

Oakwood Avenue Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131372
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	315791
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne-Marie Berry
Headteacher	Mr Michael Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Oakwood Avenue Warrington Cheshire WA1 3SZ
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school situated near the centre of Warrington. It has a special unit in Key Stage 2 for up to 24 children with moderate learning difficulties. Reception and Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and the Nursery are accommodated in separate buildings. Overall, the social and economic background of the area served by the school is average, although there are areas of significant disadvantage. Most children are of White British heritage. There are a small number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds. These children speak English fluently. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average, although the majority of these children attend the unit. The school has been awarded the Healthy Schools Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to children's achievement and the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

The school was last inspected in 2004 when it was judged to be a good school. One of the key issues from the last inspection was to raise standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 1 to 6. The standards now achieved in English at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are lower than at the time of the last inspection. The school has failed to make the improvements required. Over the past four years the leadership team has not put sufficient emphasis on checking that children are learning the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics well enough, particularly during their early years in school. As a consequence, too many children leave Oakwood for secondary school not having reached the standards of which they are capable.

Children enter the Nursery with levels of knowledge and understanding that are below those expected for three-year-olds. After four years in school, standards reached are well below those expected for seven-year-olds. This represents inadequate progress. Although achievement overall is inadequate, children currently in Key Stage 2 are making better progress. In the last year the school has started to tackle underachievement in Key Stage 2 effectively. However, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors recognise that there is still much to do in order to ensure that all children achieve well.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is better in Key Stage 2 than in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) and Key Stage 1. There is some good practice from which the teachers can learn; this teaching is generally lively and engaging. Children's attitudes to learning are generally good, but where teaching is unsatisfactory, behaviour deteriorates. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school has recently developed a new curriculum called 'Oaky', based on children answering key questions that require them to work across a range of subjects. Parents and children like the new approach to learning. However, the senior leadership team is not yet linking the standards achieved by children to their evaluation of the new curriculum. The care and support provided for children and their families is good. For example, the nurture room for children who are finding it difficult to cope is effective and the parents' caf, is much appreciated. However, the guidance children receive to help them make good progress in their work is inadequate overall.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been successful in setting a good ethos. Oakwood is a welcoming school. Some innovative, exciting projects help children to enjoy their learning. However, the leadership team has not focused enough on improving children's achievement. Issues from the last inspection have not been dealt with adequately. Because of this, the school is judged ineffective and provides inadequate value for money. The capacity within the school to make the improvements required is satisfactory. This is because the leadership team has already started to improve achievement in Key Stage 2 and has ensured that children's personal development and well-being are good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

Children enter the Foundation Stage with levels of skills and abilities below those expected for three-year-olds. After two years in school, children leave Reception with skills and abilities well below those expected for five-year-olds.

Children settle well in the Nursery and follow the classroom routines happily. They are confident in using all the indoor areas available to them. The opportunity for children to learn independently in Reception through outdoor play is limited. Teaching is satisfactory and relationships between adults and children are good. However, in some activities led by adults, children are not always encouraged to play an active part and this slows their progress.

The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are inadequate. Planning is cursory. It does not show clearly what children are expected to achieve or link teaching to what children already know. Staff do not make regular checks on individual children's progress and planning is not monitored. Consequently, the leadership team is unable to evaluate how well children's skills are developing in all the areas of learning. Induction procedures were improved in 2007 to include a check on what children already know when they enter the Nursery, although this information is not currently used to measure children's progress over time.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Improve standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure teaching and learning is at least of good quality.
- Improve assessment and use it to identify and plan the next steps in children's learning and to better evaluate their progress.
- Make stronger links between school development planning, children's progress and accountability of staff.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate overall and standards attained by children in Key Stage 1 are very low. Children enter Year 1 with levels of knowledge and understanding well below those expected for five-year-olds. Standards are consistently well below the national average by age seven. In 2007 no children reached the higher level (Level 3) in writing and mathematics. The achievement of higher ability children in particular was inadequate. The children currently in Key Stage 1 are working at levels below the national expectation.

Children's achievement in Key Stage 2 is inadequate although there has been recent improvement. Standards at Year 6 fell to their lowest levels in 2006, when a third of the children in the main school did not reach the levels in English and mathematics expected for their age. Standards improved in 2007 and more children reached the levels expected for 11-year-olds. However, the number of children reaching the higher Level 5 was very low. Children currently in Key Stage 2 are making better progress. The senior leadership team is now checking the levels children are working at and linking these to challenging individual targets. It is providing additional support for children who are underachieving and, as a result, the children currently in Key Stage 2 are working at standards closer to the national expectation.

Children with statements of special educational needs in the unit make good progress and achieve better than the other children. Children with identified special educational needs in the main school achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children enjoy school. They are confident when talking to visitors and are able to express their views well. They know about healthy lifestyles and are keen to take part in the sporting activities the school provides. The older children are aware of keeping safe and they enjoy training as play leaders to look after the younger children. Children show concern for the feelings of others. The oldest children are sensible when using the Year 6 common room and other areas of the school. Behaviour is generally good. When it is less than good, it is usually because the teaching is not effective. The school council makes a strong contribution to the community; its sub-committees are active and representatives take their responsibilities seriously. The funding sub-committee of the council has been successful in its charity work. Children manage collaborative work well, practising the negotiation skills needed for adult life. They have good attitudes to learning and are prepared to learn from their mistakes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching observed during the inspection ranged from good to inadequate. In Key Stage 2 teaching is satisfactory or better. A range of teaching quality was seen in Key Stage 1, from unsatisfactory to good. Overall, the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. In all classes the relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and children are good. The best lessons are lively and interesting. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards well to capture the children's attention. Children enjoy their lessons and say they have fun. In Key Stage 2, teachers show a good knowledge of children's learning targets and are becoming more skilled at matching tasks to the children's ability.

Where teaching is less than good, and is sometimes inadequate, teachers spend too long introducing the lesson before the children start their work, limiting the time children have to make progress. In some lessons it was not made clear to children exactly what they should achieve by the end of the lesson and the teacher did not give sufficient guidance on how to complete the task. Occasionally, teachers have not really considered what they are to teach, so their expectations for children's achievement are too low.

In the unit, teaching is consistently good and teachers have high expectations of what the children can achieve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The recent introduction of the innovative 'Oaky Curriculum' is having a positive impact on children's attitudes to learning. Children and parents support this new development; children say it is interesting and they enjoy discovering the answer to Oaky's question. The school has ensured all National Curriculum subjects are covered in the new

approach and that the balance between subjects is appropriate. Enrichment activities include a good range of visits, visitors to school, and blocks of time devoted to particular projects. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and there are opportunities for children to learn through drama, dance and through singing in the choir.

The school is currently revising its planning for basic skills in line with government guidelines. However, progress in implementing improvements is inconsistent. Currently, the progression of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics from Foundation Stage through to Key Stage 1 is not sufficiently well planned or given enough emphasis in lessons. The school has recently introduced staged targets for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science which are helping teachers to focus on the steps in children's learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support the school provides for children are satisfactory. Arrangements to protect and safeguard children and to reduce risks to their health and safety are fully in place. The pastoral care and support the school provides is good. Parents appreciate the efforts the school makes to involve them in their children's learning. The breakfast club, the parents' caf, and the well-being activities such as yoga, are highly regarded. The recently introduced nurture room is providing very high quality care for the most vulnerable children as well as those who join from other schools and the work done to ensure their needs are met is outstanding. The school has forged effective partnerships with other local schools and agencies. One consequence of the partnerships with other agencies is that children with special educational needs are supported particularly well.

The guidance provided to children to improve their work is inadequate. Although marking is regular, it rarely makes clear to children their next steps in learning. Guidance given to children during lessons does not always tell them what they are expected to learn. Children have been set learning targets, but these are not yet used effectively to measure how well children are progressing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has set a good ethos and has been successful in securing children's emotional well-being. The transformation of the building and the introduction of innovative ideas, such as the media suite and mini-cinema, illustrate the level of the leadership's creativity. However, until recently, not enough attention has been given to improving the standards achieved by children.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have complementary skills and are now determined to raise standards and achievement. Challenging new school targets set for Key Stage 2 are linked to a raised expectation of what children are capable of achieving. However, target setting is much less developed in Key Stage 1 and the Foundation Stage. As a consequence improvement in standards in the lower half of the school is negligible. The senior leadership team is beginning to understand the need for increased accountability for the standards achieved by children. Their work is in its early stages and it is not yet having a significant impact in the lower part of the school. Recent arrangements for senior leaders to monitor teaching and learning in lessons are helpful, but not yet frequent enough or sufficiently rigorous to ensure the quality

of teaching and learning improves. Not all senior leaders contribute fully to the school's evaluation of its effectiveness.

The subject leaders are developing their skills well. The effective implementation of the 'Oak Curriculum' shows the capacity and willingness within the staff team to improve the quality of education children receive. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are aware of the fall in standards since the last inspection and are now working effectively with the local authority school improvement partner to hold the school to account for the standards it achieves. The need to improve the quality of its school improvement planning to focus on the outcomes for children in order that all children achieve their potential has been recognised.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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	3
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	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	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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	4
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?	Yes

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

A short while ago I visited your school with Mrs Loughlin and Miss Kenna. I would like to thank you for your welcome on the two days we were at Oakwood. You were very helpful and polite and we enjoyed our visit. I am writing this letter to you to tell you the results of the inspection.

We judged your school to need improvement. You have not had as good an education as you deserve, particularly the youngest children, and the standards of your work have gone down to the point where they are too low.

That is the bad news. There is also good news. We saw that you know how important it is to keep fit and healthy, you make good friends and take responsibility seriously; for example, when you use the Year 6 common room and radio station. Your school provides you with good opportunities to work together on interesting projects, such as the Ultra Mobile Personal Computers and the new 'Oaky Curriculum'. We listened to what you, your parents, the staff and governors had to say. You all said that the school is now improving, particularly in Key Stage 2, and that the school cares for everyone very well. We agree with you. We can see how determined Mr Jackson and your teachers now are to make sure you reach higher standards in your work.

Your teachers will need to make sure that they always teach well and match your work closely to what you need to learn next. Mr Jackson is going to make sure that all of the school's plans for improvement are linked closely to how well you make progress in your work. You have an important part to play by working hard to achieve your best at all times in your lessons.

An inspector will visit in a few months to check on the school's progress. You and your teachers have my very best wishes.