

Oxford Road Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109786
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	288495
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Chris Nye HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sian Webb
Headteacher	Miss Tricia Evans
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001
School address	146 Oxford Road Reading RG1 7PJ
Telephone number	0118 901 5511
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an HMI and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school, which is slightly larger than average, serves an area of mixed social housing with high levels of social deprivation in the centre of Reading. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils from a wide range of black and minority ethnic backgrounds is very high as are the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Twenty five languages are spoken in school and many pupils enter the school unable to speak English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The school has a Foundation Stage Unit which admits children part time to the nursery class. The percentage of pupils who join the school in year groups other than the Reception Class is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oxford Road Community School judges its overall effectiveness as satisfactory and inspectors agree with this judgement, although in some areas, such as leadership and management, inspectors feel that the school has underestimated its own effectiveness. This is because the school is faced with a number of challenges and there is clear evidence that robust strategies to address these and improve the quality of the provision are starting to have a positive impact. As a result, the school provides satisfactory value for money and, because of the good leadership and management at all levels, has a good capacity to make further improvements.

Children enter the school in the Foundation Stage with very low levels of attainment and make satisfactory progress overall, although those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who do not speak English as their first language make good progress because of the good quality support that they receive, both in the Foundation Stage and in older classes. Standards throughout the school are well below the national average; however there have been improvements recently, particularly in Key Stage 2. There have been a number of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and these are beginning to have a positive impact, although this currently remains satisfactory overall because of inconsistencies in pace and challenge. The school is rigorous about tracking pupils' progress, but the use of assessment information to inform planning and provide clear guidance to pupils about how to improve is inconsistent.

The school rightly prides itself on its inclusive ethos and good standards of care and support, and it works very well with external agencies and parents to ensure this. The high numbers of new pupils in all age groups who are admitted to the school settle in quickly, and are made to feel welcome by staff and pupils alike. This is because pupils' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding; they are polite and helpful both in class and around school. The school encourages a sense of social responsibility, listens to pupils' views and values their contributions to the life of the school. This positive picture is also reflected in the views of parents and carers, who are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it consistently reflects the best practice in the school.
- Ensure that assessment and tracking information is used more effectively to plan pupils' learning.
- Ensure that pupils are provided with clear and consistent guidance on how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress but, because many enter the school both in the Foundation Stage and at other year groups with skills below that expected for their age, the standards that they achieve are generally well below average. When children enter the Foundation Stage unit their language and literacy abilities are very limited because some have immature language skills and some are unable to speak English. In the Foundation Stage children make significant progress in their understanding and use of English because they are very well supported. In spite of this, however, by the time they transfer to Year 1 most do not achieve the levels expected for their age.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have improved recently, but remain below the national average. A contributory factor to recent improvements is the introduction of new ways of teaching phonics, which is beginning to have a positive impact on progress in reading and writing.

Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 have improved recently, and last year were in line with national expectations in English and slightly below in mathematics and science. However, the fact that a significant number of pupils who speak little English join the school in Key Stage 2 means that standards overall in the older classes are well below expectations. The good quality provision for pupils for whom English is not their first language enables them to make good progress, particularly in written and spoken English, throughout the school. There is also good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and they, too, make good progress as a result.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school successfully promotes pupils' personal development and well-being because it has efficient systems in place and is strongly committed to ensuring that everyone feels valued and included. As a result, attendance is slightly better than average, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and each other, and behave exceptionally well in lessons and on the playground. Pupils are safe and happy and feel that their views are valued and responded to, for example through annual pupils' questionnaires and a very active school council.

Pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is good and their cultural development is very good. This is because the school both values and celebrates the wide diversity of pupils' backgrounds, for example through the 'young teachers' scheme, which encourages pupils to share their language and culture with others. Social responsibility is actively encouraged with older pupils routinely taking responsibility for looking after and supporting younger ones. The school's healthy eating promotions, physical education and drugs awareness programmes all have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes towards adopting healthy life styles.

Pupils make positive contributions to both the school and wider community through charity fundraising events. They are successfully developing team working skills and an understanding of the world of work through, for example, the Year 6 business enterprise scheme.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory overall, with some good features. A common strength is the very good working relationships that exist between adults and pupils which mean that pupils are confident and keen to learn. Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned and build effectively on previous learning; good use is made of 'talk partners' to enhance pupils' confidence and promote learning; teaching assistants make a particularly positive contribution to learning. However, in lessons where teaching is less effective the pace is not brisk enough, planning is not sufficiently detailed and learning objectives are not made sufficiently clear. Consequently pupils, particularly the most able, are not always challenged enough.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language, benefit from a range of effective additional support strategies, such as small group sessions and booster classes in English and mathematics. These have a very positive impact on their learning.

The school collects substantial information on pupils' progress and tracks this well. However, assessment information is not used consistently to inform the planning of lessons so that they do not always focus closely on pupils' needs. Pupils' work is marked with positive and encouraging comments, but insufficient guidance is given about how their work can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which meets legal requirements. Long term planning by curriculum teams is good because it provides a progressive framework for the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding in all subjects. Pupils have good opportunities to make connections between subjects, for example in science lessons that link well to mathematics. Information and communication technology is used well to enhance the curriculum throughout the school.

A strength is the many opportunities that are taken to enrich the curriculum. Numerous extra-curricular clubs, visits and residential trips for the older pupils bring the curriculum to life and very good use is made of the local environment to support learning. For example, pupils worked with a photographer to produce a display in the local library of photographs of the area which they had taken and developed themselves.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for because of the all round attention and support given by adults to their welfare. A particular strength are the systems which ensure that newly arrived pupils, particularly those from abroad, settle in quickly and happily. The school is very effective at dealing with bullying and racism and pupils know who to speak to if they have a problem. Very good systems are in place to ensure that other agencies work closely with the school to support both pupils and their families. However, the academic guidance provided for pupils is underdeveloped because assessment information is not consistently used to plan suitably challenging activities for all groups and marking does not provide precise guidance to pupils about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school at all levels are good because staff are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and cohesive plans are in place to address the weaknesses. The headteacher and senior staff possess a clear sense of purpose and provide very proactive leadership, both strategically and on a day to day basis. Rigorous monitoring procedures accurately inform planning for improvement and link well to a robust programme of staff training. As a result, weaknesses in assessment and teaching have been clearly identified as priorities for improvement and there is good evidence that strategies, although at an early stage, are already beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of the provision for pupils.

The school is adequately resourced, although some reading books are in need of replacement. In spite of being housed in a building that is difficult to manage, the learning environment is bright and positive. The recent high staff turnover and the difficulty in recruiting teaching staff have been challenges that the school has effectively addressed, for example through the very well managed job share of the two deputy headteachers. Teaching assistants are very well trained and managed and make a significant contribution to the work of the school. The governors are well informed and provide outstanding challenge and support to the school.

Annex A

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	4
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	2

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2
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?	3

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.

Annex A**Leadership and management**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when our inspection team visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you are learning. You told us that you enjoy coming to school, which is great! Your parents and carers also say that they like the school and that you are happy there.

We think that your school has lots of strengths. Your headteacher and the senior teachers are good at making sure that the school improves and all the adults provide you with good quality care and support, especially those of you whose first language is not English and those who find learning difficult. We think you have lots of opportunities to learn about interesting things outside the classroom, for example when some of you did the local photography display. You work hard and behave very well indeed, both in class and on the playground - well done!

We also think that there are some things that could be better. Many of you find it hard to reach the standards expected in English, mathematics and science and we feel that the school needs to work even harder to try and to improve this. We have also asked the teachers to give you more help and advice on how you can improve your work and make sure that all the teaching meets your needs.

Thank you again for being so friendly.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Nye

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools