

Oakfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131806
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	293853
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Reeve
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline MacMillan
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002
School address	Scott Drive Wickford Essex SS12 9PW
Telephone number	01268 734343
Fax number	01268 561704

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a mixed residential area of Wickford, south Essex. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Their social and economic backgrounds are mixed and, on balance, broadly match the national range. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school was opened in 2000, expanding rapidly since then, with its size doubling in 2003. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007. The school holds an Inclusion Mark for its work on equal opportunities, the Essex Schools Award, an Active Sportsmark and an Advanced Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and academic progress, broadly satisfactory in the past, is now good. Value for money and the capacity for further improvement are both good.

The school is relatively new and initially, pupil numbers expanded rapidly each year, sometimes dramatically. In addition, there was high staff turnover including changes to the governing body and senior management team. The school has therefore done well to provide consistently good support and guidance for pupils so that they adjust quickly to its expectations and make impressive personal progress. Behaviour is excellent and attendance is above average. Pupils' ability to be reflective and appreciate other cultures is extremely good. Their enjoyment of school and their awareness of personal safety issues are both excellent. Many make an outstanding contribution to school life and to the wider community. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Attainment on entry is below average but the school uses effective teaching methods, good pastoral support strategies and appropriate monitoring systems to help pupils make good progress. As a result, standards at Year 6 now are above average. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards match national levels in English, mathematics and science. Factors such as high pupil mobility and some weaknesses in teaching affected Key Stage 2 results in the past but increased stability has enabled the school to take corrective action. Areas of underperformance, for example in mathematics, were accurately identified and very good remedial strategies put in place. As a result, current Years 5 and 6 are working towards very challenging targets and are on track to meet them. Achievement overall therefore, is good.

Teaching is good as well and school records show recent improvements. In a significant minority of lessons, the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Any inadequate teaching experienced in the past has been eliminated. The use of assessment to monitor academic progress is good. These improvements, however, have not been in place long enough to elevate achievement to the same high level as personal development. The school is rightly keen to ensure that all lessons come up to the standard of the best. Senior managers are aware of the need to extend to satisfactory lessons the same strong pace, high challenge, good marking and active participation of pupils seen in the good or better lessons.

The curriculum is good and promotes learning and enjoyment well. Much of it already encourages active participation by pupils but the school is right to increase this feature of its work. It also seeks to make better links between subjects. Extra-curricular activities contribute very effectively to pupils' personal development.

Good leadership and management ensure good academic progress. The new headteacher shows a very secure knowledge of the school. She has moved swiftly to address shortcomings in tracking systems, areas of teaching and aspects of pupils' performance. She has gained a remarkably high level of support from her new senior leadership team, the rest of the staff and from parents. Their combined commitment shows that the school has a good capacity to improve. Governors support the school well and have a good impact on its work.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The levels of understanding children reach in all areas of learning are average and progress is good. This reflects a clear diagnosis of children's needs as they enter the school and good teaching to meet those needs. Staff establish excellent relationships with children very quickly and are highly consistent in their expectations of behaviour and good learning habits.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure recently introduced tracking systems are consistently and rigorously implemented so that standards in English, mathematics and science meet the school's new and higher targets.
- Strengthen the pace, involvement of pupils and the quality of marking so that all lessons are good or better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is below average, but pupils make good progress because provision is well organised and teaching is effective. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are average. They have recently improved, especially in writing, showing the good impact of the school's focus on literacy skills. Test results, at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average. Despite dipping in 2007, results for most years have been generally close to national levels. The work of current Year 6 pupils demonstrates above-average standards, in line with the very challenging targets set for them. This is due to improved teaching and the introduction of setting, earlier booster classes and greatly improved monitoring systems. Issues in the past relating to mathematics and the performance of girls have been resolved. Achievement is good, matching the progress seen in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils is outstanding. They show strong respect for each other and different cultures and beliefs. Pupils were fascinated during an outstanding assembly on Diwali given by one of their teachers who included a video of her own family and friends celebrating the event. Pupils are articulate and confident, and the behaviour of the overwhelming majority is exemplary. This helps to ensure that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy through sensible eating and taking exercise. They behave in an extremely safe and considerate way and have a very good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe out of school. Attendance has improved and is now good.

Pupils know that their views are valued and the excellent school council even helped to interview for a new deputy head. There are many examples of pupils contributing extremely well to school life and the life of the wider community. They make good progress in preparation for adult life through team working and the good progress observed in lessons. They are justly proud of their school and say they have nice teachers, good friends and interesting lessons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. All lessons are at least satisfactory, with a relatively high proportion that are outstanding. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and foster very good relationships with and between pupils in lessons. This creates an environment in which pupils are ready to learn. The time and skills of learning support assistants are used effectively to support pupils with learning difficulties. In lessons, there is a good balance of individual, paired, group and whole class work. In the best lessons, pupils are actively engaged in the work throughout: a wide variety of resources and stimulating range of teaching methods helps them to meet the high expectations placed on them. Learning is less successful when the tasks are unclear or pupils' active involvement is limited. Marking can vary. In the best cases, there is a clear indication of how pupils can do better and there is evidence of pupils responding positively to these comments. Elsewhere, marking assesses work accurately, but offers little guidance for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides good opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, to progress and perform well. A revised curriculum structure has recently been put into place that is stimulating active participation, good learning and promoting good progress. The introduction of Spanish is an example of how the school is developing transferable skills for pupils. The increasing use of a thematic approach to planning the curriculum is successfully encouraging the development of skills and ensures that pupils make meaningful links between subjects. The enrichment programme supports the taught curriculum well. There is a good variety of special events, visits and a range of visitors to the school, with regular activities such as the gym trail supporting the promotion of healthy lifestyles. In addition, the wide range of extra-curricular activities covering sport and the creative arts successfully enhances the curriculum and motivates pupils to learn. The school's commitment to promoting healthy living is acknowledged through its success in gaining the Advanced Healthy Schools award and the Active Sportsmark.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Overall care, guidance and support for pupils is good. The school's pastoral guidance for its pupils is of the highest standard and in recognition of its work it has gained the Inclusion Quality Mark and the Essex Schools Award. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils in the school. Adults are consistent in their demonstration of how they wish pupils to behave and as a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The school is fully compliant with safeguarding regulations. Many measures to improve academic guidance have been successfully introduced recently. For example, 'provision mapping' is used now to accelerate the progress made by identified groups of pupils. The impact of such measures is clearly seen in lessons, but these strategies have not yet had time to make an impact on national test results.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very clear direction for the school and she has the strong support of colleagues, pupils, governors and parents. Other senior staff form a highly effective team with her. Their track record, though brief, is good, with many well-chosen recent changes in policy and practice. These initiatives are raising standards through diagnosing pupils' needs more effectively, setting higher targets and taking swift action to change provision when necessary. Self-evaluation is very accurate and having a good impact, but leadership and management have not had time for their actions to be fully felt. The school has an excellent approach to equal opportunities. Subject leadership is good, reflecting good training and high-calibre appointments. The Governing Body plays a very valuable part in school life, having helped the present and previous headteacher raise parental support for the school and develop good links between staff and governors.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

11 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakfield Primary School, Wickford, Essex SS12 9PW

Thank you for your very warm welcome earlier this term. We enjoyed visiting your school. A special thank you is owed to the pupils who gave up part of playtime to come and speak to the inspectors.

You go to a good school. Comparing it with others all over the country, we are very pleased with:

- your excellent behaviour
- the good progress you are making and the good teaching which makes this possible
- the headteacher's very good leadership
- the really pleasant relationships between pupils and adults in lessons and around school
- your respect for people and ways of life which are different to your own
- the way the school supports pupils whatever their ability or background

If the school is to keep getting better, the things it should do are:

- use its new system for checking your progress really carefully so that you can keep working well right through the year.
- help teachers turn satisfactory lessons into good or outstanding ones; they can do this by making sure they give you lots of practical things to do, mark your work helpfully and keep the lessons moving along at a good pace.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at Oakfield.

Yours sincerely

Robert Drew

Lead inspector