



Oakhurst Community First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113685
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279221
Inspection dates 6 December 2005 to 7 December 2005
Reporting inspector Geoffrey Burgess RISP

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

Type of school	First	School address	Shaftesbury Road
School category	Community		West Moors
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		Ferndown, Dorset BH22 0DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01202 871577
Number on roll	172	Fax number	01202 876506
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Baker
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Melanie Davy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Oakhurst Community First School caters for children between the ages of four and nine who mainly come from a large village on the edge of Bournemouth. Almost all pupils are White British. All speak English as their first language. Few are entitled to free school meals. The school population has been fairly stable in the past but a significant number of pupils joined the school in the older classes last year. An above-average number of pupils are on the special needs register. A well-above-average six pupils have statements of special need. Children's attainment when they start school is usually average but is sometimes below. There has been a complete change of teaching staff since the last inspection and a new headteacher and chair of governors have taken over this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oakhurst Community First School is satisfactory and provides satisfactory value for money. This confirms the view of the head and governing body. However, inspectors are pleased to note substantial recent improvements to several aspects of the school's work, notably in the quality of teaching, in pupils' progress and in the effectiveness of leadership and management. The school's strengths lie in the curriculum it provides, its pastoral care for all pupils and in their positive attitudes and very good behaviour. A special strength is the way it makes sure its pupils with severe special needs have every opportunity to succeed. Parents are very pleased that their children are happy in school.

Other aspects of the school, including the Foundation Stage, are satisfactory, with pockets of strength and some areas for improvement. Satisfactory overall progress includes good progress among pupils receiving extra help with their learning but slower progress by potentially higher-achieving pupils. While standards are average through most of the school, they are well down in Year 2, which includes a lot of pupils with learning difficulties. The main weakness in leadership and management, which is sound overall, is the lack of financial prudence, which has resulted in a large overspend. However, this is being resolved and the very good progress made in identifying and making much-needed improvements is a good indication of the good ability of the current leadership to bring about change for the better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standards achieved by more able pupils by raising expectations and providing more challenging work.
- Focus on improving achievement in Year 2 so that standards can be closer to the national average.
- Manage the large overspend so that it can be repaid without compromising the learning of pupils now in school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most learners make the progress that should be expected of them and pupils achieve broadly average standards by the time they move on to the middle school. Children in the reception class are making good progress. Seven-year-olds have achieved slightly above average results in national testing over the past three years. With school records showing that these children started school with average standards or a little below, this represents sound progress. National tests taken voluntarily by the school and school records show that pupils have made satisfactory progress in Years 3 and 4, achieving similar standards. All first-hand evidence indicates that pupils are now making better progress in reading, writing and maths in Years 1 to 4. If this is maintained, pupils in Years 4, 3 and 1 should achieve progressively higher standards as they reach Year 4. However, Year 2 contains a high proportion of pupils with special needs and standards are below average. Pupils who find learning difficult are well

supported in and out of the classroom to ensure that they do as well as they can. However, more able pupils are not achieving as well as might be expected.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with pupils being clearly aware of right and wrong and having a good understanding of different faiths and cultures. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and they enjoy coming to school. They are polite and courteous and their behaviour is very good, even with Christmas just round the corner. Pupils feel safe in school, and they report few problems. They are confident in the support of staff should any problems arise. Parents say that 'this is a happy school'.

Pupils are aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. They readily explain what constitutes a healthy diet and they recognise the importance of physical activity. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community, where the school choir plays a strong role in representing the school. Pupils are also aware of the needs of others and willingly raise funds for charity. In school, responsibilities are taken on readily and conscientiously. The school council has been active in helping to improve playground equipment. The range of responsibilities undertaken by pupils and the satisfactory nature of their basic skills suitably prepare them for their next stage of education as well as later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school's records show that pupils make satisfactory progress and pupils say they enjoy their work. This indicates satisfactory teaching and learning. However, progress has been noticeably better in recent months and classroom observations show that much teaching is now good and sometimes very good. The use of ability groupings in literacy and numeracy lessons helps to ensure that the level of challenge is sufficient for most groups of learners. Effective teaching assistants help to make sure that pupils who find learning difficult, some very difficult, are able to succeed in reaching their learning targets. However, higher attainers are not being stretched enough. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods, including providing opportunities for pupils to work independently and the use of a range of resources, such as computers, to motivate pupils. Good assessment procedures are used to monitor learners' progress and plan lessons, and learners know what their targets are. Good use is made of homework to support learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum enables pupils to take part in a broad range of activities. Teachers take particular care to provide a suitable range of work in the mixed-age classes. Good links are made between subjects when appropriate, and good use is made of information and communication technology in other subjects. Provision for art and design is good. There is a good emphasis through the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills. In the Foundation Stage there is a good balance between independent learning and more directed tasks. Learning difficulties and disabilities are identified well, and pupils are provided with suitable work activities. The school is especially successful in including pupils with severe special needs, allowing them every opportunity to join in and succeed. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. Parents appreciate the much-improved range of school clubs which pupils support with enthusiasm.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care for its pupils is good and much appreciated by parents. Good relationships that exist between pupils and adults ensure that pastoral care is good. The care extended to pupils with severe learning disabilities is exemplary. There is a good focus on ensuring that every child matters. Adults know pupils well and pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to if they are worried. Child protection procedures are secure, and staff are alert to signs that any pupil might be distressed. The school ensures that pupils work in a safe, secure and clean environment. Pupils are taught about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are routinely reminded of the need to take care, for instance, when taking part in physical education.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and often add words of advice. Pupils also have targets for improving their work. However, in the past, these targets have not always been challenging enough to ensure that pupils, especially the higher attainers, made good progress with their work. Current targets show that staff are now addressing this issue well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's solid track record in recent years indicates that the leadership and management of the school have been satisfactory. However, this does not reflect the efforts made by senior teachers to deal with issues they identified in the past. Much was achieved and in the process two teachers gained national leadership qualifications. The arrival of a new headteacher added focus and urgency to their work, which is now beginning to have the impact needed.

Many aspects of the work of the school have been under review. Several changes have been made and more are in the pipeline. The head quickly identified the need for

classroom monitoring and this has already made an impact. The deputy head has ensured that the monitoring of progress and trends in standards is effective. The role of teaching assistants has been upgraded. Consultations with members of the school community have identified areas for improvement and work has begun on many of them. The contribution of the new head in bringing this about has been very good.

The key issue in the management of the school is a large inherited overspend. This is being tackled but will not be resolved quickly. A shortage of volunteers has made the governance of the school difficult. The governing body is now nearly up to strength but most governors are still finding their feet. However, this has provided the opportunity to strengthen the expertise of governors and their role in monitoring and evaluating what the school does. The school is in a good position to move forward and represents satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	3	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	2	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?	3	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	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Oakhurst Community First School Shaftesbury Road West Moors Ferndown Dorset BH22 0DY

8 December 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you very much for making our time at your school such a pleasure. We are really grateful for the time you took to talk to us about your school and show us your work.

This is what we liked most about your school:

- You enjoy your time in school and have a go at all the activities planned for you.
- Your interesting work is well displayed around the school.
- You are very polite and behave very well.
- All the adults in the school take very good care of you. There is always somebody for you to talk to.
- Your headteacher and all the other teachers are working hard to make your school the best it can be.

To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:

- Help pupils who are already good at reading, writing and maths to do even better.
- See what can be done to help some children in Year 2 do as well as children in other year groups.
- Find a way for the school to pay back the money it owes without stopping children from having all the things they need to learn.

We know you will enjoy the rest of your time at Oakhurst School.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Burgess Lead Inspector