



Oakwood Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117222
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280017
Inspection dates 25 May 2006 to 26 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Paul Cosway LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Oakwood Drive
School category	Community		AL4 OXA
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727 753930
Number on roll	270	Fax number	01727 753931
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. David Moore
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Zoe Berndes

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school, serving the east of St Albans. It is situated in a relatively advantaged area, although pupils come from a range of backgrounds. Fewer than average numbers of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. Most pupils are of White British background. The proportion at an early stage of learning English is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. The children enter the school with skills, knowledge and understanding which are slightly above average for their age. The standard entry number to the school has recently changed and is 45 and pupils are organised in single age classes and mixed age classes. The school has recently gained an Investors In People award for its management and development of staff and a Healthy School Award.

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 outstanding features and it gives good value for money. The school rightly judges itself to be good and has a realistic understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Provision is good in the Foundation Stage and pupils begin Year 1 with literacy, numeracy and social skills above the national average. They make good progress through the rest of the school, because of their positive attitudes to learning and good teaching. They reach well above average standards in the national tests by the end of Year 6. Literacy and numeracy are taught well and the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), music and physical education is good, leading to high standards. In 2005, some girls in Year 2 did not perform to their potential in mathematics, however Year 2 results were still above average overall. Pupils' personal development is good overall with some elements that are outstanding. By the time they reach Year 6, almost all are well-behaved, responsible and considerate of others. Pupils have excellent attitudes to work and greatly enjoy school because they are taught well. The support and care they get are very good. Most teaching is good or outstanding. The curriculum is good in its range and quality, including educational visits and after-school clubs. Good systems are being developed for assessing pupils and for tracking their progress, but not all teachers are using tracking and pupils' targets effectively yet. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has a clear vision for the school. Aply supported by her senior team and the governors, she has improved behaviour in the school recently and raised standards in ICT. The school has improved since the last inspection and the team work and high morale of the staff ensure that it is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the good tracking systems that the school has devised more consistently so that teachers are aware of their pupils' targets and intervene more effectively if pupils are underachieving.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Currently, standards are above average in the Foundation Stage and pupils make good progress from a level of understanding which is slightly above expectations for four-year-olds. Standards are well above average in English and mathematics by the age of seven and eleven. Standards in music, ICT, art and physical education are high, because the school's provision for these subjects is good. Most pupils are making good progress, achieving well and meeting challenging targets between Years 4 and 6. The school judges achievement and standards to be good, and wants to improve them further. In 2005, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who reached at least level 4 in the national tests was well above average. The proportion who reached level 5 in English, mathematics and science was much higher than in most schools. Results in reading

and writing were well above the national average for last year's Year 2 pupils and they achieved well in Years 1 and 2. In mathematics, however, results were above average overall, but below average for the proportion of pupils reaching the level 3. This was because some of the girls did not make as much progress as the boys. The school has analysed the reasons for this and is beginning to track the progress of all groups of pupils more effectively. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language and others who have moderate learning difficulties or disabilities also make good progress. The school met its challenging targets in 2005 and is on course to meet the even higher targets for 2006.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well being is good overall and has some outstanding features. Pupils have excellent attitudes to school and greatly enjoy their work, particularly using computers. Attendance is good but not all families support the school and take holidays out of term time. Pupils adopt safe practices and older pupils take care of younger ones. The school has achieved 'Healthy School' status and pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives. School meals and their presentation have been significantly improved over the last 18 months. Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. While behaviour is good overall, parents are concerned about the behaviour of a small minority of older pupils. The school has extended anti-bullying work and makes very clear what is acceptable. Behaviour has improved as a result and is now good. Pupils know there are people to talk to and the 'worry box' is available to share concerns. There are good opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities. They raise money for charities and contribute to the local community. Along with their high literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, this is excellent preparation for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and manage them well. Most plan their lessons to interest the pupils and include a good range of tasks to keep the pupils involved. The pupils respond by showing great enthusiasm for learning. Teachers plan their work well to meet the needs and abilities of all pupils. In an outstanding lesson the teacher used resources very well to make learning interesting and give the pupils particularly clear, helpful guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers involve the pupils well in the lesson so that they are alert and enthusiastic, challenging all learners to work hard and achieve well. The school is working to share these skills more widely. In the few less successful lessons, the teachers manage pupils well, but do not use pupils' targets effectively or challenge them fully. Parents are generally pleased with the quality of

teaching and the guidance the school gives them on how to help their children. Homework is set regularly and supports well work done in class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, being broad and well balanced. There are strengths in the way English activities are planned with a good emphasis on improving listening and writing skills. There are effective cross-curricular links between literacy and other subjects which provides lots of opportunities to write for a range of reasons and in different styles. Since the last inspection the school has extended the opportunities for pupils to use computers, and has plans to develop this further. Staff recognise that planning for problem solving activities in mathematics, though generally good, could be further developed. School improvement plans now reflect a growing focus on increasing pupil's confidence in the range of strategies they can use. Extra-curricular activities are good especially in sport and the school is proud of the successes the pupils have achieved in local competitions. Activities are well planned for groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Elements of the school's care, support and guidance for its pupils are outstanding. The provision is good overall. The school monitors pupils' personal development very well. Pupils say that their teachers are friendly and that there is always someone they can turn to if they are in difficulty. There are excellent systems for rewarding good behaviour and a clear progression of sanctions for inappropriate behaviour, which pupils understand well. Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties, those at an early stage of learning English, and those who have been identified as gifted and talented. Teachers review pupils' progress regularly, although the ways that progress is tracked vary from teacher to teacher. The recently devised systems are good but need embedding further so that they are used consistently. In most instances, the marking of pupils' books gives them a clear indication of how they can improve. Older pupils in particular show a good awareness of the way they need to improve their work in order to move to the next level. The school carries out risk assessments for all its activities and has good procedures in place for child protection. Pupils feel safe.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, supported very effectively by her deputy, has brought about significant improvements in the school since the last report, developing the use of ICT, for example, and improving the support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school's self-evaluation procedures are good. The headteacher's management skills have ensured that the staff works as

a team and their morale is high. Recognising that the role of subject leader was underdeveloped, she arranged additional training for them and extended their role. This has been successful and most now lead their subjects well. Almost all parents are very appreciative of the way the school is led and the ways in which it is continuing to improve. The views of parents and pupils are welcomed and they contribute well to school development. Some are concerned about the mixed age classes, thinking that this may disadvantage some children. This is outside the school's control and the school deals with the challenge well. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Some governors have a good knowledge of the school's work. Training is in place to strengthen the understanding of others, some of whom are new to the role. The school judges leadership and management to be satisfactory overall, not wanting to be complacent. This refusal to be easily satisfied is one of the reasons why the school is well placed to continue to improve.

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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?	2	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	1	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	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	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	1	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?	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?	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	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

Thank you very much for your help when we visited your school. We were very impressed by how much you enjoyed your lessons. Your behaviour in school and in the playground was good. The inspection team has decided that your school is good, with some outstanding features. These include the way that it helps you to grow up to be responsible, caring and able to think for yourselves. All the adults in school care for you very well indeed. The teaching is good and you have interesting and enjoyable lessons. This helps you to make good progress. By the time you reach Year 6 most of you have reached standards well above those in most other schools. We have asked teachers to track your progress more consistently so that they can tell you where and how you can improve it further. Your headteacher is leading the school well and overall the leadership and management of the school are good. Your school continues to improve. The work you do in music, ICT and physical education is of a high standard and we know that you enjoy these subjects very much. You also have lots of clubs, activities and trips and you help your local community. Both you and your parents think that this is a good school and you are right. Enjoy your time at school and continue to work hard.