

The Oaks Community Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118483
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312958
Inspection date	25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Cooper
Headteacher	Theresa Mills
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	Gore Court Road Sittingbourne ME10 1GL
Telephone number	01795 423619
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Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage and the progress being made in Nursery and Reception, especially by higher attaining children • standards and progress in Years 1 and 2, especially in mathematics, and the impact of teaching on raising achievement • the impact of leadership and management, particularly through school initiatives for improving standards. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with pupils and staff, review of the assessment data the school uses to track the progress the pupils make, and analysis of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work 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

The Oaks is a large infant school with a nursery. It has a specialist speech and language unit which is shared with the junior school on the same site. The unit is jointly managed by the two schools and currently has 13 infant pupils aged between five and seven years. Nearly all children are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is very high. Most of these pupils have speech and language difficulties whilst a minority have emotional and behavioural problems. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Eco-Schools 'Green Flag' and Primary Geography Quality Mark Silver awards.

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. Pupils receive excellent levels of care and this is a major reason why their personal development is excellent and their behaviour is good. They do well academically because the development of basic skills is given high priority. From the earliest age, pupils have strong opportunities to develop their creative and sporting skills. Learning opportunities in geography are extremely good. Pupils thoroughly like school because they learn in a happy and attractive environment and teachers make learning enjoyable. The great majority of parents hold the school in high regard. As one parent says, 'I couldn't be happier with the standards of education and care my children receive. The staff are very dedicated.'

Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception and standards are above average on entry to Year 1. Standards by the end of Reception have improved this year although higher attaining children do not always do as well as they should in writing and calculation aspects of mathematics. Progress continues to be good in Key Stage 1. By the time they leave Year 2, pupils reach above average standards in reading and writing and average standards in mathematics. These standards also include pupils in the speech and language unit. This causes a drop in the overall results, although the degree of this varies from year to year. Pupils make excellent progress in writing and by Year 2, pupils write very well for a good range of purposes, with neat handwriting and good spelling. Their poetry is most imaginative and pupils use words creatively to express their ideas and feelings.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to this. Pupils in the speech and language unit make good progress because they are given the right balance between developing their personal and academic abilities. There are very systematic arrangements for them to integrate with mainstream classes.

At the heart of the school's success is the very good leadership of the headteacher. She is well supported by other senior leaders and has built a strong team that is fully committed to improving the all round education for each pupil. There are good systems for ensuring middle managers play a full part in managing and monitoring their areas of responsibility. Thorough arrangements for checking how well the school is performing have led to the school having a realistic and accurate evaluation of its performance. This has led to the school increasing the time spent on the direct teaching of basic skills in Reception. Governors are very well led and they have systematic programmes for monitoring the impact of initiatives on raising achievement.

The quality of teaching and learning are good. Classrooms are attractive learning environments with stimulating displays of pupils' work. Teachers manage their pupils extremely well and use interactive whiteboards and other learning resources very effectively to engage pupils' interest. Pupils like the variety of approaches teachers adopt and the fun ways they use to motivate them to learn. Setting arrangements in Year 2 for writing have accelerated pupils' progress because teachers are able to match work very accurately to the very wide range of learning needs. The strengthening of teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics has led to good teaching and learning in this subject, including problem solving. However, in Reception there are a few occasions when work is too easy for higher attaining children. Academic guidance and target setting are good with very effective systems in Key Stage 1. However, the school is fully aware that, in Reception, recording systems do not enable teachers and school leaders to

easily check children's progress. This gets in the way of them quickly making any improvements that might be needed.

Outstanding pastoral provision promotes pupils' great enthusiasm for school, their sense of security and excellent relationships. Their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced through strong links with local churches and a well thought out programme of assemblies, visits and social events. Vulnerable pupils, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are very well catered for. There are excellent links with outside agencies to ensure they are given every opportunity to succeed. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to both the school and wider community as they act as members of the school council and perform duties around the school. They are particularly effective in their 'eco' work, including litter picking, recycling and conserving energy. Initiatives such as links with a school in Uganda and pupils' part in raising money for many charities enable them to develop their understanding of other countries and other people's lives.

The curriculum is broad and stimulating education with rich opportunities in art and design, music and sport. Subjects are linked together very imaginatively and pupils' learning often has a practical starting point. Successful links with other schools enrich pupils' learning as well. Pupils really understand the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and participate enthusiastically in the good range of after school clubs.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Almost all children who attend the Nursery go on to join the school's Reception year. However, nearly half the Reception children have not attended the school's Nursery. Children's overall attainment on entry is broadly as expected but a significant minority have limited speaking and personal skills. Home visits prior to children starting in the Nursery create good relationships with parents and ease children smoothly into school. Children settle happily due to the excellent induction procedures. Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception although higher attaining children could still do better in writing and calculation. Teaching is good overall but, occasionally, work is not matched closely enough to the needs of higher attainers. Throughout the Foundation Stage there are excellent opportunities for children to develop their speaking and personal skills with some exceptional opportunities for independent learning through play. There is now a good balance between adult led learning and child initiated activities because the school has stepped up the time spent on direct teaching of basic skills in Reception. This occurred because assessment data indicated some past underachievement in literacy and numeracy. Assessment systems are satisfactory. The accuracy of teachers' assessment has improved this year. However, the school is fully aware that recording systems do not enable teachers to readily check children's progress. Outdoor learning opportunities are very good and indoor role play is of a high quality.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Raise higher attaining children's achievement in Reception, especially in writing and calculation, by making sure their work is always challenging.
- In Reception, improve recording systems for assessment so that children's progress can be readily evaluated and, where necessary, 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?	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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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

25 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Oaks Community Infant School, Sittingbourne ME10 1GL

Thank you for being so welcoming and helping me when I came to inspect your school to find out how well you are getting on. I particularly enjoyed visiting your lessons, looking at your work and talking with you.

You told me your school is a good school and I agree. Here are the reasons why:

- You make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You have really good opportunities for geography, sport, art and music.
- Those of you in the speech and language unit make good progress and have good opportunities to join in with children in The Oaks.
- You have some great ideas and show these through your poetry and art work.
- You behave well, work hard and enjoy school. This makes your school a happy one.
- Your eco work is impressive and you are helping to take care of your world.
- Your headteacher, governors and staff have made your school a caring and attractive place and are making sure you get a good education.

Here are the things I am asking the school to improve:

- In Reception, make sure those of you who learn quickly are always given hard enough work in writing and number problems.
- Use a better way of recording how well you are doing in Reception so your teachers and school leaders can help you to make even better progress.

You can help your teachers by making sure you continue to work hard at improving your reading, writing and mathematics.

Thank you again for being so helpful.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick Lead Inspector