

Oakwood Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114722
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311676
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathleen Yates

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Prior
Headteacher	Ms Lesley Trotter
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2005
School address	Windsor Avenue Clacton-on-Sea Essex CO15 2AH
Telephone number	01255 421168
Fax number	01255 426069

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized infant school, which serves an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and who have learning difficulties and disabilities are higher than average. The school also caters for a number of looked after pupils. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with few pupils from ethnic minority groups. The school is a member of an Excellence Cluster and has achieved the Basic Skills Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oakwood Infant school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. Parents and pupils are mostly positive in their views. There are good links with other organisations to promote the well-being of learners. This ensures that the needs of a growing number of pupils with emotional and learning difficulties and disabilities are identified at an early stage.

Pupils in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress from their very low starting points. While their achievement is satisfactory, by the end of Reception, most pupils do not reach the levels, which are expected for this age, except in their physical development. The satisfactory progress continues throughout the infant classes. By the end of Year 2, standards in mathematics are broadly average. They are significantly below average in reading and writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress while higher attaining pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable, especially in writing.

Personal development including spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. Cultural development is good. Behaviour is satisfactory and most pupils display positive attitudes to their work. They have a suitable understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and safe practices and they make a positive contribution to the community. Preparation for economic well-being is satisfactory.

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. There are not enough lessons, which are good to enable all pupils to have the opportunities to make more than satisfactory progress. The curriculum is satisfactory but there is insufficient detail in day-to-day plans. For example, teachers do not focus sharply enough on developing speaking and listening activities to promote pupils' language skills to help them to become better readers and writers. Provision for enrichment activities is good. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There are good systems to identify the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and as a result, these pupils are well supported in their learning with challenging targets. Less effective use is made of tracking systems to ensure higher attaining pupils are guided to reach the levels of which they are capable, especially in writing. Group targets do not always give pupils a clear picture of what to aim for in order to reach the next stages in their learning.

Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory. Attendance figures are still below the national average, but they have improved. Along with outside agencies, the school is working hard to encourage parents to send their pupils to school regularly.

Leadership and management of the school and its capacity to improve are satisfactory. However, while the school's overall self-evaluation of what it needs to do to improve is sound, in a number of respects, it has graded itself more generously than the inspection findings. The headteacher and her deputy are not rigorous enough in their evaluation of the school's performance. Core subject leaders lack the opportunities to monitor their areas effectively. Governance is satisfactory. While the governing body is supportive and diligent in liaising with other agencies to care for the many complex needs of pupils, they do not have the systems in place to monitor the school's academic performance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When they arrive in Nursery, the skills and knowledge of many children are very low. Many have poor speaking and listening skills, and some aspects of their personal development are poor. They make satisfactory progress, and this continues through their time in Reception classes. There is a smooth transition between these classes. Children respond appropriately to the expectations of how they should behave. Teaching, learning, and the curriculum are satisfactory; extensive use is made of the indoor and outdoor spaces where children take part in a wide range of activities. They grow in confidence and begin to work together, learning to share equipment and to take part in group activities. Leadership and management are satisfactory. While regular checks are made of how well children are doing, there is insufficient focus on developing children's speaking skills to help them to communicate clearly. Parents are encouraged to take a keen interest in helping their children. Only a very small proportion of the children reach the levels expected of this age by the end of the Reception year. The exception to this is that most achieve the expected levels in their physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give a greater emphasis in teachers' planning to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills in the drive to improve standards in reading and writing.
- Improve the use of target setting so that teachers and pupils have a clear view of what they are aiming to achieve, particularly in writing for the more able pupils.
- Improve the rigour by which the senior and middle managers monitor the work of the school and use this information to improve the quality of teaching and the pace of learning

A small proportion of 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

Throughout Years 1 and 2, achievement is satisfactory overall. In 2006, the standards pupils reached by the end of Year 2 were below average overall but progress from their starting points was satisfactory. Provisional results for 2007 indicate a similar pattern but with an improving picture for mathematics. Achievement is good for those pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities. However, the more able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable, especially in writing where they failed to meet the targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral and social development, is satisfactory. Cultural awareness is good and is promoted successfully through art, music and dance. The school provides an environment in which pupils feel safe, happy and respected. Pupils know there is an adult they can turn to if they are worried. Incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of healthy life styles, although sometimes their lunch boxes do not reflect this. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Although, there are variations depending on how interested and engaged pupils are by the task. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community

through activities such as helping the elderly and fund raising for charities. Below average standards in English and mathematics, hinder pupils' development for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is good teaching but not yet enough to speed up pupils' progress and improve standards generally. While lesson planning is satisfactory, in some classes, it does not take sufficient account of the widely varying stages of development that pupils have reached. Too often, the depth of planning gives insufficient prompts for the teacher. This is particularly so in focusing on the improvements necessary to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and to evaluate, through questioning, the learning that has taken place. Where good teaching is seen, questioning is thoughtful and probing, but this is not happening enough. Small group work rarely gives good opportunities for the pupils to take account of one another's views, which would also contribute to developing their speaking and listening skills. Teachers plan a range of activities and sometimes use these to challenge pupils of different capabilities, but this is not always consistently so for the more able.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory programme for learning that is broad, and generally suitably balanced. Long and medium-term planning is in place but senior managers are not sufficiently involved in monitoring day-to-day planning to know when there are shortcomings. The displays in classrooms and around the school are attractive and enhance the pupils' understanding of life outside the immediate community. A good range of enrichment activities enhances pupils' understanding of dance, drama, music and art. Visits to places in the locality, and a diverse range of visitors to the school, broaden the pupils' views of community and national issues. The school is successful in developing pupil's awareness of safe and healthy living through its lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pastoral support is good. Child Protection procedures and arrangements for safeguarding pupils' are robust. Teaching assistants make a sound contribution to pupils' learning and behaviour management. Although, in some classes they are set mundane tasks and not engaged sufficiently in supporting pupils' learning. The school is developing ways in which it can further engage parents' in supporting their children's learning.

There are inconsistencies in the support and guidance that pupils receive for their academic development. There are sound systems for assessing and tracking the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Additionally, the good level of support they receive enables them to reach and sometimes exceed their personal targets. For other pupils, while some are clear about how well they are doing and what it is they need to do to improve their work, this is not so in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There is a common sense of purpose among all staff and the governing body to raise attendance. Good links exist with outside agencies to support the school's work and to promote community cohesion. Tracking systems make it possible to identify and address areas of weakness for the pupils with learning difficulties and this area is well led and managed. For other pupils, especially the higher attaining pupils, there is not enough rigour in the school's analysis of tracking information. Furthermore, senior managers are not allocating sufficient time and training opportunities to subject leaders in order that they can develop their skills in evaluating the school's work and thus raise the pace of improvement.

Governance is satisfactory. While the governing body is actively involved in promoting pupils' personal development, they are not taking a sufficient lead in monitoring pupils' academic development.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Oakwood Infant School Clacton-on-Sea CO15 2AH

As you know a team of inspectors came to your school recently to carry out an inspection. We really enjoyed meeting you. This letter is to thank you for helping us with our work.

Most of you enjoy coming to school and all the classrooms and corridors are colourful and bright. You are generally well behaved and are eager to take part, especially when lessons are interesting. Those of you who struggle a little with your learning are doing well. All of the adults in the school and the governors make sure you are safe and settle happily in school. You enjoy a good range of extra activities.

We have asked the school to make sure all of you do as well as you can in all subjects because we feel you can do better, especially in your writing. That is why we have asked the school to make sure that there are more opportunities for you to use your speaking and listening skills to help in this. We have also asked that the targets set for you help you to know more clearly, what you are working towards. Finally, we have asked that the teachers who are in charge of subjects should check up on how well you are doing and how your teachers can help you to make better progress.

We wish you all the best for the future,

Kathleen Yates, Keith Gilbert and Janet Tomkins

(Inspectors)