

Oakwood Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112766
Local Authority	City of Derby LA
Inspection number	310998
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Edwards

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	343
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pam Moss
Headteacher	Ms Nancy Elks
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Holbrook Road Alvaston Derby Derbyshire DE24 0DD
Telephone number	01332 571231
Fax number	01332 571163

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large suburban junior school on the outskirts of Derby. The pupils come from a broad range of cultural backgrounds, although the majority are of White British heritage. Pupil mobility is below average. Attainment on entry to the school is below average with a significant minority starting school with low attainment in writing.

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. It has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to maintain the momentum. The key issues from the last inspection report have been resolved, the quality of teaching is much improved and standards are rising. The pupils are very proud of their school and are keen participants in the exciting range of opportunities that the school provides. There is a good level of care to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure. As one parent commented, 'I think Oakwood Junior School is a great school for children to learn. My daughter enjoys it and the staff are caring and friendly'. The school is at the heart of the community that it serves and provides good value for money.

Pupils make good progress, and standards by Year 6 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Because the teaching is good and pupils have a much clearer idea of what they need to do to improve, their achievement is good. Furthermore, the pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive and the curriculum encourages all pupils to become active learners rather than passive recipients of information. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Those pupils with moderate learning difficulties make good progress because they are well supported, both by the teachers and a team of dedicated teaching assistants. However, not enough emphasis is given to ensuring that the higher attaining pupils are challenged to reach their potential. Not all pupils do as well as they could in writing. This is because many lack fluency in their handwriting and lack accuracy in their spelling.

The quality of learning is good. Teachers and support staff work very effectively together. Staff know each pupil by name and are excellent role models. This promotes high quality relationships and ensures that pupils benefit from an orderly learning environment. Teachers plan work carefully to ensure that the necessary skills are taught systematically and effectively. The very good curriculum is innovative and motivates pupils to do their best. The ethos and the exciting range of opportunities available to pupils, strongly supports their personal development and keeps them interested.

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. Attendance rates are broadly average and improving because the school has been resolute in its drive to eliminate unauthorised absence. Staff respect and value all pupils. Consequently, pupils develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-discipline. Behaviour is good and makes a strong contribution to the quality of learning. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they respond very well to many initiatives that encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles. They work hard and play well together. The school is successful in preparing pupils for life in a multicultural society and the next stage in their education.

Leadership and management are good. The school's accurate view of itself has resulted in a clear strategy for further improvement. This includes the development of the role of the leadership team to ensure greater consistency in the way that pupils' progress is monitored. The quality of governorship is good as the board is closely involved in the strategic development of the school and has a growing understanding of how to measure its performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by helping the pupils to develop a fluency in their handwriting and by improving their spelling.
- Raise the achievement of the higher attaining pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. The gap between the pupils' performance in tests for eleven-year-olds and the national picture has narrowed markedly in recent years in English, mathematics and science. This is because the quality of teaching has improved and staff have a much clearer idea of the pupils' potential. Furthermore, the school has placed very good emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills and this has supported the pupils' language development. Standards in reading are stronger than standards in writing. Pupils use a good range of vocabulary but are let down by a lack of accuracy in spelling and fluency in their joined script. Pupils who find writing difficult receive sensitive support and this enables them to make good overall progress. However, more could be done to help the higher-attaining pupils to reach their potential. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have risen through enhanced resources and training for staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a strong sense of themselves as learners and, as they experience success, they grow in self-esteem. Pupils make increasingly healthy choices and know how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils work effectively in teams and to tight deadlines, in producing a newspaper, for instance. Behaviour is good; pupils are polite, respectful of others, interested in different cultures and customs and tolerant of differences. They are proud of their school and take their many responsibilities seriously, as 'eco troopers' and influential school councillors. Attendance is average. Almost all of the pupils enjoy school very much; they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils' well-being has a high profile, so pupils learn effectively to understand and deal with their emotions. As their basic skills develop well, pupils are well placed to benefit from secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers show determination to improve standards and achievement. They enjoy good relationships with pupils and lessons are calm and orderly. Sometimes the work is not challenging enough for higher-attaining pupils to enable them to reach their full potential. There are high expectations of behavior and involvement of all in the activities provided. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their lessons and are particularly knowledgeable about the learning process, as a result of the excellent emphasis placed on teaching the pupils how to become learners. A real strength is the planning, which effectively links different subject areas. Creativity is encouraged across a range of subjects and this motivates pupils to improve the standard of their work and their pride in it. Day-to-day assessment procedures and target setting are consistent between classes and subjects. Marking is consistently good and has developmental comments that indicate how work might be improved. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. All subjects are covered, including modern foreign languages, and pupils value the wealth of enrichment opportunities. An excellent range of well attended after-school clubs, with many day and residential visits extend pupils' learning opportunities. All of the school environment is a stimulus to learning, with attractive areas in corridor and classroom and exceptional outdoor facilities for studying the natural world. Outside specialists enhance provision in music, creative arts, and sport. ICT is used well to support work in other subjects. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal, social and emotional development well and successfully supports healthy living and staying safe. The most unique aspect of the curriculum, however, is the way that pupils learn invaluable lessons about how to become a good learner; this and the appropriate focus on basic skills and working co-operatively, helps prepare pupils for their future lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff provide good support for pupils through close day-to-day supervision and a commitment to inclusion. An exceptional programme of intervention strategies is tailored to support pupils and enable them to thrive. One pupil, for example, spoke articulately about how having breakfast with the learning mentors on a Monday morning helps prepare him emotionally for the school week. The school makes detailed risk assessments, and first aid and other training are up to date. Safeguarding arrangements are fully in line with national requirements. Academic guidance is good. There are consistent methods of assessment and informing pupils of their targets throughout the school, and this has had a beneficial effect on the raising of standards. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are well supported, although the needs of the more able are not so consistently met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She has nurtured the ethos of high achievement and motivated and empowered her colleagues to settle for nothing but the best. Teamwork is at the heart of all of the school's successes and this has enabled the staff to grow in confidence and to share the responsibility for effective school leadership. It is evident in the leadership team's successful work in strengthening and sharpening assessment arrangements. Every effort has been made to ensure that all the pupils who find learning difficult can achieve their best. The leadership team now recognises the need to provide more challenge for the higher attaining pupils. The school's view of itself, although rather modest in part, is accurate and has sustained the school's programme of improvement. The role of the governors has been carefully nurtured and their systems for critically monitoring the work of the school have improved.

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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?	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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?	1
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

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakwood Junior School, Alvaston, Derby DE24 0DD

We really enjoyed our visit to your school because everybody was so polite, helpful and friendly. We were very pleased to be able to work with you in your classrooms, join in with your assemblies and listen to your comments about Oakwood. We can understand why you enjoy your school so much as there are many things that make your school special. Here are some of them.

- Everybody understands the school rules and you behave well.
- Everybody tries to be friendly, thoughtful and helpful. Well done!
- You are making good progress with your work.
- The staff are very caring and the teachers are determined to make your lessons as exciting as possible.
- There is wide range of activities and visits to keep you motivated.
- There are wonderful displays of work throughout the school and the grounds are very interesting.
- Even though yours is a good school, Ms Elks is constantly thinking about how it could be even better.

But of course, even though yours is a good school, there are still things that can be improved. The most important one is that we know that you can do even better with your work, particularly with your writing. So we are asking everybody to help make your writing as good as possible. Also, we would like to see even more challenge for those of you who find the work a little easy at times. We are sure that Ms Elks and the staff will work very hard to help you to improve, and that you will remember to thank them.

I would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

Keith Edwards

Lead inspector