly, and they welcome the weekly newsletter which identifies pupils who have behaved especially well throughout the week.
- Pupils are polite. They show respect and kindness to others regardless of age, race and disability. Enjoyment of school life was obvious through the discussions with them, although a few older pupils commented that they sometimes found lessons, such as guided reading, 'quite boring'.
- Attendance is broadly average and leaders are working hard to encourage the better attendance and punctuality of a few pupils. Top attending classes have rewards and certificates and

initiatives such as 'Circus Skills' and the 'super attenders' club are effective in encouraging these pupils to attend more regularly.

- The school's behaviour policy is applied consistently by all staff. The very few pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are dealt with appropriately. The school has a learning mentor who provides useful guidance to these pupils and to their families.
- Pupils feel safe in school, confident that adults will help them with any worries they may have. Those spoken to know how to stay safe while using the internet and can identify various types of bullying, including racism and cyber-bullying. They say that, in school, bullying is rare, and they know what to do if it occurs.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Systems for monitoring pupils' performance are not sharp enough. For example, last year, pupils' attainment was only recorded on the school's tracking system half-yearly rather than termly. The checking of pupils' work in books has not been linked closely enough to the attainment level of individual pupils. The executive headteacher has begun to rectify these shortcomings but it is too soon to see an impact as yet.
- The management of teachers' performance requires improvement as the targets given to teachers are not specific enough and do not identify where they most benefit from further training and professional development. There has been no clear link between pay awards and teachers' performance. The government's new Teachers' Standards have been shared with staff and all staff are due to agree targets that will help them to improve their teaching skills. Staff say they want to become more effective and they value the advice given to them.
- The new executive headteacher has successfully involved staff in knowing what is needed to move this school to good. Unsettled leadership during the last year had halted the pace of improvement but, with the support and drive of the executive headteacher, staff are eager to move forward. Senior and middle leaders are committed and the school improvement plan is a useful tool for achieving improvement.
- The support of the local authority has increased over the last year. It brokered the release of the deputy headteacher from another school to be acting headteacher during the summer term. It also arranged the support of the current executive headteacher until a substantive headteacher is appointed.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils adequately but is not suitably adapted to enable pupils to make a fast rate of progress. Mornings can be quite dull, with all time spent on English and mathematics. In some instances, mathematics lessons, for example, can last for 70 minutes and the expectations of what pupils are to learn in this time are not high enough. Leaders recognise that lessons need to be more exciting, and are bringing in new resources such as film and media to engage pupils' interest.
- Parents and carers are appreciative of the work of the school. The before- and after-school clubs ensure effectively the safety of pupils whose parents have to leave for work early or are not available to take care of their children at the end of the school day. Close working with other agencies makes sure that those families who find working with the school difficult know they are welcomed into the school.

■ The governance of the school:

- is committed to school improvement and has supported the staff well during an unsettled period.
- ensures that safeguarding requirements are met.
- does not receive sufficiently detailed information to hold leaders to account for the achievement of pupils, including those for whom the school receives extra money through the pupil premium.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103165
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	400593

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	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie O'Connell-Stevens
Headteacher	Simon Dix (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2010
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