

Oakington CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110833
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number	288791
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Roger Brown

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Charles Warboys
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Jenkin
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Water Lane Oakington Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB24 3AL
Telephone number	01223232328
Fax number	01223232328

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector over two days.

Description of the school

This small school serves the village of Oakington and the surrounding area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, but there are small numbers from a range of different backgrounds and cultures. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above the national average. A high proportion of the pupils moves to the school or leaves it midway through each year. Attainment on entry to the school, although varying considerably, is usually below average overall. The school holds an Active Mark award and a National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants award for the training it gives to its teaching assistants.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The quality of education provided by this school is good. The staff are dedicated, caring and approachable and the pupils thrive in their care. 'Oakington School is a very happy, positive environment where respect, individuals' needs, and the Christian ethos are very well promoted', wrote one parent. Central to the school's approach is its success in developing all pupils' self-confidence and independence whilst at the same time encouraging them to be part of a team. Examples of this seen during the inspection ranged from the clubs run by older pupils for the younger ones, to the successful integration of pupils with severe difficulties and needs into regular classes.

Children starting in the Foundation Stage settle quickly, get involved in their activities and make good progress. The pupils' personal development is good and this is reflected in their good behaviour. They know how to make sensible choices about living healthily and leading active lives. All pupils are encouraged to play an important part in shaping the life of the school. The staff regularly consult them and pupils know how to air their views and that, in doing so, they can bring about change. However, attendance is below the national average as a small number of parents fail to get their children to school on a regular enough basis. Despite this, pupils attain high standards in their work as a result of the generally good progress they make during their time in the school, although the school's analysis shows that their progress is stronger towards the end of the key stages.

One area of relative weakness is writing at Key Stage 2. The pupils' writing at this stage fails to match the high standards they achieve elsewhere. The teachers have analysed the reasons for this and concluded that more time needs to be given to practising writing. Teachers are thoughtful and creative in the way they teach, for instance in their inventive use of information and communication technology (ICT) to encourage pupils to research and discover information for themselves. A particularly noteworthy element is the great support given by the teaching assistants. The high quality professional training they have received has equipped them to play a crucial role in supporting the learning of all pupils. As a result of the good quality teaching the pupils' learning is good. Older pupils with particular gifts and talents get support and encouragement, but there is less support to develop the younger more able pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by a wealth of clubs and activities outside the normal lessons that all help to foster the pupils' enjoyment of the school. The older pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the residential visits they can take part in.

Good leadership and management results from successful teamwork between staff and governors, enabling the school to have a clear and accurate picture of its development and effectiveness. The school was rated as satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, but there are clear improvements in many areas, enabling it to have made good progress since then. Some of the new improved systems and procedures, such as the pupil tracking system are still being embedded, but are already helping to drive up standards. The school's capacity to improve further is therefore good, and the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Concentrate upon improving the quality of pupil's writing skills, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Extend the provision and support for pupils with particular gifts and talents to all year groups.
- Continue to work with parents to improve the level of attendance at the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of the Foundation Stage are good with many children achieving the goals for learning expected. By the end of Year 2, the formal assessments in reading, writing and mathematics show that standards are above average. Pupils make good progress overall, but the school's improved system for tracking pupils' progress shows that their progress is stronger at the end of the key stages than it is midway through them. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, standards in the formal assessments of English, mathematics and science are usually above those found nationally. The one aspect of the pupils' work that is less well developed is writing. Although their basic writing skills are sound, too few pupils achieve success at higher levels. In analysing what they need to do to develop standards further, staff have concluded that they need to give pupils more opportunities to practise writing more frequently across all subjects. Able pupils in Years 5 and 6 are given good support and opportunities to develop their skills, but there are too few chances for younger, more able pupils to develop and be challenged.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really like coming to school and are very happy. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They behave well, have a good understanding of right and wrong and have regular opportunities to reflect on what they do and what is special and important to them. They actively care for each other and demonstrate a very strong sense of responsibility by following the school's safety procedures. Pupils' cultural understanding is good. The school works hard to extend their experience and understanding of life and the world around them. Pupils believe that they influence what happens at the school. Older pupils are rightly proud of the clubs and activities they lead for the younger ones and of their achievements in general. All pupils understand the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. They really enjoy the opportunities for sports and know about healthy eating and try to commit themselves to it. However, attendance rates are only satisfactory and, although they have improved slightly of late, a small number of parents do not support their children effectively enough by ensuring that they attend regularly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with some excellent aspects. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and of themselves. Lessons are well organised, well resourced, imaginatively presented and clearly capture the interest of the pupils. There is an exceptional spirit of teamwork in the school. Everyone works well together; teachers and teaching assistants have excellent relationships with each other and with the pupils. This is particularly effective in supporting those pupils with specific learning difficulties or needs. These pupils get an appropriate level of challenge in lessons, which skilfully extends their knowledge and understanding without inhibiting their learning. In each class pupils understand the routines and procedures. They move from activity to activity in a sensible and orderly fashion and get on with their work. Assessment procedures are comprehensive and accurate, allowing teachers

to focus on specific developments. The uneven progress by pupils at some stages that has been highlighted by the recently introduced tracking system is recognised by the teachers. They have begun to address this with accurate targets for both individuals and groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school makes good provision for teaching the essential literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. It ensures that all pupils have a good background and grounding that they are able to apply in new or different circumstances. In addition, the pupils get a rich diet of interesting work and experiences that build their wider knowledge and understanding very effectively. These are extended by regular opportunities for pupils to develop their self-confidence and skills. This prepares them well for playing a wider role in adult life, by for instance, the school's involvement in community events. The creative and inventive use of varied and wide-ranging extra-curricular activities actively promotes pupils' enjoyment of learning. This includes experience of a good range of sports, the arts and languages. The school recognises that it still needs to continue to enhance ICT resources to make even better curriculum provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils correctly believe that the care, guidance and support they receive are good. The school rightly prides itself on being open to all and makes good provision to include anyone and everybody who applies to attend. Pupils who have failed to succeed in other schools develop and thrive. All pupils value and respect the relationship they have with the adults in the school. They are proud to be at the school. They speak enthusiastically about how their work is valued and praised by the staff. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively and their work gives great support to individual pupils' development. Very careful attention is paid to the pupils' welfare. Child protection procedures are well established and rigorously maintained. Better guidance and support for pupils' academic progress is being further enhanced by the improved tracking system.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and the strong teamwork apparent throughout the school is exemplified by high quality relationships at all levels. The leadership knows the school's strengths and relative weaknesses well. The governors, working together with the staff are strongly focused on raising standards even higher. They recognise that they will continue to need support and training to analyse the school's data, but are clearly focused on supporting the school to continue to improve whilst recognising the difficulties that are ahead, and the developments that need to be made. The school's budget is managed effectively, and although there is currently a higher than recommended carry forward this has been approved to maintain staffing levels over the coming year. The school always seeks to get best value for money and this can be seen in the enhanced and improved building and resources.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	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	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?	2
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.

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	1
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	2
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

15 March 2007

Dear Children

Oakington C of E VA Primary School, Water Lane, Oakington, Cambridge CB24 3AL

Thank you for the warm welcome I received when I visited your school. It was a real pleasure to be with you. I enjoyed watching your lessons and activities and I really enjoyed talking to you about your work.

I thought that some of the things that were good about your school were:

- the way everybody is welcomed into your school, shown respect and helped to get on
- the great way in which all the adults in your school get on so well together, and work so hard to help you to learn
- the many clubs and activities you can go to; I was especially impressed with the clubs that the older children run
- the many visits you go on to interesting places and events
- your good attitudes to each other and the way you take care of your friends.

However, I would like your teachers to:

- help you to make more progress with your writing to make it even better
- give the younger children who have special gifts and talents similar opportunities to learn and discover just how well they can do as those offered to the older ones
- work with your parents to make sure all of you attend school as often as possible.

Many of your parents wrote to me. Almost everyone said that they think your school is a good school, and I agree with them. I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent with you in school.

Best wishes for the future.

Roger Brown

Lead Inspector