

Oatlands Community Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121431
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	313987
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Les Schubeler

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	301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hilary Goodier
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Beechwood Grove Harrogate North Yorkshire HG2 8QP
Telephone number	01423 872827
Fax number	01423 872358

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Oatlands Community Junior School is a popular, larger than average school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Each year group comprises two classes; in addition, there are two mixed age classes, one for pupils in Years 3 and 4, and the other for Years 5 and 6. The school received the Gold Artsmark award in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's own evaluation that this is a good school which has developed well since the last inspection and provides good value for money. Parents are very supportive of the school because it 'takes an active interest in all the children and their welfare' and 'the children are so proud of their school and want to do their best for themselves and for the teachers'.

Pupils' good personal development is strengthened by the caring ethos of the school so that pupils learn in an environment which promotes respect for all. They understand the need to live healthily. They respond positively to the school's system of rewards and sanctions, which they accept as fair; as a result, they feel safe and behave well. By the time they leave the school most pupils are confident and well rounded. Although their independence both in their learning and their contribution to the school community is, for the most part, underdeveloped, they are increasingly prepared for adult life and, importantly, can empathise with the needs and situations of others.

Pastoral care is strong and pupils are looked after well. Academic guidance is not yet developed fully and pupils are still coming to terms with an appreciation of the value of aiming for specific targets in their learning.

Pupils build well on the high standards they have reached in the infant school and continue to make good progress through Years 3 to 6. The standards that they attain by the end of Year 6 are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. A greater proportion of pupils attain higher levels in all three subjects than is found nationally. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because the support that they are given is clearly focused on their specific needs. Pupils enjoy learning, work hard and want to do well. Such positive attitudes contribute valuably to their progress. Effective teaching is central to the progress that pupils are making. Pupils are enthusiastic about the quality of teaching and there is a growing trend among teachers to provide activities that challenge the most able pupils. However, assessment data are not used often enough to enable all pupils to understand how to improve their personal performance.

The good curriculum is an important factor in enabling pupils to achieve well. A particular strength is the outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities that offers pupils many chances to discover new talents and develop their skills, most noticeably in music and the arts. This is reflected in the award to the school of the Gold Artsmark.

Integral to the school's performance is the good leadership and management of the headteacher, supported effectively by the senior team. Their accurate evaluation of the school's actions has resulted in a clear focus for school improvement. Realistic but challenging targets are set for individuals and for the school as a whole. Careful restructuring of staff responsibilities has led to more efficient monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. The successful teamwork of staff is strengthening the performance of the school, aided by strong governance. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and hold the school to account. Following on from the action taken to remedy identified weaknesses, there is a good capacity to improve further and the school is well placed to move forward with confidence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop greater independence in their learning and in their contribution to the school community.
- Ensure that pupils become secure in their understanding of the steps they need to take in order to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Although results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007 were not as high as in previous years, they were above average. In English, pupils reached higher standards in reading than in writing. The school has since made a detailed analysis of the data. It has identified areas where there is greatest need of improvement, particularly in writing and some aspects of mathematics. Measures have been put in place to remedy the weaknesses and they are being rigorously monitored by the school's leaders. Although it is too early to assess sustained effectiveness, there are encouraging signs of improvements in pupils' work during this academic year. Equally rigorous attention is paid to the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their specific needs are identified and appropriate support programmes are introduced for them. The success of these programmes ensures that they, too, make good progress from their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Rates of attendance are good, despite the small number of parents who take their children on holiday during term time. Good attendance reflects pupils' enjoyment in coming to school. Pupils talk eagerly about healthy lifestyles. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enhance their spiritual and cultural development, for example, by visiting places of worship of different faiths. They develop useful social and teamwork skills which, coupled with their good literacy and numeracy standards, prepare them well for the future. Through an active school council, pupils make valued contributions to the school community. They take great pride in the impact of their work, which includes a project to redevelop the school playground and enthusiastic support for a range of charities. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop independence through their own initiatives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned, learning tasks and activities being well matched to the needs of the pupils. Learning is enhanced by well utilised resources and the effective contribution made by teaching assistants. Teachers manage behaviour well so that relationships between adults and pupils are secure. Teachers regularly check pupils' progress and are beginning to use this information to set targets for improvement. Learning objectives are shared with pupils and this helps to keep them focused, but pupils are not yet using these to take some responsibility for their own learning. The marking of work is beginning to show pupils how successfully they have met objectives and make clear what the next steps are in their learning. This practice, however, is not yet consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Provision for literacy and numeracy is good overall. The small number of deficiencies in some aspects of the writing and mathematics curricula are being addressed, with early signs of success. Provision for pupils with particular gifts and talents is developed well through the staging of exciting events such as arts week and musical and drama productions. Residential visits to an outdoor activities centre help Year 6 pupils to develop teamwork skills that prepare them well for the future. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for, enabling them to achieve as well as their peers. A well planned two-year curriculum, coupled with investment in an extra teacher for the mathematics and English lessons for these pupils, pays dividends in ensuring that the needs of all pupils in the two mixed age classes are met. Productive partnerships with other schools strengthen the curriculum, for example, in modern foreign languages. Pupils' knowledge of the wider world is enhanced through themed weeks that allow them to experience different types of music, food, art and language from around the world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Links with outside support agencies and health professionals are strong. Good arrangements are made to help pupils settle into the school before they start Year 3 and prepare them for going to secondary schools at the end of Year 6. Child protection systems, safeguarding, health and safety checks and risk assessments in advance of school trips are all in place. The school has created a supportive climate and pupils say they 'feel lucky to go to this school'. Staff work effectively with parents and a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the help they need and make good progress. Procedures to monitor and track pupils' progress towards their targets are thorough and recently reviewed. As a result, systems are still new and not all pupils are familiar with setting and reviewing their own targets to make them consistently aware of what they need to do to work at a higher level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership and imbues her colleagues with a firm commitment to realising the potential of all pupils in their learning and their personal development. Consequently, there is a clear vision and direction to the work of the school. Careful and regular monitoring and accurate evaluation of the school's work have resulted in the allocation of well-defined responsibilities to senior managers. Good improvements have been made in the development of the role of subject leaders so that they make a greater contribution to the monitoring of the work in their designated areas. Rigorous systems for tracking the progress of individual pupils have been put in place and are beginning to impact on teachers' planning of appropriate activities to match pupils' needs. This is promoting pupils' progress, and subject leaders are benefiting from having a common focus in their drive to raise standards.

The school welcomes fresh views and support from outside. The headteacher has a successful record of actively encouraging her staff to undergo training that has not only contributed greatly to their professional development, but has also improved the quality of the school's work. Teachers agree that such training has enabled them to introduce into their everyday work

a wider range of strategies, such as the use of interactive whiteboards, and so helped pupils to enjoy their lessons and achieve well.

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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	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?	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

Inspection of Oatlands Community Junior School, Harrogate, HG2 8QP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the three inspectors who visited your school recently. We would like to thank you for being so courteous and friendly. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to your views about the school. We spent a lot of time finding out how well you learn in your lessons, looking at your work and talking to your headteacher and other staff. We agree with all those of you who told us that Oatlands is a good school.

We think your teachers and teaching assistants care for you and look after you very well. This helps you to keep safe and healthy. It was very pleasing to see that you get on well with one another and all the adults who work with you. We found that you are working well and making good progress. We were impressed by the wide range of clubs and activities that you enjoy so much out of school hours.

We have asked your headteacher to do two things to help the school to improve further. First, teachers need to make sure that you understand more clearly what you need to do next in your work in order to improve. You can help yourselves, too, by making good use of your teachers' advice when it comes your way. Second, we have suggested that you have more opportunities to use your own initiative, both in your learning and in some other activities, such as running the school council. We are confident that you are mature enough to do this successfully.

We are sure that you will carry on enjoying school and continue to build on the improvements that you are making now. Most of all, we hope that you will continue to work hard and help all the staff to make Oatlands an even better school in the future.