

The Oaklands Primary School

Dolphin Lane, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7BT

Inspection dates 16–17 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		Requires improvement	3
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

- The quality of teaching is not strong enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress, particularly the more-able.
- Teachers do not teach phonic skills (linking letters and sounds) well, or hear younger pupils read often enough.
- Teachers too often repeat the same mathematical exercises and do not help pupils adequately to use their skills to solve problems.
- Teachers do not always effectively correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- When marking pupils' work, teachers do not give clear guidance on how pupils may improve it.
- Pupils are not taught how to learn on their own. This holds pupils' progress back, especially those who are more able.
- The headteacher gathers and analyses a huge amount of information about pupils' progress but does not use it effectively to raise achievement throughout the school.
- Senior leaders do not check teachers' planning in advance of lessons to see whether work is at the right level for all pupils.
- The governing body does not probe the links between teaching, development planning and pupils' performance well enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Nursery and Reception children quickly learn to share, take turns, listen to and respect each other. Pupils build on these good personal skills throughout their time at primary school.
- The school ensures that pupils work and play in a safe learning environment, and also learn how to keep themselves safe.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and pupils concentrate even when not particularly stretched or motivated by what they are given to do.
- Because the school has fostered good relationships with parents, pupils' attendance has improved and is now about average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons, made visits to six others, and listened to two groups of pupils read.
- The headteacher joined the lead inspector for three observations, and together they looked at work in pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of pupils, and three members of the governing body, and a telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school development plan; self-evaluation information; the school's data for tracking pupils' progress; teachers' planning; monitoring reports; the work in pupils' books; minutes of governing body meetings; and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors met some parents informally at the start of the school day and took account of the 22 responses from parents that were posted on Parent View (Ofsted's online parent questionnaire).
- The inspection was quality assured by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils 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, is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs, supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those for whom English is an additional language, are above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement and progress.
- The school has its own breakfast club. It has achieved a Healthy Schools Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that pupils throughout the school make more rapid progress by:
 - making sure all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve so that they can help them to reach their potential
 - ensuring that teachers give more-able pupils harder work to keep up the pace of their learning
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to work on their own so that they are better able to think and learn for themselves
 - improving the quality of teachers' marking so that pupils understand clearly how they can improve their work
 - giving pupils time to respond to marking, do corrections and learn from their mistakes.
- Speed up pupils' progress in reading and writing by ensuring that:
 - all staff fully understand how to teach letters and their sounds and encouraging pupils to use the knowledge and skills they develop to improve their reading and writing, particularly their spelling
 - staff listen to younger pupils reading more frequently, and that pupils always have books that take their reading skills further
 - pupils understand and use punctuation and grammar correctly in all of their writing, and that their handwriting is clear and legible, and spelling accurate.
- Speed up progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that number and problem-solving skills are taught well throughout the school so that pupils understand the basic concepts long before they get to Year 6
 - ensuring that teachers provide increasingly challenging real-life mathematical problems for pupils to solve using their knowledge of numbers.

- Improve the impact that leadership and management have on teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring assessments are always accurate, and data and target setting are used effectively to secure good progress for all pupils
 - checking planning before teachers use it to ensure that the work planned is at the right level for each pupil, and teachers have high expectations of all groups
 - developing the skills of the governing body in understanding information about pupils' performance.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start Nursery with skills that are below those expected for their age. Although their learning still requires improvement, they are closer to where they are expected to be when they start Year 1. The provision for outdoor learning has improved since the previous inspection, providing better opportunities for children to develop a range of skills outdoors as well as indoors.
- Attainment is usually broadly average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In 2012, attainment in Year 2 fell to below average. Following a dip in attainment in Year 6 in 2011, pupils reached higher standards in Year 6 in 2012 than in previous years.
- The proportion in Year 6 making better than expected progress in English and mathematics exceeded that found nationally in 2012. Nevertheless, in Years 3 to 5, too few pupils exceed the expected rate of progress to ensure that these improvements are sustainable. Progress is better in Year 2 than in Year 1.
- Pupils enjoy reading, and they read daily in guided reading sessions. However, younger pupils do not read often enough on their own with adults. A number of pupils are not able to use their developing knowledge of letters and sounds to help them, because some of the teaching is weak.
- Weaknesses in handwriting, grammar, spelling and punctuation persist in pupils' writing through to Year 6. Teachers do not systematically correct such errors, therefore, pupils are not constantly reminded to avoid them. Lessons too often start with pupils having to complete pedestrian tasks that many find too easy. Opening sessions often last too long, leaving pupils too little time to practise the skills they have learned.
- In mathematics, pupils complete many exercises accurately but have too few opportunities to use their skills to solve mathematical problems. When they are given opportunities, the problems do not increase enough in complexity to ensure work is hard enough for all pupils, and particularly the more-able.
- The progress of disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs improved in 2012, alongside other pupils. These pupils are often withdrawn in smaller groups to boost their learning. They make good progress in their groups but do not always transfer their learning to their work in class.
- There is no discernible difference between the progress of pupils for whom the school receives extra money and that of other pupils.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups did better than other pupils in 2012, and those for whom English is an additional language quickly learn to speak English. Nevertheless, they sometimes struggle to read words they do not know, and staff do not always check that they, or other pupils who might struggle, know the meanings of new or unfamiliar words.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies too much to ensure pupils in all year groups make good progress

each year. The upturn in Year 6 in 2012 was helped by the use of pupil premium money to increase staffing levels in Year 6 so that pupils could be taught in smaller groups. This has been continued with the current Year 6 group.

- Teachers tend to tell pupils how to do things rather than guide them to find things out for themselves. They sometimes ask and answer their own questions, leaving pupils little time to think for themselves. The opposite was true in an excellent Year 4 lesson, where pupils were strongly encouraged to work together and discuss and improve their learning. Here, the teacher skilfully guided learning and ensured all pupils made at least good progress.
- Pupils' work is always marked but written marking does not always give clear guidance on how to improve. The school's practice of not systematically marking punctuation, grammar and spelling limits the pupils' progress in writing. Teachers in Years 3 and 5 left such errors uncorrected in their own writing as they modelled for pupils what they wanted them to do. This was unhelpful.
- Much work in English and mathematics consists of exercises that are at the same level for all the pupils, despite their differing abilities. The exercises are sometimes too easy for everybody and result in little learning. For example, in a Year 6 English session, less-able pupils filled in blanks on worksheets, while other pupils copied the worksheet out, filling in the blanks as they did so. This wasted valuable writing time.
- The teaching of letters and sounds requires improvement. Adults are sometimes too quick to say the sounds and words, instead of letting pupils read and say them, and learning is not always followed up with tasks that help pupils to consolidate and extend what they have learned. In Year 2, the use of computers in teaching reading was not effective because pupils were largely left to their own devices, with little guidance from the program or teacher.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and pupils who are falling behind, are targeted for extra help, usually from teaching assistants. Teachers do not always ensure that pupils use what they learn in withdrawal groups to improve their learning in class.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The youngest children are developing good social skills and attitudes. They get on well together and respond positively to adults. Throughout the school, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate on their work, persevere and complete tasks, but admit work is sometimes too easy and they lose interest in it. They do not readily work independently, or take initiative to find things out for themselves, because they are not sufficiently encouraged to do so.
 - Pupils mostly behave well in lessons and in the playground. They and their parents feel behaviour is well managed, although pupils say lessons can sometimes be disrupted by poor behaviour and that irritates them. They feel safe in school, and the school ensures they know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school. Parents appreciate this.
 - Pupils know what bullying is, and explain why it is wrong, saying, for example, that persistent name-calling, or recurring physical violence, makes others sad. They know what to do and who to turn to should they experience or know of any bullying. They trust the teachers to deal quickly with any poor behaviour that arises. Pupils show care and consideration for others and work together well in lessons.
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- The school council, supported by class councils, gives pupils a voice in the running of the school, which they appreciate. Pupils raise funds for various charities and learn the importance of contributing to the school and wider community. Extra-curricular clubs and activities are very popular, and several have waiting lists because numbers are limited depending on the activity.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The senior leaders' expectations are too low and their strategies do not make enough impact on pupils' achievement. The headteacher explained that the school had adjusted assessment data in some year groups to try to give a more accurate picture of the proportion of pupils showing the expected two levels of progress between Year 2 and Year 6. The information, however, shows that year on year progress is very variable, and the school does not have a clear enough picture of what constitutes good progress over time.
 - The school's analysis of pupils' work shows that teachers' assessments are not always accurate. Moderation meetings, where teachers share and level work together, are beginning to tackle this issue. Staffing has been increased in Year 3 as well as in Year 6 this year, in response to the dip in attainment in Year 2 in 2012. The school agrees that the teaching of letters and sounds is not skilful enough.
 - The assistant headteachers check and comment on teachers' planning after teaching has taken place and teachers have evaluated it themselves. They are therefore unable to guide teachers on whether learning is at the right levels for different ability groups before teaching takes place. The school leaders do not hold individual teachers to account thoroughly enough for the progress that pupils make in different year groups. Pupils, and especially the more-able, miss out because of this.
 - The local authority's support for the school has been very general and light touch. This is because the school sought support elsewhere.
 - The school development plan sets out an agenda for improvement that is heading in the right direction. However, the school rates its own performance too highly because senior leaders and members of the governing body do not have a good understanding of how to identify and correct weaknesses. Although staff training is linked to development planning and teacher's individual targets, senior leaders do not systematically follow up whether the training has been worthwhile.
 - Despite the weaknesses identified in this report, the actions of leaders and governors have had a positive effect. Additional government funding that was spent to support pupils in Year 6 last school year successfully boosted achievement. Attendance has also improved. These show that the school does have the capacity to improve.
 - Assemblies and work in different subjects encourage pupils to reflect, consider others and develop spiritually. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and why it is important to get along with everyone. Pupils are made aware of different faiths and cultures through their work in different subjects. All of this contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The school ensures all pupils are fully included in everything it offers. However, learning is not always at the right level to ensure all groups of pupils make equally good progress.
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The governance of the school

- Members of the governing body do not ask searching enough questions of the headteacher, for example, about pupils' progress and how it might be speeded up. They wisely approved the use of pupil premium funding to buy in extra staffing so that pupils can be taught in smaller groups. They know that attainment rose in 2012, and are rightly concerned about whether the improvement can be sustained. However, they have not checked to see whether progress is speeding up in the rest of the school to ensure continued improvement. Governors do not have a good grasp of how to use data to check on the school's performance. The governing body keeps a weather-eye on the targets set for teachers and on teachers' salary movement. They ensure the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities and, where relevant, attend training to keep up-to-date. All staff are vetted and appropriately trained to keep pupils safe and free from harm.
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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	103194
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	404858

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	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penny Wagg
Headteacher	Adrian Davies
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2010
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