

Oakdene Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104781
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	308668
Inspection date	5 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bill Lyon
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Lee
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Ashton Avenue Rainhill Prescot Merseyside L35 0QQ
Telephone number	01744 678410
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Age group	4-11
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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: pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics; the quality of academic guidance; the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being; leadership and management; and curriculum strengths. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work, discussions with the staff and governors, and analysis of the school's documents and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects 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

This school is average in size and serves an area which has relatively high social and economic advantage. A below average proportion of pupils is eligible for a free school meal. The number identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Activemark, Eco Bronze, BECTA information and communication technology (ICT) award and the Investors in People status.

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 with outstanding aspects to its work. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of senior managers are major factors in its success. This determined leadership is founded on teamwork, excellent partnerships within the local community and the continuous evaluation of how well pupils are doing in both their academic and personal development. Parents overwhelmingly appreciate what the school provides. Comments such as, 'This is a lovely school with excellent facilities' and, 'The staff are very approachable, always willing to go the extra mile' sum up their feelings. Inspection findings agree with parental views.

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Most pupils begin Year 1 with standards that are above those expected for their age. By the end of Year 2, they reach standards which are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Given their average starting point in Reception, this represents very good progress. Tracking of pupils' progress as they move from Year 3 to Year 6 shows that in Years 3 and 4 the pace of learning slows and progress dips. The school has identified that this is, in part, a consequence of less effective teaching within these year groups. Pupils begin to make up the lost ground in Year 5 and this accelerates in Year 6, as a result of the outstanding teaching they receive. Consequently, they attain well above average standards in English and above average in mathematics and science, as seen in national test results in 2007. Similarly, pupils in the current Year 6 are working at levels above those expected nationally.

Pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being reflect the excellent quality of care, support and guidance they receive. Their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. Enjoyment of school is reflected in excellent behaviour, attendance and enthusiasm for learning. They say they, 'love school' and thoroughly enjoy, 'learning about different cultures'. They feel safe and know there is someone to talk to if they have a problem. They greatly value opportunities to express their views and the many chances given to them to represent their school, for example, as school councillors. They take these responsibilities very seriously: for example, as eco-councillors promoting conservation, or as activity leaders looking after younger pupils at lunchtime. Pupils have an excellent awareness of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and they understand the reasons why it is important to have a healthy diet and do plenty of exercise. The school takes every opportunity to involve pupils in the community through, for example, involving them in deciding which fundraising ventures they wish to support. This well-developed sense of community prepares them well for their future lives.

The good progress pupils make is the result of good quality teaching. Major strengths include very effective use of personal target-setting to involve pupils in their own learning, high quality relationships and high expectations. In spite of these strengths, in a minority of classes, work set is not always suitably matched to meet pupils' individual needs. Good use is made of learning support assistants to ensure that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates.

The school would be the first to say that some of its exciting developments have yet to pay dividends in raising standards even higher by the end of Year 6. This is part of its continual drive to forge ahead with changes to benefit pupils' progress and achievements. For example, the school has successfully introduced a highly creative and innovative skills-based curriculum. This is used imaginatively to link subjects together and help pupils to apply their skills and

knowledge across a range of areas of learning. For example, Year 6 pupils link ICT, science and mathematical skills with literacy skills to create vibrant, engaging work which supports the enjoyment of learning and their academic development very effectively. The curriculum provides many excellent extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities to support work in the arts, sport and humanities as well as the teaching of French and Spanish. The school does not miss an opportunity, through the excellent partnerships and community links which it has established, to foster pupils' well-being. For example, the well supported breakfast and after-school care provision which are very much appreciated by the parents ensure pupils' welfare and enjoyment are promoted well.

Good leadership and management have ensured that all previous inspection issues have been tackled and that the school has moved on effectively. Accurate self-evaluation ensures that the school knows itself well and this contributes to its sustained improvement. Although monitoring of staff performance is focused effectively on maintaining good progress in pupils' academic and personal development, it does not yet ensure that the slippage seen in pupils' progress in some year groups is halted. Governance is of a good quality. Arrangements are in place to promote child protection, health and safety. The school is in a good position to improve even further and it provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join Reception with skills that are broadly average for their age. They settle happily into the stimulating, lively environment and become successful learners who work together well and show positive attitudes in all activities. They make good progress and, by the end of Reception, achieve skills that are above those typically expected. This is as a result of the good teaching and excellent personal care and support they receive. Children enjoy the challenging activities, whether teacher led or independent. Daily sessions focusing on letters and sounds help to boost their early reading and writing skills well. The outside learning area is used effectively to encourage children's social development and skills across all areas of learning and has improved significantly since the last inspection. There are good partnerships with parents, who appreciate the welcoming ethos and excellent care their children receive. Links with outside nursery providers, prior to children starting Reception, are less well developed. Leadership and management are good. Staff use information gathered from assessing the small day-to-day steps in children's progress well to ensure activities help children build on what they can already do.

What the school should do to improve further

- Iron out inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning to ensure all pupils achieve their best in all year groups.

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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?	1
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	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?	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	1
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	1

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?	1

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	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	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

You may remember that I visited recently to see how you are getting on. Thanks to all those children who talked to me about what they were doing in lessons, what happens in the playground and the jobs that they do around the school. Special thanks to the children who met me at lunchtime. I thought you would be interested in what I am saying in my report. Yours is a good school and you are right to be proud of all the things that go on there.

One of the very best things about the school is you yourselves. As you go through the school, you become mature and responsible and you are well prepared for secondary school and later life. I was particularly impressed with how much you know about how to stay healthy and keep safe. The school takes excellent care of you and gives you lots of opportunities to take part in extra activities. You told me how much you enjoy all the clubs such as sports and music.

You are taught well and this means that you make good progress in your learning. By the end of Year 6, you reach standards that are higher than are usually expected. The people in charge of the school have good ideas about how to make it even better and so are doing a lot of work to make sure that you do equally well in all your lessons.

I have suggested one thing that the school needs to do now.

- Make sure that all teaching is as good as the best which I saw so that all of you achieve as well as you can during every school year.

Thank you again for all your help.