

Ocker Hill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103920
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	308453
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Darrell Foster
Headteacher	Adam Hollyhead
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Gospel Oak Road Tipton DY4 0DS
Telephone number	01215 560445
Fax number	01215 567371

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, and leadership and management. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, examination of pupils' work, assessment data, interviews and documents including analysis of the parents' questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

In this average-size school, the majority of pupils are White British. A very small number are from minority ethnic groups, but none are at the early stage of learning English. Pupils enter school in Year 3, with skills mainly matching those expected for their age. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.

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 provides a satisfactory quality of education. It has some good features. Pupils enjoy school. Their attitudes to learning are good and they work hard in lessons. They like their teachers, saying they are kind, friendly and help them to learn. Close attention is given to personal development, so pupils develop into mature sensible polite young people as they progress through the school. Their self-esteem is good, and they confidently talk to visitors expressing their views. 'This is a fun place where we do lots of interesting things,' and 'There's nothing I would change here, it's all good!' Parents are also pleased with the care and education provided for their children. 'This school really seems to care, and endeavours to bring out the best in children', is an example of the many positive remarks made in the parental survey.

By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. Over the past few years, the leadership has concentrated on improving the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels by the end of Year 6, following a decline in standards in the recent past. There has been good success with this, and now more pupils are leaving the school working at this expected level. As yet, too few pupils attain the higher level, although there are early indications that this year, more Year 6 pupils should attain these higher levels by the end of the school year. Although these standards represents satisfactory achievement from pupils' starting points in Year 3, progress throughout the school is uneven. This is because there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, resulting in Years 5 and 6 pupils making better progress than those pupils in other year groups. The main reason for this is that assessment information is not used consistently well throughout the school to set work that is appropriate for the range of ability within each class. More able pupils are not always given work that challenges their thinking.

Although standards are broadly average overall in English, writing is a weaker aspect of this subject. Good strategies have been introduced, for example VCOP (vocabulary, connectives, sentence openers and punctuation) to improve pupils' writing skills. These are starting to have an effect. However, in some year groups pupils do not have enough opportunities to write independently and there is an overuse of worksheets. Also, not all teachers are clear about what the next steps of learning in different types of writing are, for example a set of instructions or report writing.

A strength throughout the school is the management of behaviour. Behaviour is good, and the school has a warm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils feel very safe and are confident that any adult will help them if they have a worry or concern. All safe-guarding procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being are well established. Bullying, pupils say, is rare, but if it does occur it will be sorted out quickly and fairly. Classrooms are bright, stimulating environments, and pupils clearly enjoy the wide range of activities presented to them in the interesting curriculum. Close attention is given to making the curriculum more relevant to pupils through the linking of different subjects. Pupils enjoy activities such as art and technology focus weeks, which provide them with the time to work collaboratively on a project over a longer period of time. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities they are involved in. The residential visit in Year 5 is particularly popular, and Year 6 pupils reminisce about the fun they had when they visited Ingestre Hall. Another favourite is the visit to a local football club, where pupils develop and extend their football skills. Links with other providers are good and are supporting pupils' learning well.

Helping pupils to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle is of high priority, and pupils are confident in knowing of the need to eat healthily and to keep themselves fit. The 'Walking Bus' they say is a good idea, as it makes sure pupils have the opportunity to take regular exercise. They also have a good understanding of the effects of smoking, drugs and alcohol on their health and fitness. They willingly take on responsibility such as school council members, and are actively involved in raising money for charity. Their basic skills, positive attitudes to learning, politeness and respect for others provide a sound basis for the next stage of their education.

The headteacher knows what is needed to move the school forward and although the senior leadership team is relatively new, a strong sense of teamwork is developing between them. Governors are supportive and fulfill all of their statutory duties. Self-evaluation, however, is slightly over generous, although it accurately reflects the school's strengths and weaknesses. Also, the monitoring and evaluation of strategies put into place to bring about improvement are not rigorous enough. As yet, staff are not held accountable for the progress of pupils in their class. Even so, good improvements made in the accommodation, and in pupils' attendance which was unsatisfactory in the previous inspection, show the school has a sound capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure assessment information is used effectively in Years 3 and 4 to plan learning that meets the needs of all pupils, especially the more able.
- Provide pupils with regular opportunities to write independently, and improve teachers' subject knowledge in teaching of writing.
- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation procedures so the leadership is clear about the success or otherwise of improvement strategies, holding staff accountable for the progress of their pupils.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	2
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	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

28 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ocker Hill Junior School, Tipton, DY4 0DS

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school to see how well you are learning. You told me a lot which helped me to decide what the best things are, and what needs to be improved. I think your school is providing you with a satisfactory education, and there are signs that it is improving. Satisfactory means it does some good things, but other things need to be better.

The staff work hard to make sure you are given lots of interesting things to do, so school is good fun and you really do enjoy learning. Your teachers take good care of you and it was pleasing to hear that you feel safe and secure in school. I was delighted at the way you become more sensible and mature as you progress through the school, and was very impressed by your good behaviour. It was also pleasing to hear how much you enjoy the clubs and activities that are made available to you. You all have a good understanding of the need to eat a healthy diet and to exercise regularly, and are clearly proud of the work of the school council. The talent show sounds a really good idea. I wish I could come to see 'Ant and Dec', I expect it will be great fun. It is good to know that your parents are pleased with the school's work.

By the time you leave in Year 6, the majority of you are attaining standards in English, mathematics and science that are similar to those in most schools. However, I think some of you could do even better. So I have asked your teachers to make sure that the work you are given makes you all think hard, especially those of you that are in Years 3 and 4. Also, I think writing standards would be higher if you had more opportunities to write for yourselves, and your teachers knew exactly how to improve your writing skills. Finally, although I think your headteacher has good ideas about how to make things better for you, he needs to check regularly that everyone is carrying out the ideas and these actions are helping you to learn even more.

Thank you again for helping me with the inspection. You are lucky to go to such a happy and friendly school.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Furness Lead inspector

28 February 2008



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