



Olney First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110246
LEA Milton Keynes LEA
Inspection number 278389
Inspection dates 14 September 2005 to 15 September 2005
Reporting inspector Cathie Munt HMI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Spinney Hill Road
School category	Community		Olney
Age range of pupils	4 to 8		MK46 5AD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234711388
Number on roll	290	Fax number	01234717067
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr S Bateson
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr S K Dunning

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two HMI and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

Olney First School in the small market town of Olney ten miles north of Milton Keynes, serves children of Olney and the adjacent villages. The pupils, aged four to eight, are mainly of white British origin. About four per cent of the pupils are from other white backgrounds. Just over one per cent is from minority ethnic groups and these pupils speak English as their second language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national figure as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. Pupils are admitted to the reception classes at the start of the autumn term following their fourth birthday. They attend part-time for 2 weeks, beginning full time attendance in the third week of the term. The inspection took place in the second week of term. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 will transfer to their next school in September 2005 when Olney First School will become an infant school following the re-organisation of education in the area. The school achieved Investors in People status in 2004 and received the Healthy Schools Award in 2005.

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 a good school with some outstanding features. The school is very well regarded by the parents and within the local community. Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and the pupils make an excellent start to their education. Throughout the rest of the school standards are above average. The pupils make good progress in their learning over time due to the good quality of the teaching. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils and the attention given to the pupils' personal development are strengths of the school. The staff and governors form an effective and cohesive team. Leadership and management are good overall as is the school's capacity to improve further. While there are outstanding aspects of its performance, such as the school's partnerships with other educational institutions and the extent of the governors' involvement in strategic decision making, the school's self assessment, which judges effectiveness as outstanding, takes insufficient account of some areas which require further development. The outcomes for a number of the actions in the school's improvement plan are not stated clearly enough, making it difficult to judge how successful the school has been in achieving them. Insufficient use is made of the data available when evaluating some subjects so that differences over time in the achievement of different groups of pupils are not clearly identified. Sometimes the feedback to teachers does not provide sufficient advice on how to move good teaching and learning forward so that it becomes outstanding. However, the effective and efficient use of resources, its success in addressing the areas for improvement noted in the last inspection report and the standards reached by the pupils mean that the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

* Ensure that all managers make use of the full range of information available when evaluating provision in their areas of responsibility.* Ensure that development plans have clear and measurable success criteria.* Ensure that all teachers have the skills and information they need in order to move good practice to excellent.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve standards which are above the national average. On entry to the school, the attainment of most of the pupils is above the expected standard for their age in many of the areas of learning. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make very good progress in the Foundation Stage. From this excellent start the pupils make good progress in their language and mathematics work in Key Stage 1 with the majority making very good progress in reading. The pupils apply their basic skills to good effect in their work. This helps them to achieve well in other subjects. Last year, all of the pupils reached at least the expected standard in science at the end of Year 2, with almost half of them doing better than this. In 2004, the most recent year for which national Key Stage 1 test results have been validated, standards were

above average overall and the proportions of pupils reaching at least the expected Level 2 were well above the average in each test. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was greater in reading than in writing or mathematics. In Year 3, this group of pupils continued to do better in reading than in writing, in which some made very limited progress. However, over time, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics has increased steadily. The five year trend in the school's test results from 2000 to 2004 is upwards, in line with the national trend. The 2005 Key Stage 1 test results were similar to those of 2004, except in that the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in writing rose significantly. As in previous years, attainment at Level 3 was higher in reading than in writing or mathematics. Almost all the school's targets were met and most were exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Provision for the pupils' spiritual and moral development are very good and provision for their social and cultural development are excellent. The school recognises these strengths in its self-evaluation. Attendance is in line with most primary schools and punctuality is good. The pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are excellent as are their relationships with adults and other pupils. This contributes significantly to an atmosphere which is friendly, calm and productive. The pupils reported that they feel safe in school and that they can always find an adult to talk to if anything is worrying them. They move around the school quietly and play together most sensibly in the playground. Pupils obey the school rules without having to be reminded and they treat each other and their surroundings with respect. Attention to developing a healthy lifestyle is a positive strength of the school's provision. Pupils are encouraged to drink water regularly and all pupils receive at least two hours physical education a week. The school hosts a Healthy Living Week and Healthy Eating days. Regular yoga classes develop the pupils' physical skills and provide them with an insight into other viewpoints. The range of opportunities to make a positive contribution to the community and to develop skills that contribute to their future economic well-being is outstanding. Pupils learn about the cultural heritage within their community and experience how their community works at first hand through working with local artists, shopping in the market and taking part in the famous Olney Pancake race. The whole school topic on Africa develops an awareness of other cultures effectively. Visits to places of interest broaden the pupils' understanding of the wider world community and their place in it.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school has systematic arrangements for the monitoring of the teaching and learning and rightly judges them to be good overall. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for professional development for teaching and support staff. The pupils

want to learn and the skills of independence and enquiry are well developed in their lessons. The pupils' enjoyment in their learning was evident in their singing, in a mathematics lesson where challenging tasks were greeted with gasps of delight, and in the gleeful way that the newest pupils showed their art work to their teachers. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are outstanding; there are high levels of expectations of the pupils' achievement by all adults and there is excellent use of the outdoor facilities, not least in developing a range of skills in number and language. The pupils have settled quickly and comfortably into the school's routines. Elsewhere in the school, the best lessons are well planned, stimulating and provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to explore ideas through speaking and listening, as well as to develop their creative skills. The teachers in these instances use questioning well to assess understanding and to involve the less confident individuals in oral work, as well as to re-enforce the key learning points at the ends of lessons. Staff are aware that the learners are not as fully involved as they might be in the setting of numeracy and literacy targets. Teachers and classroom assistants provide effective support for those pupils who have special educational needs and this helps them make generally good progress. The best lesson planning and practice include activities and resources which are well-matched to the pupils' differing learning needs and attainment. This is not consistently the case, however, and the higher attainers are not always challenged as fully as they might be. Oral work is sometimes dominated by the more confident individuals because answers are taken from volunteers, enabling more retiring pupils to opt out of the discussion. There are clear and appropriate assessment methods in use by class teachers and there are numerous examples of helpful and constructive marking of pupils' written work. The school monitors and analyses national test results and other assessment information carefully and takes appropriate action to address weaker aspects of the pupils' achievement. However, while writing has properly been identified as a priority for improvement, last year's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' written work was not precise enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum in each stage is suitably broad and balanced and meets the needs of the learners very well. The curricular planning for the pupils in the Foundation Stage is excellent. For example, meaningful activities such as making the Christmas cake for guests at the school concert cover many of the areas of learning, engage the pupils' interest and employs basic language and mathematics skills. There are very effective arrangements to ensure continuity as the pupils progress from the Reception classes to Year 1. The school places a strong emphasis through its curriculum on developing the pupils' learning skills, creativity and cultural interests and on enabling them to broaden their understanding of the wider world. It engages an interesting mix of artists and professionals to contribute to the pupils' learning. The programme for personal, social and health education is wide-ranging and effective. It includes provision to increase pupils' understanding of how to stay safe, in the home and outdoors. Given the ages of the pupils, there is a good range of sporting and cultural activities outside

lessons. The school makes some effective provision for high attaining pupils to work with older pupils in order to accelerate their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support for the pupils is outstanding. The parental questionnaires were overwhelming in their praise for the care that their children receive. A typical comment was that the staff are very approachable and all obviously care immensely about the children's well being and development. Suitable child protection systems are in place and appropriate training covers the policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe, and for helping staff to identify particular individual needs. The school works closely with parents encouraging them to be equal partners in their children's education. Many parents help in the school on a regular basis while others share their skills and talents with the pupils during creativity weeks. Effective communication with parents keeps them abreast of the term's work and this enables them to support their children's progress at home. Teaching assistants know the pupils very well and provide them with effective academic and pastoral support. Pupils readily turn to them for help. Excellent induction and transition arrangements enable the pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Year 1 to settle speedily into new routines. This enables teachers to identify individual needs quickly and effectively and contributes significantly to the successful progress that the pupils make in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher's leadership is innovative and effective. The values that shape the life of the school are shared by staff, governors and parents and are based on a community of learners where everyone has something to offer. Consequently, adults and pupils feel valued, trust one another and work together harmoniously. The views of parents and other members of the local and educational community are taken into account appropriately when deciding the school's priorities. Self evaluation systems are well established and have been effective in improving the quality of education overall. Standards have risen steadily since the last inspection and the increased emphasis on music, sport and the arts this year has introduced more creativity into lessons, meeting the school's aims of preparing the children more effectively for the future. In their evaluation, the school's managers recognise the school's many strengths and rightly note that some weaker details of the school's performance are not identified clearly enough. This omission prevents some good aspects of the school's work from becoming outstanding. For example, the assessment system does not yet enable managers to identify differences between the achievement over time of different groups of pupils and feedback to teachers does not always show them how to turn good lessons into outstanding ones. The teachers have a wide range of responsibilities which they discharge conscientiously. However, some subject action plans have success criteria which do not relate appropriately to the actions planned and some will be difficult to

evaluate due to a lack of quantifiable outcomes. The governing body provides the school with an outstanding level of critical support. In conjunction with the headteacher, it provides a strong sense of direction for the work of the school and outstanding support for the professional development of the staff. Governors have been most effective in preparing the school for the transition to infant school status. Their skills and expertise have been used to great effect to ensure that future developments are well planned and adequately funded. The school has the capacity to build on past good practice and improve those areas that need development.

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	1	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	2	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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?	1	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	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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

Thank you for the lovely welcome that you gave to us when we visited your school on the 14th and 15th of September. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing your work. We also enjoyed hearing what you thought about your school. We agree with your parents that your school is a good school which looks after you well and which is well led and managed by your headteacher and the governing body.

You told us that you like going to school because it is friendly and because you do lots of exciting things. We saw how hard you work in class and we were impressed with how polite you were to your teachers, to each other and to visitors. The inspector enjoyed your singing in assembly and I enjoyed seeing the pictures of the book week, the school visits, the Christmas concert and the visiting snake! You also told us that your teachers help you to learn and that the adults in the school are kind and helpful. We agree with your views.

We also agree with your teachers that the older pupils could improve their writing so that it is as good as their reading. We know that you have all been given targets to help you do this but some of you couldn't remember what these were. Thinking carefully about your targets will help you when you are doing your writing. We have asked your teachers to think about what they will do to help them to make their teaching even better. We also think that it will help them to judge how successful the school has been each year if they describe what they want to achieve more clearly in the school's planning document. I wish all of you at Olney First School a happy, exciting and memorable year.