



The Oaks Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134249
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 282507
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Paul Bamber CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rochester Drive
School category	Voluntary controlled		Ellesmere Port
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Merseyside CH65 9EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 355 2050
Number on roll	147	Fax number	0151 357 4156
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs R Martin
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs M Downey (seconded)

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average urban school that was formed in 2003 by the amalgamation of two schools. There is a unit for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Children are predominantly of white British heritage and from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is a higher than average proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable. There has been a fairly high number of staff and children who have left the school over the last few years. There is a steady decline in numbers on roll with many fewer children in the Reception class, Year 1 and Year 2 than in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. The school's leadership has been subject to considerable change during this academic year and the headteacher is seconded to the post until July 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

This school is ineffective and does not offer value for money. Standards and achievement are far too low, the curriculum fails to meet the needs of many children and the quality of teaching and learning is not good enough. Despite the very effective work of the temporary headteacher, the overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate.

Children's behaviour is just satisfactory and there is evidence that it has improved since the beginning of this academic year. Although most children have good attitudes to learning, a small minority are not as attentive as they should be or willing to work hard. A strength of the school is the care and support that vulnerable children receive to help them overcome the considerable difficulties they have in conforming to the school's values. This is particularly evident in the good provision in the EBD unit. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

Because of shortcomings in the school's management of performance, it has not, until very recently, evaluated its provision accurately enough. The school is not in a position to provide enough evidence that it has the capability to sustain recent improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school needs to raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching needs to be consistently good enough to enable the children in Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach much higher standards and to achieve as well as they should.
- Improvements to the curriculum are required so that it provides children with more enrichment and meets their needs more specifically.
- The school needs to continue to improve and implement the management systems that have recently been introduced, so that performance is better monitored and evaluated in order that many areas of provision are improved. The appointment of a permanent headteacher is key to this improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are far too low. Over the last two years, standards in national tests have been exceptionally low and the achievements of children in Year 6 rank in the lowest five per cent in the country. Targets set for children's performance have been widely missed. Analysis of the school's predictions and of children's work

indicates that standards in both Year 2 and in Year 6 are still low. The targets set for performance in the 2006 Year 6 national tests are again likely to be missed by a wide margin. There are serious shortcomings in the children's grasp of the basic skills of reading, writing and number. The reasons for the inadequate standards and achievement are the lack of tracking of the children's progress, limited assessment and some inadequate teaching. The school's performance in enabling children to reach the higher Levels 3 and 5 in national assessments is particularly poor. This means that more-able children also significantly underachieve. Children enter the school with well below average skills. They make satisfactory progress in the Reception class because of adequate teaching and provision. Those children with statements of special educational needs (SEN) in the EBD unit make good progress because of consistently good teaching. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other children in their class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The children's personal development and well-being is satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. School rules are clear and the recently introduced system of rewards is beginning to motivate children well. Children say 'we enjoy school more now because behaviour is better'. The majority of parents feel that behaviour has improved recently. However, a significant minority still feel it could improve further. Inspectors agree that in some classes children should be better behaved. Eight children were excluded for fixed periods in the last academic year with one permanent exclusion. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. There is a much higher than average number of unauthorised absences. However, the school is now taking effective action to reduce these. Children know the importance of a healthy diet and appreciate the opportunities they have to exercise. They know about the dangers surrounding drug abuse and how to keep safe. Satisfactory opportunities are available for children to contribute to the school's provision. The recently developed school council is beginning to play an important role in their school community, for example, raising money for additional playground equipment. Children have too little understanding of the richness and diversity of world cultures and this is sometimes reflected in a few children's lack of respect for other's faiths and beliefs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning and that of assessment is inadequate. Teaching is often not challenging enough and the expectations of the quality and quantity of work are too low, therefore children underachieve. Until very recently, the quality of assessment has been unsatisfactory and rarely used to influence lesson plans. Even now, lessons tend to be planned according to the national strategies or

guidance, rather than being based on what teachers know to be the next steps children need to take to make progress in their learning. There is consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching for children in the EBD unit, who make good progress. Some good teaching was also noted in Reception and in Years 5 and 6. However, there is too much inadequate teaching, especially in the Year 1/ 2 class. In the satisfactory lessons, the strengths marginally outweigh the weaknesses. This results in children's standards and achievements being inadequate in many lessons.

Children's learning is unsatisfactory. In some lessons, low-level disruptive behaviour causes teachers to spend too much time correcting this, thus slowing the pace of learning. Children generally enjoy working cooperatively and learn well as a result. However, the history of poor behaviour in classrooms has meant that teachers too infrequently give children opportunities to work in teams on groups tasks, to make choices in their own learning or to assess their own work. Target setting is in the very early stages of making an impact on informing children about how they can improve and children are largely unaware of what their targets are. Throughout the school, teachers maintain good relationships with the children.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

Although the curriculum broadly meets statutory requirements, it is inadequate in that it does not meet the full range of children's learning needs; neither does it provide them sufficiently with the basic skills of reading, writing and number. Recent changes to planning the curriculum have yet to make a positive impact and consequently work is still not fully matched to children's capabilities. Information and communication technology currently plays an insufficient role in supporting all areas of learning. The needs of children in the Reception class are met satisfactorily. However, the opportunities available for children to extend their learning are hindered by poor facilities in the outdoor area. Provision for children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the EBD unit is good because the curriculum is effective in meeting their needs. Children in the main part of the school with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress when they have extra support from teaching assistants and overall make similar progress to other children. The range of activities to help foster children's interests outside lessons is inadequate. There are no after-school clubs to promote children's physical and aesthetic development. However, links with the local community are developing and there is a strong programme of residential visits that contributes well to children's personal and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The good care and support the vulnerable children receive goes a long way towards developing their personal development and well-being. Good relationships between the children and adults ensure that they have someone to turn to if help is required. Behaviour is monitored closely and incidents of bullying and other forms of harassment are recorded carefully. Recent initiatives

to improve behaviour are beginning to have a positive impact. Child protection procedures are thorough. Policies for first-aid and risk assessment are sound. Procedures to monitor health and safety issues need to be more rigorous. Teachers and teaching assistants provide satisfactory support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Well-trained staff support the personal needs of the children in the EBD unit well and provide carefully managed opportunities for them to be appropriately included in school life. The systems to assess and track children's progress are at an early stage of development and to date are insufficiently robust to ensure that children make sufficient progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The quality of leadership and management is inadequate. There is clear evidence that when the seconded headteacher took up her temporary post in October 2005 many crucial management systems were not in place. The lack of these was contributing significantly to children's poor progress in their learning. Many of these are now in place. However, there has been insufficient time for these to have impacted positively on those aspects of provision that need to be greatly improved. The seconded headteacher, with able support from the recently appointed deputy headteacher, has identified the considerable shortcomings in provision. In close partnership with the local authority and other educational groups, she has begun to implement actions with the potential to bring about improvements. However, with the decision to appoint a new headteacher only just confirmed, there is no guarantee that those improvements will be sustained.

The leadership and management of the EBD unit are very good. However, the need for the coordinator to spend so much time in the unit dilutes his effectiveness in managing the provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the rest of the school. Although, the staff responsible for leading subjects are committed and enthusiastic, they are under trained and lack the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to effectively influence improvements in standards and achievements. Performance management systems are at a very early stage of development. As a result, the potential of individual staff members has not been fully utilised nor has there been time to take action to improve the quality of teaching and learning where shortcomings have been identified. Governance has been radically overhauled over the last twelve months and governors are now better organised into relevant committees. However, they are still developing their roles and their overall effectiveness is barely adequate. The school's provision represents unsatisfactory 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?	4	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	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	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	No
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	No
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	No
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 making us so welcome during the two days we spent in your school. We really appreciated the open way in which you chatted to us and let us know so many interesting things about your school. We would like to share with you those things we thought were good about the school and those things we felt it could do better.

What we liked most about your school:

- how well you are looked after and supported, especially when you are upset or have difficulties
- those of you who are in the unit make good progress.

We found some important things that could be better:

- a lot of you need to be helped more to improve your work
- you need more activities out of your classrooms to help you have more interesting experiences and understand more about the world.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to enjoy school and do well with your work and carry on trying really hard to improve.