

Oulton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107842
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309514
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	319
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ron Walker
Headteacher	Mrs Maria Townsend
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Green Lea Oulton Leeds West Yorkshire LS26 8NT
Telephone number	0113 214 6303
Fax number	0113 214 6330

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school serving an area which is socially and economically mixed. The pupils are mainly of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. In September 2004 the school received pupils from a neighbouring school following its closure.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Oulton Primary is a good and improving school. Central to this improvement has been the focus on the school's motto, 'Thinking for ourselves and caring for each other'. Pupils are articulate, feel valued and are given opportunities to take on responsibility. When asked to describe the school, pupils commented, 'It is like a big community', 'a kind and friendly school', 'a school where we care for each other'. The overwhelming majority of parents are also very positive about the school. Their views are captured by the comment, 'A fabulous community spirit about the school. A real caring ethos - wanting the best for every child.'

Pupils achieve well during their time in school. Standards, following a decline in recent years, are now improving and are in line with those seen nationally at the end of Year 6. This represents good progress in the light of the below average attainment on entry to Year 1. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage, because of the good teaching, well thought out curriculum and the good care and support they get from adults. Although progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good overall, it is not uniform from year to year. Likewise, progress in all subject areas is not uniform, with mathematics less strong at the end of Year 2. This is because of the limited opportunities for problem-solving.

Throughout the school, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They have good relationships with teachers, behave well and work well together in class. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of being healthy; they feel safe, and know that their opinions and views are valued. They show high levels of self-confidence and enjoy school. Pupils do equally well, regardless of their background or ability. All pupils receive good care, support and guidance, including the many pupils who enter school at various times throughout the year. The curriculum is good and tailored well to the needs of all pupils. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, but in a minority of lessons the pace of learning is too slow and there is a lack of challenge. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those pupils for whom English is not their first language.

The school has undergone a considerable change in its pupil profile, following the closure of a neighbouring school in 2004. This has presented the school with challenges which it has had to work hard to overcome. The headteacher and her senior management team, strengthened by new appointments, have managed the changes well and brought about many improvements by some carefully thought out strategies. For example 'Big Writing', with its focus on weekly assessment and personalised targets, has brought about improvements in English. However, improvements in other areas have not yet had a significant impact. Development planning does not focus precisely enough on a whole-school approach. The school acknowledges this and is working to redress the issue. Governors provide effective support for the school, particularly in managing change and providing challenge. The school is not complacent and there is a common purpose among staff in wanting to raise standards and provide the best possible education for the pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents recognise and appreciate the good quality of provision in the Foundation Stage and the fact that children get off to a good start in school. The attractive surroundings, happy

atmosphere, approachable staff and good relationships with parents ensure that children feel safe and secure. Many children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age. By the time they join Year 1 standards have risen, but are still below average. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception because there is well focused support for groups and individuals, with a strong focus on practical activities, language, and personal, social and emotional development. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good and the teamwork of staff is strong. Teachers plan well together to create a curriculum that is well designed to meet the needs of all children and to stimulate their interest. Children are given encouragement to explore the world around them and to develop their independence. This is seen to particularly good effect in the outdoor space, which is used well. There is a good balance of teacher directed activities and independent activities. The focus on personal and social development and language skills encourages self-esteem and provides a firm foundation for the next phase of learning. There are occasions in mathematical development, however, when children in Reception could be given greater challenge in their independent work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment in mathematics in Years 1 and 2, particularly in relation to problem-solving.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all at least good, particularly with regard to pace and challenge.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress during their time in school, and this includes pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 2 standards overall are just below average. Compared to standards in reading and writing, standards in mathematics are less strong. This is due to limited opportunities for real-life problem-solving and some shortcomings in matching work with pupils' needs in some classes. Progress from Year 3 to Year 6 continues to be good. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been steadily improving over the last two years. Overall, they are now in line with those seen nationally. The school's data show that pupils who have had all of their education in the school generally achieve higher standards than new arrivals.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

A secure and happy environment has been established which enables pupils to feel valued and positive about their achievements. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy coming to school. Behaviour is good and most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle and they enjoy running the healthy snack shop at break and the 'wake up and shake up' sessions. They know how to keep safe. They participate well in the wide range of activities outside school and appreciate visiting experts working with them. Older pupils support younger ones well, with the 'friendship bench' and as playground leaders. The school council is very involved in charity fundraising, and is proud of its part in developing the school playground. One parent, typifying the general view, commented, 'My daughter is on the school council and thinks it's wonderful that they have had their say in the running of the school.' Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being with the strong focus on literacy and information and communication technology (ICT).

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, but inconsistent in quality. There is much good practice in the school, which is not shared well enough. Teachers show enthusiasm for their subjects and plan their lessons well with appropriate and varied activities. ICT supports learning well, particularly the use of the interactive whiteboards. There are good relationships between pupils and teachers, and pupils show respect for each other. Emphasis on the vocabulary of subjects helps pupils to understand ideas while improving their literacy. Teaching assistants work well with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so that their achievement matches that of their peers. In a minority of lessons, where teaching leads to learning that is less secure, there is a lack of pace and challenge and the work is not matched well to the needs of all pupils. While marking is carried out regularly, it does not always inform pupils clearly about how to improve their work. In an excellent lesson in English, pupils were guided to assess their learning for themselves and to focus on specific points for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of learning experiences. Links between subjects enhance learning and develop pupils' basic skills; for example in writing, through work in other subjects. Increasingly, work is well planned to match the needs of all pupils whatever their ability or prior attainment, but the way in which this is implemented is not consistent. The school has responded well to its recent changes and has reorganised the curriculum in Years 1 and 2 to address the social needs of all pupils. Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, visits from artists make a good contribution to their personal and social development and are much appreciated by the pupils. 'We loved making the mosaics', said one pupil. The school recognises that expanding provision in creative arts is an area for development. There is a good range of after-school clubs which are popular with pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for very well and there are good procedures to ensure that they are safe. Parents trust the school to take care of their children and pupils say an adult is always available if they have any problems or concerns. Systems for supporting pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved since the last inspection and are now good, well managed and inclusive. This enables these pupils to make good progress towards achieving their targets. Academic guidance is good overall and particularly strong in English, where pupils know their targets and know clearly the next steps to take in their learning. This has resulted in increased progress in English. Staff pay careful attention to health and safety, including regular risk assessments. Child protection arrangements are robust and the school works very well with other agencies to support vulnerable pupils. There are effective partnerships with parents and other local schools to ensure smooth transition of pupils when they join and leave the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has moved forward considerably under the strong leadership of the headteacher and is in a good position to improve further. The transfer of pupils following the closure of a neighbouring school has been sensitively managed and has resulted in staff working hard to bring about improvement in personal and social development, as well as academic achievement. The headteacher, along with her senior leadership team, has instilled a culture of self-reflection and common purpose among all the staff to raise standards. Rigorous tracking systems to check pupils' progress and evaluate teaching and learning have improved achievement in many areas. Increasingly, targets set are more challenging. The school has recognised where improvements need to be made however, the pace of improvements has not been entirely consistent. This is because development planning has not effectively drawn together information from across the school. The school has recognised this and is already working to improve its planning methods. For example, the leadership team is now successfully engaging the involvement of staff in the planning process. The school works well in partnership with outside agencies to promote pupils' achievement and well-being. Parental response indicated a high level of support for the school's work and demonstrates the confidence they have in the school. Governors are supportive, offer constructive criticism and challenge the school appropriately and effectively.

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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?	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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	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

Inspection of Oulton Primary School, Leeds, LS26 8NT

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing all the interesting work that you do.

Here are some of the things that we liked best.

- You enjoy school and you behave well.
- You are developing good personal skills that will help you to have a successful adult life.
- You know how to stay healthy by eating the right food and by taking plenty of exercise.
- Adults in school ensure that you are safe and well cared for.
- Your school provides you with interesting and varied opportunities, such as school visitors and clubs.

Here are some of the things that we think could be better.

- The standards you reach by the end of Year 2 could be better, particularly in mathematics.
- We would like all lessons to be as good as the very best.
- We have suggested that the staff look together at all the things they could do to make your school even better.

You can help by asking your teachers how to improve your work and what steps you should take next in your learning.

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you once again.