INSPECTION REPORT

Oakfield Infant School

Low Fell, Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108332

Acting Headteacher: Mrs J Jacques

Reporting inspector: Miss V Rogers 22274

Dates of inspection: 5-6 June 2000

Inspection number: 190606

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 7

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Chowdene Bank

Low Fell

Gateshead

Postcode: NE9 6JH

Telephone number: 0191 4870354

Fax number:

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A Bell

Date of previous inspection: 5-8 November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Oakfield Infant School is situated to the south of Gateshead. The school shares the same site as the Junior School to which pupils transfer at the age of seven years. There are currently 160 pupils on roll (78 boys and 82 girls) aged from 4 to 7 years who attend full time. Children are admitted to the reception class at the start of the school year in which they are five. At the time of the inspection there were 18 pupils under five. Most pupils attend a number of nurseries across the town, others attend playgroups or have no pre-school experience before entering the reception class. Numbers on roll have risen since the last inspection; the school is very popular.

Attainment of the four-year-olds when they enter the school is broadly average. There are three pupils with a statement of special educational need and the school has identified 12 pupils (7.5%) as requiring some additional support with learning disabilities and similar needs. Although over half travel from outside the immediate area, most pupils live close to the school. They mainly come from privately owned housing. The pupils come from a broad socio-economic background. Almost six per cent of pupils are entitled to receive a free school meal, which is below the average for schools of its type across the country. There are no pupils from ethnic minority communities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Oakfield Infant School is a good school with several very good features. The pupils achieve high standards in reading, writing and mathematics, where teaching is good. The headteacher, staff and governors work well together to provide a good quality of education for all pupils. The school has a higher than average income per pupil and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' achievements in National Curriculum tests are very high in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- There are good structured programmes in place for pupils' learning and very good procedures for assessment which are used well to meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- The attitude of the pupils is good and their behaviour is very good.
- The provision for pupils' personal development is good; the provision for their moral development is very good. Provision for their spiritual, social and cultural development is good. Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are good.
- The acting headteacher provides very good leadership and is supported well by the governors and staff. Together they have established an ethos that strongly supports pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- More effective communication with parents, to ensure that they fully understand the good standards and quality of education that the school offers.
- Provision for the physical development of children under five, by providing regular access to large play equipment.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. No key issues were identified in that inspection. However the governors, headteacher and staff wished to build on the success of the school and drafted an action plan with four issues which were identified as areas for development within the report. The school has successfully addressed each of these areas. The monitoring role is very well developed and forms an integral part of the management structure. The school has developed comprehensive curriculum maps and procedures for assessment, which ensure continuity and progression in learning. They have developed effective procedures in planning to ensure that the higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged. They have curtailed the number of activities on offer in any one lesson so that the teaching is more focused. The standard of documentation within the school is very high and supports the ethos of continuing school improvement.

The school is well placed to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

		compar	ed with	
Performance in:	-	similar schools*		
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Reading	А	A*	A*	А
Writing	Α	Α	Α	В
Mathematics	А	A*	А	А

Key	
Very high Well above average Above average Average Below average Well below average	A* A B C D

[&]quot;similar" is defined as being in the same free school meals benchmark group.

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. They make good progress and by the end of the key stage are achieving standards that are well above average in writing and mathematics when compared to national averages and very high in reading, where the results in 1999 indicate that they are in the top 5 per cent nationally. When compared to similar schools (those in the same free school meals benchmark group), the results were well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing.

Average results over the period from 1996 to 1999 show a rise in achievements overall. The school consistently reaches its agreed targets for groups of pupils and has set clear targets to improve writing.

In teacher assessment for science in 1999, pupils' attainment was very high in comparison with national averages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good both in class and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good. Relationships throughout the school are good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory, but improving. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils: Aged up to 5 years		aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The overall quality of teaching is good. In all lessons observed, including those for the under fives, the teaching was satisfactory or better. In almost sixty nine per cent of lessons it was good.

A well-structured curriculum, together with the very good planning and procedures for assessment is used very effectively to ensure that pupils of all abilities are enabled to make good progress overall, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teachers effectively build on pupils' previous learning and pupils respond well to the new challenges that the teachers present

which take their learning forward. The pupils are interested and work hard to complete their work and achieve the objectives of the lessons.

During the inspection, examples of good teaching were observed in information technology and religious education as well as in English, mathematics and science.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment		
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which is relevant to the needs of all pupils and meets statutory requirements. The school has effective strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy.		
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school has developed detailed education plans for them that contain clear and precise targets for improvement. These pupils are particularly well monitored and supported.		
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' personal development is good. The provision for the moral development of the pupils is very good. Provision for their spiritual, social and cultural development is good.		
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a strong area of school life. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is very good. Child protection arrangements and procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils are good.		

Parents are very supportive of the school. However, there are areas of significant dissatisfaction which are due mainly to misunderstanding of what the school offers: this weakness in communication is made worse by a difficult school site which prevents parents from having day-to-day access to the teachers.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led by the acting headteacher, who is very well supported by a dedicated, hardworking and committed staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the work of the school. Although they are a newly formed governing body they are developing their managerial responsibilities well and all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is a particular strength of the school. The school analyses the standards it achieves very thoroughly and uses this information to modify its provision. Regular and effective monitoring of teaching is carried out and information gathered from this is used well to provide appropriate professional development.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of all staff, time and accommodation. Teaching resources are very good and are very effectively used to enhance pupils' learning. Principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most What parents would like to see improved The good progress their children make and • The quality and quantity of the homework the high standards that the school achieves. provision. • The range of activities outside lessons. Their children like school. Pupils' behaviour in school is good. • More information about the progress their • The school expects pupils to work hard and children are making. achieve their best. The teaching is good. The school is well led and managed. There is a caring ethos and parents feel comfortable about approaching the school. The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.

The inspection team agree with the parents that the strengths of the school far outweigh the weaknesses. The school has a range of extra-curricular activities which take place during the lunchtimes and are open to Year 2 pupils. These include a French club, gymnastics, book club and an information technology club, which alternates with a science club. The activities which take place play an effective part in developing the pupils' skills, for example in information technology, to a much deeper level. The school also involves the pupils well in a range of visits and invites visitors such as theatre groups into school. The inspectors feel that the provision at present is adequate considering the age of the pupils. The school has a homework policy which mainly centres around pupils taking home reading books and information regarding what the pupils have been learning during the week so that parents may develop this as required. The inspection team agree, that more specific communication regarding the school's expectations in homework could be made. The school has agreed to consider this matter further. The inspection findings suggest that information regarding pupils' progress is sound. The school holds two parents' meetings each year, with a further one planned; during these meetings parents are given targets that the pupils are expected to aim for. In addition to this the school has open mornings where parents are invited to work alongside their children in the classroom and parents receive clear annual written reports.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils' achievements in National Curriculum tests are very high in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics.

- 1. The school has consistently achieved high results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of the key stage. The pupils enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. Evidence gained during the inspection confirms that they make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and achieve standards that are very high in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics when compared with national averages. When compared with similar schools pupils attain well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing.
- 2. The school has maintained and improved upon the high standards reported in the last inspection and is well placed to sustain this progress.
- 3. The school is strongly committed to raising standards through its central philosophy of developing the talents of all pupils. The school carefully evaluates the effect of any new initiatives such as the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Through careful monitoring of standards they recognise the relative weakness that pupils have in writing when compared with the other subjects and have put in place strategies to address this and bring about further improvement.
- 4. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to class discussions in all areas of the curriculum and do so, well. Pupils across the school achieve well in reading. Reading is used effectively to support and extend the learning in other subjects, such as when learning about the use of non-fiction texts as a source of information. For example, pupils in Year 1 use their "big book" about "The Blue Whale" as a basis for both learning and extending their phonic skills and knowledge and finding out information. Pupils' skills in writing are above average at the end of the key stage. Pupils develop their writing skills well as they move through the school. By the end of the key stage they write for a range of purposes such as stories, instructions and letters and use their skills well in other subjects such as science and history. The school has recognised that writing is less well developed than the other subjects and is now providing more opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes.
- 5. Standards in mathematics are above national averages. Pupils respond well to the good quality of teaching and make good progress, particularly in acquiring and using computational skills and mathematical vocabulary. They apply their skills very effectively in other subjects such as science.
- 6. Standards in science are above average at the end of the key stage. The curriculum is carefully structured and there is a strong emphasis on the practical work and first-hand experience. In the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, 100 per cent of pupils achieved or exceeded the national standard which was very high; over half of these pupils achieved a higher level. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding in all attainment targets of the National Curriculum well as they move through the school.

The overall quality of teaching is good.

7. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. There is a structured approach to learning throughout the school with all teachers working well together as a team. Both pupils and staff work hard. Teachers plan their work very carefully by identifying precise learning objectives, they use methods and choose activities that are suitable and match the needs of the pupils and they use the time available efficiently. The planning of English and mathematics, particularly, identifies clearly what is to be learned and provides activities which are well matched to meet the needs of the pupils for this. Support staff and parents who help in class are used well; teachers plan well for them and ensure that they are clear about the lessons' objectives and the tasks the pupils have to do. For example, in a Year 1 literacy lesson, a group of under-achieving pupils received very good support in developing their phonic skills from a parent who was able to give them the extra attention they needed and so motivated them well.

- 8. There is a unity of purpose amongst the staff. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge and have developed their skills through a willingness to reflect upon their own practice and to participate in further training opportunities. They demonstrate a high level of professional commitment and are good role models. They have high expectations of both the standards of work to be achieved and pupils' behaviour. They have good relationships with their pupils, whom they manage well, and maintain very high standards of discipline. Most lessons are conducted at a very good pace; however, in a few instances the pace was too quick to enable pupils to reflect on what they were required to do or what they had learned. The teachers use the good quality resources very effectively to enhance the quality of learning. Care is taken to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are well supported and benefit equally from all activities. The quality of teaching could be improved even further with more opportunities provided for pupils to create their own ideas and so develop an independent approach to their learning.
- 9. Teachers assess pupils effectively through marking their work, using questioning techniques to establish what pupils understand and regularly carrying out more formal assessment tasks. Teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge and assessment very effectively when matching work to the pupils' abilities, particularly in English and mathematics, thus ensuring that pupils of different abilities are enabled to make good progress overall. Learning targets are shared with pupils at the start of most lessons and teachers return to these during the concluding plenary session when pupils reflect upon what they have learned and whether they have achieved their goals.

There are good structured programmes in place for pupils' learning and very good procedures for assessment, which are used well to meet the learning needs of all pupils.

- 10. The school has developed a clear and well-structured curriculum map which ensures that all pupils have access to the full Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum and provides continuity and progression in the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. The curriculum for the under fives includes all the recommended areas of learning and the National Curriculum during the last term in reception. The school has a comprehensive system for reviewing and monitoring curriculum provision to ensure that it fully meets the needs of all pupils and national and statutory requirements. The school provides a wide range of stimulating activities and high quality displays, which contain useful and interesting information to make learning interesting and celebrate pupils' work. The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of visits and visitors to school and out-of-school activities which include information technology, French, gymnastics and book clubs which play an effective part in further developing pupils' skills.
- 11. Procedures for assessment are very good and assessment is seen as an integral part of teachers' planning, with opportunities for assessment clearly identified on planning sheets and termly curriculum maps. Achievement in English and mathematics is evaluated daily and this information is used well to establish what pupils need to learn next. Individual records and samples of pupils' assessed work are kept in individual pupils' folders. Targets are set termly for pupils' academic development and these are shared with parents during consultation evenings.

The attitude of the pupils is good and their behaviour is very good.

- 12. The pupils behave very well both in lessons and around the school. There have been no exclusions and no instances of misbehaviour were seen during the inspection. The pupils have good relationships with each other and with adults. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups when required to do so, sharing resources without fuss. In their responses to the questionnaire and in the pre-inspection meeting, parents praised the children's behaviour. Children know what is expected of them and respond accordingly. Well-established classroom routines and organisation help the school to function efficiently and in an orderly manner.
- 13. Pupils have good attitudes towards learning, responding well to their teachers, listening to others' viewpoints and maintaining concentration. All pupils, including those under five, are able to sustain concentration for long periods and show a high level of commitment. The only time when pupils become restless or do not respond well is when they become tired and this then affects the value of their input in group work and discussions.

14. Overall the pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development together with a satisfactory level of attendance, make an important contribution to the quality of education and to the high standards that are achieved.

The provision for pupils' personal development is good; the provision for their moral development is very good. Provision for their spiritual, social and cultural development is good. Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are good.

- 15. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good and contributes well to the pupils' clear understanding of right and wrong. Assemblies and a careful programme of personal and social education contribute well to their personal and social development. Well-established rules of behaviour have been written, with input from the pupils through discussion. The school rewards the successes of its pupils through the distribution of certificates for a range of achievements.
- 16. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Spiritual awareness is fostered as part of the school's policy and includes the daily acts of worship which are well planned. An awareness of the beliefs of others is developed satisfactorily through religious education lessons which include visits to churches and the synagogue.
- 17. The provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are given responsibilities around school. They clear up after lessons well and without fuss and take responsibility for carrying out simple jobs around the school, such as taking registers to the office. Older pupils help younger pupils when they start school by writing "welcome" letters and helping them at playtimes. There is an emphasis on a whole-school approach and many events such as the fun afternoon are arranged to promote this. Pupils take part in a number of fund-raising events for charities and play an active part in community life, for example by singing carols at the local nursing home.
- 18. Provision for cultural development is good. Pupils learn about their own culture through visitors to school such as theatre groups and through visits in connection with their work. They have opportunities to study the work of a variety of artists such as Cezanne and there are many good displays of the works of famous artists.
- 19. Pupils' relationships with adults and with each other are good. They play well together in the playground during break and lunchtimes.

The acting headteacher provides very good leadership and is supported well by the governors and staff. Together they have established an ethos that strongly supports pupils' learning.

- 20. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher in December 1999, the former deputy headteacher has become acting headteacher. During this period she has maintained the high standards and improved some aspects of an already good school. She provides very good leadership and is strongly supported by the acting deputy headteacher, staff and governors. Together they demonstrate a high level of commitment to the work of the school and to high standards of personal and academic achievement. This provides a clear educational direction for the work of the school. The high quality school development plan was developed through a process of consultation with staff, parents and governors, an analysis and evaluation of pupils' achievements in national and standardised tests and assessments and the monitoring of teaching. The school is both reflective and evaluative and has a clear sense of purpose.
- 21. The staff work well together as a team. Apart from the newly qualified teacher, all teachers are responsible for at least one curriculum area. Time is made available for them to carry out these duties including the monitoring of standards and the teaching and learning of their subjects.
- 22. The ethos of the school is very good. There is a positive, caring atmosphere which strongly supports high standards of academic attainment and personal development.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

More effective communication with parents to ensure that they fully understand the good standards and quality of education that the school offers.

23. The questionnaire and parents' meeting indicate that the parents are very supportive of the school overall. However, three areas of significant dissatisfaction were identified. These relate to the provision of homework, extra-curricular activities and information to parents regarding their children's progress. The school recognises the importance of a good partnership with parents and has many positive strategies in place to help with this. There are opportunities for parents to work alongside their children and help in school, regular newsletters and a parents' forum with representatives from each class, who discuss issues such as homework. The school also sends a questionnaire to parents at the end of each year to gain their opinions on a range of subjects. From further discussion with parents and observation during the inspection it is clear that the parents' dissatisfaction is largely due to the lack of easy access to a difficult site, which hampers effective communication and consequently obscures the good standards that the school achieves and the good quality of education that is offered. The school now needs to establish a more effective dialogue with parents to ensure that they fully understand what the school offers.

Provision for the physical development of children under five by providing regular access to large play equipment.

24. Provision for children who are under five in the reception class is very good overall. Within the classroom environment there are many well planned and imaginative opportunities for them to develop their co-ordination, manipulative skills and control of a good range of equipment such as scissors, paint brushes and paste and they develop these skills well. Although the school has a range of large wheeled toys these are not used or available on a regular basis and the children do not have daily access to outdoor play, except during the school's playtimes. There are no large pieces of climbing equipment readily available to enable them to practise and develop their balancing, large-scale movements, physical co-ordination and social skills.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 25. The school should now:
 - (1) Communicate more effectively to parents the good quality and range of work that the school offers by providing easier access for them, particularly at the start and end of the school day; (paragraph 23)
 - (2) Provide children under five with regular access to large play equipment. (paragraph 24)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	16	l
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8	

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	69	31	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		160
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		12

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	30	21	51

National Curriculum To	est/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
	Boys	29	30	30
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	21	21	21
	Total	50	51	51
Percentage of pupils	School	98 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
at NC level 2 or above	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (85)

Teachers' Asse	essments	English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	29	29	30
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	21	21	21
	Total	50	50	51
Percentage of pupils	School	98 (100)	98 (100)	100 (100)
at NC level 2 or above	National	82 (82)	86 (86)	87 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	105
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black - Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.5
Average class size	26.7

Education support staff: YR - Y2

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	85

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	251333
Total expenditure	258978
Expenditure per pupil	1774
Balance brought forward from previous year	20771
Balance carried forward to next year	13126

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	159
Number of questionnaires returned	69

Percentage of responses in each category

My child likes school.

My child is making good progress in school.

Behaviour in the school is good.

My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.

The teaching is good.

I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.

I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

		T	T	
Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
59	39	0	1	0
48	42	3	0	7
41	57	1	0	1
23	46	23	6	1
49	48	0	0	3
33	38	28	0	1
64	36	0	0	0
42	55	3	0	0
33	45	16	0	6
46	46	1	0	6
43	51	3	0	3
7	33	28	16	16