

The Orchard Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117155
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312519
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

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	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alec Thomas
Headteacher	Mr David Bent
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2003
School address	Gammons Lane Watford Hertfordshire WD24 5JW
Telephone number	01923 672280
Fax number	01923 681310

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Orchard Primary School is of a similar size to most other primary schools and serves the local community of north Watford. The majority of pupils are from White British families. An above average proportion is from minority ethnic groups and many pupils learn English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties is lower than average. The present headteacher is retiring at the end of the academic year and a new headteacher has been appointed for September 2008. The school gained the Active Mark in 2007 and is currently working towards the Healthy Schools award.

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 judges itself to be effective and the inspectors agree. Parents speak well of the school and praise the quality of education it provides, commenting, 'The credit goes to the school for creating and maintaining such a happy, positive environment for everybody.'

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and achieve well, and continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 6. In 2007, standards were above average at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics and well above average in science. They are currently average in Year 6 in all three subjects. Pupils reach good standards in art and design, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT), which shows good improvement since the previous inspection. Handwriting and the presentation of work are areas for improvement, however, because pupils' skills are not sufficiently developed and there is no whole-school policy or scheme to guide teaching and learning.

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy learning and increase their personal skills successfully because they do their best to meet the teachers' high expectations. This results in some excellent attitudes and behaviour amongst the oldest pupils. They know how to stay safe and healthy, and most attend regularly. Staff provide good care, support and guidance so that pupils do well and develop a good sense of responsibility as they grow, carrying out many jobs to contribute to the community, such as participating in the school council.

The school's good teaching helps pupils to make effective progress. Lessons are often lively and pupils have a good grounding in most basic skills. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and the curriculum is planned well. Teachers manage classes effectively, setting a good pace and ensuring that pupils find learning interesting, although marking in some classes does not give pupils enough advice on how to improve their work. Plenty of after-school activities include a wide range of clubs and sports.

The school has improved well since it was last inspected. Good management has led to an increased use of assessment that has helped to maintain standards and increase attendance. This improvement has stemmed from good leadership, management and governance, as well as strong staff commitment. This gives the school good capacity to improve further. Senior leaders are managing the transition period carefully to ensure that the school runs smoothly during the period of the change of headteachers. The roles of the subject leaders are not fully developed to include regular evaluations of provision based on assessments of how well pupils are doing.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter with very limited skills in personal, social and emotional development, and in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress and achieve well because they have good opportunities to increase their skills. Trusting relationships exist between adults and children, and parents value the ease with which children settle into the caring, well-managed environment. As a result, standards are close to those expected nationally in most of the six areas of learning by the end of Reception. Children do particularly well in developing their social skills. This is because the quality of teaching and curricular planning is good and so children become confident enough to make choices and enjoy organised activities. The outdoor area is used well, although the covered area does not extend fully to include the Reception

area, which limits its use at times. Staff keep a careful watch on how well children are doing and ensure the specialist support for early language learners and those who find learning difficult has a good effect on their progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in pupils' presentation of work by improving their handwriting skills.
- Improve the quality of teachers' marking so that pupils are given advice on how to improve their work.
- Extend the roles of the subject leaders to include regular evaluations of provision that are linked to assessments of how well pupils are doing in each subject.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout their time in the school. They do well to reach the standards expected nationally by the end of Year 2 in reading, mathematics and science. By Year 6, the results of the national tests show that standards have been maintained well over the last five years and were above average in 2007 at the end of Key Stage 2. They are currently average in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, and good in art and design, design and technology and ICT. Pupils in Year 6 are making good progress from their starting points. Handwriting standards are inconsistent across the school, exacerbated by poor pencil grip. Pupils who learn to speak English as an additional language do well because they are integrated successfully in activities and supported by caring and knowledgeable staff who do their best to help them. Those who need extra help with their learning are also making good progress and achieve well. The school's good focus on pushing up the achievement of boys is bearing fruit and they are now doing well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy school because, 'Everyone is really friendly and lessons are good'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils confirm that behaviour is good, although sometimes the enthusiasm of younger pupils spills over into calling out in lessons. Older pupils say that behaviour has improved, and records show a decline in playground incidents. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Effective lessons in personal, social and health education, science and physical education (PE) ensure that pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. The good focus on developing literacy, numeracy, ICT and social skills prepares pupils well for the next phase of their schooling and adult life. Increasing opportunities for pupils to take responsibility as school councillors or play leaders equip them well with the skills they need to contribute effectively to their community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good work of the teachers and teaching assistants means that learning moves on effectively. Teachers' excellent relationships with their classes lead to lessons that are based on high expectations of behaviour. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to inspire and

set examples for pupils. As a result, levels of enjoyment are often high and learning proceeds at a good pace. Teaching is occasionally excellent at the upper end of Key Stage 2, when lively activities hold the pupils' attention and ensure that they progress exceptionally well, especially in their willingness to participate. Lesson plans state clearly what pupils of different abilities need to learn, particularly for boys and early language learners. Marking is too variable however; it is good in some classes. It is not in others, because it does not give pupils enough clear advice on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides an interesting range of activities. It maintains a good balance between subjects, and pupils produce some very effective artwork. Good links with local sports colleges enhance provision for PE, which is popular with pupils. The school provides a good range of after-school clubs and visits related to pupils' studies to help bring learning to life. Teachers make good use of literacy, numeracy and ICT to aid learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 5 used computers to develop their literacy skills and those in Year 1 used them to find out about Victorian homes. The school has worked effectively to improve attendance. The lack of a policy and scheme of work for handwriting means that the presentation of pupils' work is inconsistent and sometimes untidy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They are confident that staff deal well with any concerns or worries that they may have, such as any rare instances of bullying. The required procedures to ensure pupils' protection and welfare are in place. The school has good systems for identifying the needs of individuals and providing extra support where it is needed. Effective systems to check how well pupils are learning lead to good progress. Although staff set targets for learning, these are not always well understood by pupils or written up in their books. The school's strong focus on social development leads to a very happy and harmonious school with confident well-adjusted pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides excellent pastoral support for the school. He nurtures the professional development of staff very carefully and encourages them to do well. This dedicated leadership is reflected in the friendly, calm and welcoming nature of the school and the good achievement of the pupils, as well as strong teamwork amongst staff. The headteacher works very well with the deputy headteacher and, together, they are steering the school successfully through its transition period before the headteacher retires. They monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely and evaluate performances accurately. The subject leaders manage their subjects suitably, although they do not conduct their own regular evaluations of pupils' achievements. Governance is good. The governors fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and actively support the school.

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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 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	2
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

19 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Orchard Primary School, Watford, WD24 5JW

Thank you for making us feel so welcome during our visit to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing you talk about your work and your school. Here are a few things we found out.

We think you go to a good school and your parents agree. The teachers and teaching assistants care about you and look after you well. They are good at teaching you and helping if you find lessons hard or are learning to speak English as a new language. You have plenty of interesting things to do in lessons and you make good progress.

You behave well and work hard in lessons. You have plenty of things to do after school and you enjoy learning. It was good to hear that you help by doing lots of jobs around the school and that the school council has lots of ideas to help make things better.

The headteacher, staff and governors all work together well to make sure that the school runs smoothly and they keep looking for ways to help you learn even more things. We think that they should help you to improve your handwriting and encourage you to try harder by giving you more advice when they mark your work. We also think that the teachers who look after each of the subjects should think about all the things they do and compare them to how well you learn. You can help by continuing to work hard and coming to school regularly.

We hope that you go on enjoying school.

Dr Anna Coyle

Lead inspector