

Oak Tree Nursery and Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132064
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	293932
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Gerald Griffin

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	322
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Thompson
Headteacher	Stephen Luke
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002
School address	Priory Road Swindon SN3 2HA
Telephone number	01793 521903
Fax number	01793 436642

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of considerable economic hardship. Almost all pupils come from White British families and most children enter the school with skills and experiences that are well below the levels expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. There have been many staff changes in the last year and the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining a governing body. The headteacher has been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oak Tree is a satisfactory school. The school is quickly improving under the headteacher's good leadership and management. The school has successfully redressed the recent history of underachievement and low standards through rapid and significant improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' behaviour. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards are rising and are now broadly average in Year 6. Standards in writing, however, are below average. While pupils are quickly catching up lost ground, weaknesses in pupils' use of vocabulary and the accuracy of spelling and punctuation remain. Parents are very pleased with the school's recent improvements. One parent summarised their views by saying, 'My daughter's learning has gone from strength to strength.'

Lessons are generally interesting, relationships are good and teachers have good subject knowledge. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and work hard. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall because, although there is some good teaching, it is not as widespread as it needs to be and there are too many inconsistencies in practice. For example, teachers do not always plan work to match the different needs of pupils and the pace of some lessons is too slow.

The school's happy atmosphere significantly contributes to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils really enjoy school; they feel safe and secure and talk enthusiastically about the role of the school council. Behaviour has greatly improved over the past year and is now good overall and occasionally outstanding in lessons. This is because teachers' behaviour management is good, which ensures that any boisterous behaviour is quickly and effectively dealt with.

Pastoral care arrangements are good. Children make a good start in the Nursery. Sensitive care ensures pupils with learning difficulties and emotional problems make similar progress to other pupils. While the school sets challenging targets for older pupils, those for pupils in Years 1 and 2 are less secure, so that care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The curriculum is satisfactory and has been much improved by linking topics together to make the work more appealing, especially for boys. However, the outdoor learning area for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is inadequate and significantly hampers children's development of independence.

Staff and subject leaders enthusiastically and effectively support the headteacher's lead to improve the quality of education provided and leadership and management overall are good. The recent record of improvements shows the school is well placed to make further gains. While there are strengths in leadership and management among staff in school, governance is satisfactory. This is because governors have only recently started to check school performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' writing by broadening their vocabulary and developing accurate spelling and punctuation.
- Ensure teachers' planning matches the needs of different pupils so that all pupils are challenged and lessons proceed at a good pace.
- Improve the outdoor learning area for nursery and reception children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards in Year 6 are broadly average. They have risen significantly over the past year especially in English, although writing remains a weaker element. Achievement is satisfactory. Boys' standards have caught up with the girls and boys and girls now make similar progress. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is also satisfactory. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, especially in their language and personal and social development. In spite of this, their low starting points mean that most do not reach the expected standard by the time they start Year 1.

Reading standards are average. Pupils read and understand the meaning of a good range of texts. Standards of writing are improving but are below average, the legacy of low standards in the past. Punctuation and spelling are weak and pupils do not use a wide enough vocabulary to develop their ideas. The school recognises this and is providing more opportunities for pupils to develop vocabulary and improve their spelling and punctuation. Pupils' scientific knowledge, mental arithmetic and understanding of number are average. The use of scientific and mathematical knowledge to solve problems is, however, less well developed and the school is providing more time for pupils to develop these skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' have a well developed moral code that forms the basis for their good behaviour, their sensitivity in relationships and respect for others. They are particularly committed to living harmoniously in a multicultural society and have a good knowledge of different religions. Pupils' good spiritual development, shown by their appreciation of beauty and the world around them, is promoted through well structured assemblies, art and music lessons.

Pupils say they feel very safe and secure in school and that the rare incidents of bullying are very effectively dealt with. Pupils are keen to learn and want to succeed. They enjoy all aspects of school and one girl summed up the feelings of many when she said lessons are 'fun learning'. Pupils have good relationships with adults at school and feel they can readily turn to them with problems, knowing that they will get effective help. Pupils have a clear understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Most are committed to taking plenty of exercise, although few are prepared to try the school's healthy meal option. Pupils readily help in school and take responsibility well. They enthusiastically raise money for a range of charities. They are proud that the school council helped to plan the 'Wednesday afternoon' activities that they feel are adding real interest to the curriculum. Average standards in basic skills and their good attitudes to learning are preparing pupils securely for their future in education and employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good relationships and well managed behaviour help pupils enjoy their learning. In Nursery and Reception classes, teaching is particularly effective in developing the quality of children's language. Throughout the school, teachers have secure subject knowledge and mainly high expectations. Recently acquired interactive whiteboards are used well to enhance learning. For example, in a successful literacy lesson, the board was used effectively to support pupils'

understanding and use of compound words. Teachers' perceptive questioning, together with frequent use of 'response partners', often helps pupils clarify their thinking and carefully consider their answers. While there is some outstanding teaching, not enough of it is good. For example, teachers do not always use assessment well enough to ensure all activities are suitably matched to pupils' capabilities. Many lessons are delivered at a brisk pace but this is not always the case and learning sometimes slows. In writing, teachers do not place enough emphasis on the use of formal language. Throughout the school, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, especially for those with learning difficulties. Teachers' marking of pupils' work usually gives pupils a clear understanding of what they should do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The nursery and reception curriculum is satisfactory overall with a good focus on developing children's language. The provision for outdoor structured play for children is inadequate and pupils are not able to develop their independence in the way they should. The area is not secure, is liable to flood and lacks resources. The school is taking action to remedy the situation so that children can gain confidence in moving between the classroom and outside. Improved opportunities for speaking and listening are helping to improve pupils' vocabulary and standards in English. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop writing skills in subjects other than English, an issue recognised by the school. The school's efforts to make the curriculum more engaging by adding more practical work and linking subjects has been successful. For example, pupils in Year 4 are developing their computer research skills while learning the geography of India. The curriculum is soundly enriched by additional activities, such as the visit of African musicians, visits to London and sports and breakfast clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff provide good support and encouragement for all children and pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided with sensitive care and support, enabling them to participate fully in lessons. Pupils who would have been excluded in the past for poor behaviour get outstanding support in the 'Rainbow Room', helping them to overcome their problems and take a full part in school. The school has good links with outside agencies to support pupils' education. Child protection arrangements and health and safety checks are robust. While attendance is below average, it is improving through the school's determined efforts to work with vulnerable families and its rewards for good attendance.

Academic guidance is good in Years 3 to 6 where pupils are set challenging targets to attain. Their progress towards them is regularly reviewed and effective support, such as booster classes, helps pupils who might underachieve. Guidance in other years is improving but is not as effective. This is because teachers' assessment of the progress made by children and younger pupils has only recently become reliable enough to be used to set targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear direction for school improvement. Despite a period of considerable staff change, he has, with good support from the recently

established leadership team and the local authority, implemented procedures for monitoring and improving school performance. Good leadership and management at all levels have resulted in rapid improvements in pupils' behaviour, the quality of teaching, curriculum provision and resources. These have led to a significant rise in standards, better achievement and learners' good personal development. This is helped by the good use of staff to reduce class sizes so that pupils get more individual teaching. Staff morale is high and they have a shared commitment to achieving the school's aims.

The school regularly checks its performance, giving it a secure understanding of its qualities and where improvements have to be made. Planning for improvement is thorough and the development plan is an effective tool to move the school forward. The school has made good gains since the last inspection.

After a period of high turnover of governors, the governing body is more settled. Under the stewardship of the recently appointed chairman, governors are now in the position to play a purposeful part in the financial and strategic planning of the school and in challenging the school to do its best.

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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?	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	3
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	3

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?	3
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	3
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

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

We enjoyed our visit to your school. You made us feel very welcome and you were very polite. We liked the discussions we had with you about the work and activities you do at school. You clearly get on with each other very well and you are rightly proud of your school. We decided Oak Tree is a satisfactory school. We also think it is getting better. Here are some of our findings:

- You make satisfactory progress in your lessons.
- Standards are rising and are average except in writing, which is weaker.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress.
- You enjoy school, feel safe and accept responsibility well.
- Your behaviour is good.
- You have good relationships with your teachers and you work hard for them.
- The curriculum is improving because the school is making lessons more interesting.
- You are looked after well and older pupils get good advice on how they can make their work better.
- The new headteacher is leading the school well and staff work hard to make sure the school gets better.

We have asked the school to do a few things to help it improve further. They are:

- Make your writing better by improving your vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.
- Make sure teachers plan work that helps everyone learn quickly and achieve well.
- Improve the outdoor learning area for children in the Nursery and Reception classes.

We wish you all success in the future.