



The Oaks Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103165
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286580
Inspection dates 15–16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Mumby HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bells Lane
School category	Community		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	3–11		B14 5RY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4646272
Number on roll (school)	180	Fax number	0121 4646298
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Catharine Grundy
		Headteacher	Anne-Margaret Phelps
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Oaks is an average-sized primary school with a Nursery. It serves a disadvantaged area on the southern boundary of Birmingham. The majority of pupils are of White British background with a small proportion from minority ethnic groups. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than that found nationally, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is similar to that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Oaks is a satisfactory school which is well placed to improve further. Under the strong leadership of the current headteacher, with the support of a committed staff team, the school is making significant improvements to the education of its pupils. However, the leadership of the school is hindered in its work because the governing body is not fulfilling its responsibilities. As a result, the overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.

Children get off to a sound start in the Nursery and make satisfactory progress. They make good progress in Reception because the class is well organised and teaching is carefully planned to meet the children's needs. However, insufficient use is made of the outdoors to enhance the learning for children in the Foundation Stage. Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory with many good lessons, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress. Many do even better but there is not enough teaching which is good or better to ensure good progress for all pupils. They know how to improve their work because of the helpful marking by teachers. The effective partnership between teachers and learning support practitioners helps pupils learn. Standards have risen since the time of the last inspection and are now similar to national averages at the end of Years 2 and 6.

The curriculum has been planned sensibly to meet the needs of the different pupils in the school. For example, small specialist teaching groups are used to help pupils overcome their difficulties in learning and improve their self-esteem. The enthusiastic school council provides a good opportunity for pupils throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 to make a positive contribution to the life of the school, for example, by improving the outdoor play equipment.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They have a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and have influenced the healthy improvements to the lunchtime menu. The pupils enjoy their learning and feel safe because, in the words of a pupil, 'we all respect each other.' The school works effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that all the pupils are well cared for. The school has sound systems in place to encourage good attendance. However, attendance levels are still too low and more rigorous measures need to be put in place to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

The headteacher and senior staff monitor the work of the school well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. School improvement planning is good and effective strategies have been put in place to improve teaching and learning and raise standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work more rigorously with parents to improve attendance and remind them regularly of the adverse effects of children's absence from school.
- Ensure the governing body is well informed, meets regularly and that attendance is good in order that it is able to fulfil its duties and hold the school to account.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The majority of children enter the Foundation Stage with standards close to national expectations in most areas of learning, although a significant proportion of them have less well developed skills in language and communication. Most children make satisfactory progress in Nursery and good progress in Reception. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most children have attained standards in line with national expectations, except in writing, where standards for a significant proportion of children are still low.

Pupils' progress is satisfactory through Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards attained in national assessments in Years 2 and 6 in English, mathematics and science are similar to the national average. The school rigorously monitors the progress of all of the pupils and recent data indicates that, compared to other year groups, progress in Year 6 is good. Work seen in lessons and in pupils' books at the time of the inspection shows that pupils make satisfactory progress from Year 1 to Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their spiritual development is good, as shown in assembly, where they sing hymns and songs passionately and pray respectfully. They think, reflect and express themselves well. Their social and moral development is good. 'Play Pals' make a significant contribution to ensuring that pupils play well together and take responsibility to include each other in their games. There is an active school council which is helping pupils to understand that they can influence improvements to their school and take responsibility for implementing these changes. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to develop their understanding of other cultures in lessons and special events. Displays around the school contribute to their sound cultural development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with many good aspects. Lessons have a clear focus with an appropriate range of activities for pupils. Most lessons start briskly and, in the best lessons, teachers make clear links to prior learning. Assessment is used to match work to pupils' individual needs, although tasks are not always sufficiently challenging for all of them. As a result, pupils work productively but do not always make as much progress as they could. Good lessons finish with the opportunity for pupils to assess what they have learned.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because it has been designed to meet the needs of all pupils. Their progress is monitored and small group teaching provides specific activities to help pupils who find learning and appropriate behaviour difficult. In addition, the mobility group provides specialist approaches to help pupils to improve their coordination. A good range of extra-curricular activities adds to the pupils' enjoyment of their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has robust procedures in place to monitor the welfare of all its pupils through the work of the Children's Welfare Team and the learning mentor. The 'Squirrels' group provides a safe haven for pupils who need more support and structure at playtime. Although risk assessments are carried out for activities both in and out of school, this is not done systematically and no central record is kept.

Work is marked carefully and pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve their work. This marking is often linked to the helpful targets that pupils are set in English. However, this good practice of setting targets is not consistent across other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the headteacher and staff are good because they work very well together to achieve their shared vision of '... providing the very best for all members of the school and wider community'. The strong sense of teamwork and the commitment of all of the staff have enabled the school to overcome the challenges of recent difficult and unsettled times and provide a caring and supportive learning environment for its pupils. The school has successfully raised standards in English, mathematics and science as well as significantly improving leadership and management since the last inspection. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and a good capacity to improve further.

The quality of teaching and learning is rigorously monitored and evaluated through lesson observations by senior staff. Along with appropriate professional support, this has been effective in bringing about improvements in teaching and learning. Pupils are assessed regularly and their progress is tracked rigorously to ensure that appropriate support is put in place where it is needed. However, evaluations of planning and pupils' work have been less systematic. As a result, there are still inconsistencies in teachers' planning and not all lessons are planned to enable all pupils to achieve as much as they could.

Despite the efforts of the chair of governors, who spends a significant amount of time in school, the governing body is not effective in carrying out its responsibilities. This is because attendance at meetings and training events is often poor and the period of time since the last governing body meeting is too long. As a result, many school policies are out-of-date and the governing body is not able to hold the school to account.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making Ms Keevill and me so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing so much of your work.

Your school is a satisfactory school and we were pleased to see how well you all get on with each other and how much you enjoy school. Everybody really does matter and the adults in school take good care of you. You all behave well in lessons and play well together in the playground. The 'Play Pals' do a good job and we think that the 'Squirrels' group is a very good idea to help some of you at playtimes. It's a shame that some of you are missing out on all of these activities because you are not at school every day. We have asked your school to make sure that all of you come to school every day unless you are too poorly, or it is a school holiday!

Your teachers plan your lessons carefully and you all try your best. The small groups that some of you work in help you to learn more quickly. You all make progress, but many of you could do even better if your teachers challenged you more. We were pleased to see how helpful you found the way that your teachers mark your work. They really do help you to improve. Children in Reception make good progress because you work very hard with all of the exciting activities. In Nursery and Reception, it would be even better if you spent more time outside during the day.

The teachers in charge of your school are working hard to make your school even better. They have already helped you to learn more and they know what needs doing now to make things even better. Unfortunately, they don't get enough help from the people responsible for your school. They are called the school governors and we have asked them to help the school more.

Thank you to the children in Reception who made our hedgehog biscuits – they were delicious!

Good luck and keep up all the good work!