

Oaklands Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123967
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292841
Inspection date	22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Sara Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001
School address	Oaklands Avenue Porthill Newcastle ST5 0EX
Telephone number	01782 297585
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Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school has 48 children on roll who attend part time for either mornings or afternoons. Almost all children are from White British backgrounds. There is one child with a statement of special educational need. The headteacher was appointed in January 2006. Plans to develop the school as an Early Years Centre to provide full day care are at an advanced stage

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'I could not have chosen a better school for my child to attend.' This comment captures the views of the overwhelming majority of parents. They are right to be so positive about the quality of education that their children receive. Oaklands is a good school that enables children to flourish, make good progress and achieve standards above those expected for their age. At the heart of the school's success is the purposeful leadership of the recently appointed headteacher. In a relatively short period of time, a strong team ethos has been forged, with all staff being fully committed to helping all children to achieve to their full capability.

Most children start school with levels of attainment that match those expected. They make good progress across all the areas of learning, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. As a result, most of them are on track to exceed the levels expected of them as they enter Year 1. Progress in communication, language and literacy is relatively slower than in other areas of learning. This results from children not developing their phonic awareness at a fast enough pace and only the more able being prepared to initiate their own writing activities. Children's personal development is good. They are very well behaved and work well together in pairs and small groups. They also have a good understanding of the need to eat healthily and take regular physical exercise to live a good lifestyle. The good curriculum is effectively extended by a variety of enrichment activities. A good example of this is the residential stay for children and parents at a family outdoor activity centre. Teaching and learning are good, with warm relationships being beneficial to the good progress that children make. All staff are aware of each child's individual needs and so work is tailored effectively to enable them to achieve well.

The care, support and guidance of children are good. This is recognised in the many comments of parents that show how appreciative they are of the way their children are looked after while in school. Leadership and management are good, with strategies for improvement introduced in the last year to raise children's achievement proving successful. These include the better use of day to day assessment by staff to effectively challenge children of all abilities. The relatively new governing body is very supportive of the school but its role in asking appropriately challenging questions about the proposals of senior management to bring about school improvement is underdeveloped. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Its recent track record shows that the school has good capacity to make any necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Boost children's writing skills by developing their phonic awareness at a faster rate and encouraging more of them to initiate their own writing activities.
- Develop the role of the governing body so it is more effective in holding the school to account.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

During their time in school, children achieve well and reach standards above those expected in all areas of learning. This is particularly the case in their personal, social and emotional development. As a result, they are positive in their dealings with adults and other children. They can work well collaboratively and are also developing the skills needed to be effective independent learners. Children's skills in speaking are good, and they are confident in beginning

conversations with staff and visitors. Progress in gaining phonic skills is relatively slower than in other aspects of communication, language and literacy. Apart from more able children, there is a reluctance to initiate writing activities for themselves. A variety of practical activities effectively increase their knowledge and understanding in mathematics. Children's creative skills are developed well through a wide range of role play, artistic and musical activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural education is good. They play and work happily together and clearly know right from wrong. They are kind to each other and are confident when talking to adults. Children show a lot of enjoyment in their activities. As one said, 'I like this school because we have lots of fun.' Attendance is broadly average and punctuality good. Children know how to stay safe, as was evident in the careful way they handled equipment when cutting up pieces of exotic fruit. They make a good contribution to the school community and show willingness to take on responsibility, for example, by self-registering at the start of morning and afternoon sessions. Children make a satisfactory contribution to the wider community and the school is keen to develop this further. They develop a good understanding of the wider world and how people earn a living through a wide range of role play activities. The good grounding being given prepares children well for the next stages of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff plan the sessions well so that, overall, there is a good balance between adult-directed activities and those initiated by children. Activities are mainly practical and successfully capture children's interest and maintain their concentration. Questioning is used well to find out what children know and to develop their skills in speaking and listening. There is strong emphasis on children's personal development with staff encouraging them to make choices for themselves. However, whilst more able children initiate their own writing, there is not enough encouragement for others to do so. The role play areas are used well to develop children's basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This was seen to good effect when they were using the 'shop' to make purchases and calculate the money needed and how much change they should have. The way that children are taught to link sounds and letters does not enable them to develop these skills as quickly as they could do. Children have positive attitudes to their learning and interact well with adults and their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Children's own particular interests and experiences are effectively taken into account when planning activities, for example, when there is a new baby in the family. This helps to ensure that the curriculum is meaningful and relevant to children's needs and is an important factor in the good progress that they make. Recent modifications to the curriculum include the introduction of 'Fun Five Minutes' sessions on a daily basis. These give children invaluable extra-targeted support in areas identified for further development such as their linking of sounds and letters. There is a good balance to the curriculum so that children can develop their creative talents as well as their academic skills. There are satisfactory links with external services

such as the school nurse, to extend children's learning. The school is exploring ways of strengthening this aspect of provision. The design of the outside area means children require constant supervision while using it because it is not fenced off from the surrounding area. This restricts them from accessing it if they choose to use it independently of staff.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is strong with emphasis on children's health and safety. Child protection arrangements are fully in place and all staff know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. Risk assessments are rigorous in school and during off site visits. Good links with outside agencies result in very effective one-to-one support being provided for any child with a statement of special educational need, which ensures good progress. Links with pre-school providers are satisfactory and the school is planning to improve these to give a clearer picture of children's attainment on entry, including social skills and personal development. Procedures for checking the progress that children make are good. This allows the school to have a clear view of how each child is doing. The information gathered is used well by staff to guide children to improving their work. Good links with parents ensure all parties are kept fully in the picture about a child's development and there are some good inputs with parents, for example, helping with children's reading development at the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management at all levels have a shared vision of how the school should improve. Self-evaluation is accurate and has correctly identified and prioritised the areas in need of development. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been made more rigorous and has led to improvement. For instance, teachers are now more confident in using assessment information to set work that meets the needs of children of different abilities. Performance management has been set in place and this successfully links staff professional development to school improvement. Effective steps have been taken in preparation for the school becoming an Early Years Centre. For example, an educational leader, with the capability to deputise for the headteacher and run the Centre, has been appointed. The relatively new governing body is very supportive of the school and functions satisfactorily. Its ability to ask relevant questions of proposals of the senior management team and hold the school to account is nevertheless at an early stage of development.

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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?	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	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?	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	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	3
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 the very friendly welcome that you gave me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to your views. I think your school is good and lets you make good progress and achieve standards above those expected.

These are the things I particularly liked about your school.

- Your school is a very friendly place in which to work and play.
- All of you are well behaved and enjoy helping others.
- You said you enjoy school because it is fun.
- The school takes good care of you and your parents are very pleased with this.
- Adults give you interesting things to do and know how to improve your work.
- It is good that you know how to keep healthy and stay safe.

What I have asked your school to do now is:

- help you learn your letter sounds more quickly and encourage more of you to begin writing from you own ideas
- make sure that governors of the school are given all the information they need to be able to check that the school is doing as well as it can and always improving.

Thank you for a lovely day. I hope you all keep on enjoying your learning.