

Oakham CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120181
Local Authority	Rutland
Inspection number	313547
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Marina Gough

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	274
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Tummon
Headteacher	Mrs Joan Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Road Oakham Rutland LE15 6EF
Telephone number	01572722404
Fax number	01572724337

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated close to the town centre and attracts pupils from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is high. Most of the pupils are of White ethnicity. The percentage of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average, but this does not reflect the true levels of deprivation that exist within the school as a whole. The school has a special educational needs unit that caters for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties and also pupils who have autism. All of the pupils in the unit have statements. Pupils in the unit are accommodated in two classes within the main building and are very much a part of the school. Within the main school, the percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties is average. Pupils join the Early Years Foundation Stage when they are four years old, and their attainment on entry varies from year to year and ranges from average to below average. The school has achieved the Activemark and Healthy Schools Award in recent years. There is a separate onsite nursery and out-of-school club, which is not managed by the governing body.

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 outstanding features in some areas of its work. The school has made good progress since its last inspection both in terms of addressing the issues raised and its own priorities for improvement. The staff team is vibrant, enthusiastic and keen to keep the school moving forwards. As a result of outstanding leadership by the headteacher, and the imagination of staff, the school is very well placed for continued improvement.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, reflecting a recent trend of improvement. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Assessment data show that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Key Stage 2 pupils currently make good progress from their different starting points, especially those who have been in school from the Reception class. However, within Key Stage 2 there are very high levels of mobility, and the impact of pupils joining and leaving the school has an adverse impact on the overall picture of standards. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are showing signs of continued improvement, especially in English, where there are real strengths in pupils' writing. Mathematics continues to be an area of whole-school development. Some pupils lack awareness of what a reasonable answer looks like when problem solving, and some are not sufficiently agile when making mental calculations.

Teaching is good and some outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. Lessons are well paced and activities well matched to the needs of individual learners. Excellent tracking systems now enable staff to pinpoint when individual pupils are not making the expected progress and to intervene appropriately. However, although the tracking systems are excellent, they are relatively new and so are still not having their optimum impact. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils are confident, keen to share their ideas, and bubbling with enthusiasm in lessons. They know how to stay safe and to maintain healthy lifestyles and they thoroughly enjoy their learning. Pupils with severe behavioural and learning difficulties are integrated very well within classes and are given the high levels of support they need to overcome their difficulties.

The school provides a good curriculum that is enriched with an excellent range of additional learning opportunities. However, because of the focus on literacy and numeracy over recent years, the 'arts' subjects, including music, art, drama and design and technology have been marginalised. The school is working towards making its curriculum more imaginative and creative and recognises that more use could be made of the long morning sessions now that standards in literacy and numeracy are beginning to rise. Residential visits are provided for Year 4 and Year 6 pupils and these do much to promote their social and emotional development. The school provides exceptional levels of pastoral support for all pupils, enabling them to overcome barriers to learning.

The overall leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. She is reflective, full of ideas and able to motivate other staff. She very much leads from the front, and seeks and takes on board the views of staff, pupils and parents so that the school is dynamic and responsive. The team of middle managers is beginning to have a good impact on the school's life and work, but the individual and collective roles of these staff are not yet fully developed. Governors are hard working and committed, and provide an excellent strategic overview for the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the Early Years Foundation Stage their attainment is average overall, although some children have poorly developed number, language and social skills. The Reception children make good progress and attain at least the age-expected level by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching is good. The support staff and teaching staff are sensitive in their interventions, moving children's learning on without overly interfering. Language, number and social skills are given an appropriately high priority. Whilst there is generally a good balance between adult-directed and child-led activities, there are times when adult-directed activities are too long and children start to become a little restless. Assessment information is used very well to track the children's progress, and those with learning difficulties are identified quickly so that they can be given the additional support they need. The welfare arrangements for the children are good and every effort is taken to ensure their safety and well-being. The accommodation is satisfactory but has some constraints which staff work around well. For example, one of the classes does not have direct access onto the small outside play area. Work on the new school building will start within a few months and so there are rightly no plans for modifying or improving the current accommodation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils by making better use of the long morning teaching sessions and giving the 'arts' subjects more prominence.
- Raise standards in mathematics further by ensuring that pupils of all ages have fast mental recall and the ability to check the reasonableness of their answers when making calculations and solving problems.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have been a main area of focus over recent years and some of the hard work that staff have put in is finally starting to show results. For the first time in many years standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, representing good progress for these pupils. In Key Stage 2, standards are picking up, but for the current Year 6 group are close to the national average in English, mathematics and science. The initiatives that are bearing fruit in Key Stage 1 have yet to work through Key Stage 2 and so standards are not as high for the current Year 6 group as are predicted for subsequent groups of Key Stage 2 pupils. In addition, there have been extremely high levels of mobility in the current Year 6 group, with only just over one quarter of pupils having been in school since the Reception class. Key Stage 2 pupils of all abilities, including those with moderate and severe learning difficulties, make good progress.

The school's new assessment tracking system is proving to be a most useful tool in terms of raising standards. Teachers use the information when matching work to pupils' needs, and to identify pupils who are not progressing at the expected rate. Intervention strategies are put in place for groups of pupils who need an extra boost, and these have a very positive impact on learning and on the pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy coming to school and relationships are excellent. Behaviour is exemplary, both in lessons and around the school, giving rise to a calm, relaxed and highly productive learning environment. Pupils feel safe. They say that bullying is rare and that occasional incidents are swiftly dealt with. Attendance is in line with the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is exceptionally low.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school has a strong ethos of respect and consideration for others which permeates all activities. Pupils contribute to the school and wider community by becoming members of the class councils and by their frequent input into school assemblies. They are active in organising fund-raising events for charities. In lessons, there are many opportunities for them to learn independently and to evaluate their own learning. Pupils are aware of the need for a healthy diet and the importance of exercise and safe play. Residential visits contribute strongly to their confidence and self-esteem. They are well prepared for the practicalities of finance by a curriculum which is becoming increasingly relevant to their needs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is mostly lively, pacy and exciting. Teachers and support staff form a very effective team and together provide a wide range of skills and expertise. In most lessons activities are very closely matched to the needs of individual pupils. Occasionally pupils spend too much time listening to the input of their teacher and not enough time engaged in activities. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is a strength, and the training of several teaching assistants in this subject has had a very positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers provide very well for pupils with learning difficulties, ensuring that pupils from the Special Educational Needs Unit can be included in a wide range of mainstream activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that meets statutory requirements. However, currently not enough time is given to subjects such as art, drama, music and design and technology because of the significant amount of time that is given to literacy and numeracy. Now that standards are starting to improve in these areas the school is looking at ways of making the curriculum more lively and exciting and recognises that better use could be made of the long morning teaching sessions. The range of additional learning opportunities provided by the school is excellent. Pupils talk with exceptionally high levels of enthusiasm about residential trips, and benefit greatly from the opportunities these trips provide. Visits within the locality strengthen the pupils' knowledge of their local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils receive outstanding care, guidance and support. The rigorous procedures for child protection comply with statutory requirements and there is great emphasis on health and safety. Pupils learn and play in a very caring and secure environment. The school actively elicits the views of pupils and encourages them to take responsibility. Procedures to improve attendance are robust and consistently applied. A comprehensive programme of personal, health and social education, enhanced by visiting experts, ensures that pupils are encouraged to stay healthy and safe. Through the Pyramid Club the school actively builds up confidence and self-esteem. Pupils who have particular learning needs or difficulties are well supported and a range of outside agencies augment the considerable expertise and commitment of the staff. Pupils are given excellent guidance about how they can improve their work through discussion, marking and the setting of targets. Pupils are very clear about what they have to do to make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and she has established a clear and imaginative direction for the school. She is well supported by senior managers who work very effectively together to ensure that challenging targets are set and achieved. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate and takes due account of the views of parents and pupils. The school keeps in contact with parents through frequent newsletters, homework diaries and curriculum summaries. Despite this, a minority of parents take the view that communication is not adequate. This view was not borne out by the inspection findings. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and programmes are agreed with teachers to improve their practice. This process is underpinned by a number of strategies such as peer observation to ensure that the best teaching can be seen by all. The governing body is outstanding. Members provide challenge to managers and they are well informed about the school's strengths and how it needs to improve. Governors have a clear strategic view of the way the school is to develop. Leaders are committed to promoting a cohesive community. This has been very successful within the school and there have been a number of initiatives to ensure that pupils become aware of the national and international dimensions. The school is aware that this is an ongoing area for development.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	1

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakham CofE Primary School, Oakham, LE15 6EF

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school a short time ago. We were very pleased to see how much you enjoy your learning and how well you get on with one another. Your behaviour is excellent.

The teachers and staff care very much for your well-being and do what they can to keep you safe, and help you to learn how to be healthy. You told us that you enjoy all subjects and especially look forward to going on residential trips. We have asked your teachers to see if they can find more time for you to do art, music, design and technology and drama by perhaps shortening some of the literacy and numeracy sessions which are a bit long.

The standard of your work in English, mathematics and science when you leave school at the end of Year 6 is improving and is average overall. The school has put in place a number of ideas to help to raise standards further and they are working very well. However, there is still more that you can do to help yourselves get better at mathematics by learning number facts so you can quickly recall them, and by checking your sums more carefully. You all make good progress and we were pleased to see that in class you all take a good part in lessons and are not afraid of making mistakes. We think your teachers do a good job in making activities exciting and challenging so that they are interesting for you.

We think your headteacher is doing an excellent job in improving the school and she has a lot of help from the teachers and support staff. The governors are also very effective and we are pleased that they look ahead to make sure their plans continue to match the needs of the school and its pupils.

Yours sincerely

Marina Gough

Lead inspector