



The Oval Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103374
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276901
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Ted Wheatley RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Whittington Oval Yardley Birmingham, West Midlands B33 8JG
School category	Community	Telephone number	0121 4643248
Age range of pupils	3 to 11	Fax number	0121 4641170
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair of governors	Mr Geoff Millington
Number on roll	460	Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Chahal
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous inspection	29 January 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Oval Primary School is a large primary school on the edge of Birmingham and has slightly more girls than boys. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and increasing, as is the proportion who are in the early stage of learning English. There is a large proportion of pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties. Children enter the school in the Nursery and Reception with very limited skills in most areas, particularly their literacy skills and personal, social and emotional skills. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average and there is a high level of unemployment and social deprivation in the area.

The school has had large changes in staffing, but this is now stable.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective school providing a good standard of education. The school evaluates itself as good and inspectors agree. The school is in a very good position to make further improvement and provides good value for money. Overall, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and has led to the significant improvement in pupils' behaviour and the extremely good behaviour and attitudes of pupils in lessons and around school. Children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and the great majority of pupils make good progress as they move from Year 1 to Year 6.

Standards are broadly average and pupils achieve well, considering their very low levels of attainment on entry to the school. Currently standards are better than shown in the end of Years 2 and 6 national tests. This is because staffing issues have been resolved and because teaching is increasingly challenging, supported by excellent enrichment opportunities and focused on individual pupils' learning needs. At the time of the previous inspection attendance was inadequate and remains so, although the school is working hard to overcome this issue. A small number of pupils are absent too often or for too long a period of time and their attainment suffers because of this.

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and direction for improvement. The school has excellent partnerships with the many agencies and organisations it works with to improve behaviour, attendance and care, guidance and support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the work it has started in improving literacy skills in order to raise standards overall.
- Continue work on and explore further methods to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress from very low standards on entry to the school. By the time they go into Year 1 the great majority of children have broadly average skills in their personal, social and emotional development and in their physical development. All children make good progress in developing their communication, language and literacy skills and their mathematical development skills, though the standards they reach are still below average.

Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2005 were below average overall but have improved in recent years. Results in writing and mathematics were lower than in reading, but are the focus of the school's work and are showing significant improvement. In the end of Year 6 national tests in 2005, results were below average and worse than the previous year. This was largely due to significant difficulties experienced by a large proportion of children and also staffing difficulties that have now been resolved. Standards rose in mathematics, also due to effective strategies

introduced by the school. Taking into account these difficulties and the very low attainment on entry, pupils made satisfactory progress overall.

Pupils currently in Years 1 to 6 make good progress and reach standards that are broadly average. Staffing is now stable, teaching is challenging and behaviour difficulties are managed really well. The school's efforts to improve literacy skills are evident in the way that pupils speak in sentences and use a wide range of vocabulary. This is starting to have a positive effect on how well pupils achieve in all subjects. Targets, both academic and behaviour ones, are challenging and pupils are clear about what they have to do to reach them. They achieve their targets because of the good support from teachers and support assistants. As one older pupil said: 'We have the same teacher all of the time now; we know what we have to do and the teacher makes sure we do it'.

Pupils with learning difficulties and those from minority ethnic backgrounds all make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including how well pupils prepare for life in a multicultural society, are good. There are particular strengths in social and moral development, both of which are outstanding. The great majority of pupils behave very well due to the very effective strategies the school has introduced to improve behaviour and to help pupils deal with their emotions and to be aware of how their poor behaviour affects other pupils. Pupils are confident and very polite. The incidence of exclusions has drastically reduced and parents are very pleased with the high standards of behaviour demanded by the school. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and their work, which has a positive impact on their learning. As at the time of the previous inspection, attendance is inadequate. The school is working hard to overcome this issue, but a number of families are not sufficiently supportive of its efforts. Pupils increasingly eat healthily, are physically active and deal responsibly with their own feelings. The school has gained a 'Healthy Schools' award and display around the school shows good progress in all aspects of physical and mental health. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local communities. The school council takes an active part in the life of the school and is proud of its achievements in improving the school environment and raising money for charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned around topics that pupils enjoy. Pupils show a good deal of interest and work hard. Teachers frequently give

them the opportunity to express their opinions and pupils are eager to respond. Lessons are challenging and meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers are friendly but firm, dealing well with unacceptable behaviour. This leads to the positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils that contribute so much to the good progress they make. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own work and to work independently. There is a clear focus on the development of literacy and numeracy in almost all lessons and teachers make good use of the available computers to provide extra learning opportunities. Marking has improved since the last inspection and teachers' comments help pupils understand how to improve. Homework is set regularly and supports the work done in lessons. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and targets are set and reviewed regularly. Progress is monitored and pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to make further progress. Support from teaching assistants is of a very high quality; they work very closely with teachers to ensure that all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good quality curriculum for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is securely based on the government's recommended guidelines and leads smoothly into the work in Year 1. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is good and well matched to pupils' needs. It is based on topics of interest that effectively motivate pupils, and the school council was involved in selecting these. Literacy and numeracy skills have been successfully built into topics. The use of computers has improved since the last inspection. The curriculum includes many aspects of social and health education and healthy lifestyle and is responsive to local needs. The curriculum is enriched with an excellent range of contributions from external speakers and educational visits that enhance pupils' learning. There is a very wide range of after-school activities including sport, dance and crafts, and teams take part in local and national competitions. Drama productions and debates help to raise pupils' self-esteem in addition to helping their speaking skills. The level of participation in these activities is good; many clubs having waiting lists of pupils who want to be involved.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support for ensuring pupils' safety, welfare and personal development is outstanding. There are robust and well-tested procedures for child protection and for ensuring the suitability of all who work in school. The school ensures that the premises are safe, and identifies and minimises potential risks in all activities. Assessment information is used very well to set all pupils challenging targets for improvement. There are exemplary procedures for encouraging pupils' personal development and well-being. The school, with a range of external agencies, provides very good support for pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities or other barriers that impede their learning. It helps pupils deal with their own emotional problems well and liaises effectively with parents to encourage them to support their

children's learning and other aspects of their development. The school also has effective procedures for supporting pupils for who are at an early stage of learning English. The school is very aware of issues that might surface when pupils are not at school and works hard to help them to deal with these. Pupils are encouraged and helped to support each other in their work and behaviour.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed and the direction for improvement provided by the headteacher is outstanding. The headteacher and senior staff have worked very closely with teachers and classroom assistants to identify the issues that limit how well pupils learn. They have established systems that support pupils, parents and staff and ensure that lessons provide exciting learning experiences uninterrupted by poor behaviour. The headteacher and staff have identified how to improve teaching and have introduced a wide range of support and training for staff. For example, staff have been trained to support pupils with English as an additional language. There is a very clear focus on individual pupils' needs and the school has introduced methods that make sure all pupils know what they need to do to make good progress.

The school consults parents and pupils effectively in planning improvements. Governors are well informed, committed to working with the school and provide a high level of support and challenge for the headteacher and staff. There is a well costed programme for school improvement.

The school has had several changes in staffing and problems caused by this were having a serious impact on how well pupils learned, but these have now been resolved.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The Oval Primary School Whittington Oval Yardley Birmingham West Midlands B33 8JG

24 November 2005

Dear Pupils

We very much enjoyed our time at your school. You made us feel very welcome and many of you spoke to us in meetings, lessons and around school and helped us gain a good impression of your school.

The best things about your school are

- Your behaviour is very good. You treat adults with respect and are very considerate towards each other.
- Your headteacher is really determined to make sure that you enjoy your education and can work and make good progress in a peaceful, friendly atmosphere.
- You work hard, enjoy your lessons and make good progress.
- The way the school takes care of you is excellent; teachers and other staff who work in the school know what you need to do to learn well and give you a lot of help and support.

We are suggesting to your school that governors and staff should now

- Make sure that they continue the good work they have started to help you do the best you can in your school work.
- Continue the work they have been doing to improve the attendance of those children who do not attend school regularly and to find other ways to help improve attendance.

With best wishes

Mr T Wheatley Lead Inspector