

The Oaks Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134249
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	301811
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Henry Moreton

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	114
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Elizabeth Cousins
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Evans
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2006
School address	Rochester Drive Ellesmere Port Merseyside CH65 9EX
Telephone number	0151 3552050
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school which was formed in 2003 by the amalgamation of two schools. The school hosts a resource base for pupils from the local area with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD).

Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage with a small number from homes where English is not the first language spoken. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also higher than average. A small number of pupils are particularly vulnerable.

When the school was inspected in February 2006 it was judged to require special measures. The headteacher took up her post in September 2006 and the chair of governors took up her duties at the same time. The school holds the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school has made significant improvements and now provides a satisfactory standard of education. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The strengths are in the leadership and management and the way the school cares for pupils. As a result of the positive environment for learning, pupils also make good gains in the development of their personal skills.

Accurate baseline assessment in the Foundation Stage provides the school with good data and qualitative information about pupils' starting points. Provision here is good and children get off to a speedy start in their learning. The tracking of every pupil's progress is detailed, regular and accurate. This information shows that pupils of all abilities now make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Some make better progress, particularly in science. Even though pupils have lower than average starting points and there is a large proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, their standards improve so that they attain standards that are just below national expectations by the time they leave. Standards remain much lower in writing. Pupils have much improved self-esteem. Those whose first language is not English make good progress in acquiring the language.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. This is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes while in school. High expectations from adults are key to this success. Teachers have taken good advice from local authority consultants with the result that their lessons gain and maintain pupils' interest most of the time. Their assessment of pupils' performance is comprehensive. However, expectations are too low when it comes to the quality of pupils' writing in subjects other than English. Teachers are not consistent in correcting errors in grammar and punctuation.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall but it is less effective in ensuring that pupils make sufficient progress in writing. Extra-curricular opportunities have improved but are not extensive enough to appeal to all pupils. The school's successful partnership with parents and carers is exemplified by the significant increase in the take-up of places on literacy and numeracy courses as well as an increase in the number of pupils on the school's roll. While many visits and visitors enhance the curriculum well in all years, there are too few opportunities to develop pupils' awareness and understanding of different cultures and people from other backgrounds.

Leadership and management are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been significant. Well considered and robust implementation of many improvements has been made over the past year. These improvements have had a positive impact on all aspects of the school's work and the ethos for learning is much improved. The budget is managed well by a good governing body. As a result, managers demonstrate that they have a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly in pupils' writing in Years 1 to 6.
- Raise teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' spelling and grammar in all subjects.
- Improve pupils' awareness of other races and cultures.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The progress that pupils make is satisfactory. Achievement is good in science. Some examples of art and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school reflect the fact that pupils are also doing well in aspects of these subjects. The school's analysis of pupils' progress is thorough and shows significant improvement over the last 16 months. The substantial work undertaken to ensure that assessment forms part of planning and teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils in the BESD resource base join lessons with their peers at appropriate times and this helps their progress.

On entry to the Foundation Stage the majority of children start with lower than expected language, mathematical and social skills. They achieve well because of the good teaching and specialist help they receive. By the end of Reception, most have made good progress but standards are lower than usually expected of children of this age. In Years 1 to 6 progress is satisfactory overall but pupils do not do as well in writing. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in their personal and social development, gaining valuable skills in learning how to share and cooperate with others. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils make satisfactory progress because of the effective guidance and support they receive. The few who are new to English make good progress in language acquisition. By the end of Year 6 pupils reach standards that are overall below average. There is some variation between subjects. For example, in science and mathematics standards are broadly average but in English they remain below average, especially in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupil's personal development and well-being are good. Pupils make good progress in their personal development. They know how to keep safe and feel secure. They show pleasure at one another's successes. Photographs and displays around the school capture this well. Learning mentors and teaching assistants provide high quality attention to individual pupils, including in the BESD resource base. This enables learning to continue while personal needs are met, and has helped to improve levels of attendance. Behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and at social times. Attendance and punctuality are broadly satisfactory. While levels of attendance have improved significantly the number of unauthorised absences during the summer months remains too high.

Pupils make a good contribution to the community through their school council and the way they support their classmates, and by participation in community events such as the local arts festivals. The staff use effective rewards and sanctions which help the pupils to maintain a good sense of right and wrong. Pupils' moral, cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of other cultures and traditions. Suitable priority is given to healthy lifestyles and effective use is made of the outside play areas and school grounds.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It has improved significantly over the past 16 months as a result of the relentless focus on learning spearheaded by the headteacher. Robust assessment, monitoring and evaluation, together with a range of strategies to improve teaching and learning, are having a positive impact on the quality of lessons. At its best, teaching ensures that lessons are planned to meet the needs of different ages and abilities in classes. However, some teachers expect pupils to sit and listen as passive learners for too long.

The vast majority of pupils enjoy learning. This is reflected in their delight about sharing their work and experiences, and in receiving merits for good work. Pupils in all classes, including in the BESD resource base, use computers and other forms of technology well and this motivates them. They respond to the regular marking and assessment of their work and know their targets. Teachers' expectations of pupils' spelling and sentence construction in the different subjects are too low and mistakes and errors are sometimes left unchecked.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum satisfactorily meets the full range of pupils' learning needs. A wide programme of visits enhances learning and pupils say that these are some of their favourite activities. ICT is used well by pupils and teachers in several subjects. Art is also a strength as seen by the good work on display. Extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' learning are limited, as are opportunities to find out about people from other cultures. A well planned programme to develop pupils' personal and social skills, including those in the BESD resource base, is successfully helping pupils to gain confidence in expressing their thoughts and feelings. Good provision is made for pupils who are gifted and talented. Pupils speak fondly of the fact that the local rotary club has taken them to the zoo as a reward for good behaviour and hard work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good, ensuring that pupils work in a positive and secure environment. Pupils are comfortable to turn to adults if they need help. The 'quiet room' is used well, particularly by the learning mentors, to support pupils. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments are in place, as are requirements for child protection. Effective assessment arrangements enable staff to have a secure understanding of how well pupils are doing and what they need to do next. Most teachers effectively share this information with pupils. The school has productive links with a range of professionals to support pupils' particular needs. Pupils are well prepared for their move to secondary school. A typical comment from parents is: 'Staff are really friendly. They work with you to help your child.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good, including that of the BESD resource base. There has been an unyielding focus on removing the school from specials measures by ensuring improvement to all aspects of its work. The reduction in staff absence, improved morale and the commitment to inclusive practice has been recognised by the award of the Inclusion Quality Mark and reflects the school's turnaround in fortunes. Planning for improvement is based on an accurate evaluation of work. Monitoring is exacting. The school's procedures to track the progress made by pupils over time are good. Subject leaders contribute well to the school's evaluation of itself, and in strategic planning. The school shares its successes with new-found confidence. For instance, middle managers have been asked to share their good practice with another school. Parents and carers are increasingly encouraged to be part of the school's development. Parenting groups are well attended and the school is well used as a base for adult education. Governance is good. The school's managers are held to account and there is a clear drive to raise standards. Efforts to improve pupils' writing are well considered but have yet to have enough impact. The school's provision represents satisfactory value for money. As a result of the significant impact the headteacher has made in a short time she understandably has the full confidence of staff, governors and the pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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	3
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?	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	3
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	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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. I am writing to let you know what we found out. You can see a copy of our report on www.ofsted.gov.uk. We were pleased to see you all use computers so much, so if you get the time, try to look it up because we think you will find it interesting. It is very much based on what you told us, as well as what we saw for ourselves.

We judged your school to be satisfactory. You will be pleased to know that we think it is no longer requires special measures and does not need such regular visits from inspectors. This is in no small part due to you. You should be proud of yourselves. With your teachers you have turned the school around by your improved behaviour, better attendance and attitudes to your work.

We were delighted to see how well you respond to the lovely environment that the adults in school provide for you. You told us how you enjoy coming to school and showed a genuine interest in us, which we really appreciated. You are well cared for and you told us how the school looks out for each and every one of you. We think your headteacher and all the staff do a good job.

Of course, as you might expect, we think the school could do some things better. We have asked the staff to do the following:

- improve the standards you reach in your work, especially in writing
- make sure that they check your spellings and sentences in all of your work
- improve your understanding of people from different parts of the world.

We wish you all the best for the future.