

St Oswald's CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135058
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	319605
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	224
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	Ken Stokes
Headteacher	Barry Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sion Avenue Kidderminster DY10 2YL
Telephone number	01562 751056
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school opened in September 2007 in the building previously occupied by St Oswald's First School, which closed following the local authority's reorganisation of schools in the area. The majority of the staff and almost all the pupils transferred from the first school. Within the Early Years Foundation Stage there is a Reception class for four-year-olds and Nursery provision for three-year-olds in a separate class, some of whom are privately funded. The privately funded element is governed by a group set up on behalf of the school's governing body. The governors also have responsibility for the wrap-around care provision before- and after-school for three- to 11-year-olds.

A new children's centre has been built on the school site but is not reported upon here as it is not the responsibility of the school's governing body. The very large majority of pupils are White British and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is twice the national average, particularly those with speech, language and communication difficulties, and there are more pupils with a statement of special educational needs than usually found in a school of this size.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It has a number of good features but also several important aspects in need of improvement. The most notable strengths are the good achievement by pupils, good teaching and some excellent features within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The headteacher and leadership team have successfully brought those new to the school and those from the original first school together as one staff team within this new school. The school has developed a reasonably accurate view of its performance based on satisfactory monitoring procedures and it is securely placed to improve.

The achievement of pupils is good. The attainment of children on entry is below national expectations for their age but good progress leads to average standards by the end of Year 6. The good overall progress is a direct consequence of the good teaching in almost all classes, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage where there is some outstanding practice, and in Key Stage 2. Teaching in Key Stage 1, whilst generally satisfactory, is less consistent and does not always result in effective learning. This is mainly because behaviour management techniques do not always promote a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere. This is a concern of some parents, and inspectors agree. Within the satisfactory curriculum in Years 1 to 6, the school has taken steps to address the need to increase the opportunities for pupils to develop computer skills and use computers to help with work in other subjects.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Whilst there is a school council and pupils in Year 6 carry out a number of jobs to help around school, pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to take on responsibilities. They report they would like greater opportunities to express their ideas and take initiative. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are satisfactory. There are good arrangements for meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils, helped by effective links with parents and external professionals, providing good additional support to those in greatest need.

Whilst the leadership and management are satisfactory, including governance, some of the important work in establishing policies, effective routines and practices is not fully established. There are good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress but other checks on the school's performance are not always systematically recorded, making it more difficult for school leaders to follow them up. Day-to-day management lacks clarity, for example the schedule and focus of staff meetings, occasionally leading to confusions and impeding the otherwise good development work by skilled subject leaders and individual members of the senior management team. The new governing body is undergoing training and gaining confidence. It is steadily reviewing the full range of school policies but is not sufficiently holding the school to account for its actions.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

All aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and there are some outstanding elements within the teaching and curriculum. These are particularly in relation to the quality and range of opportunities for children to learn through independent play in both the Nursery and the Reception class across all six areas of learning, and the way all the adults work very closely as a team. Parents appreciate this and use phrases such as 'absolutely brilliant' and 'always impressed and pleased with the teachers and their assistants'. Teachers make good use

of the relatively small designated outdoor areas to extend children's experiences. Children's attainment, although varied, is below national expectations overall and a significant minority of children are well below expectations, especially in relation to personal development and their level of early language skills. They make good progress overall with a few making outstanding progress, and by the end of the Reception Year, standards are approaching the national average. There are very sensitively managed induction arrangements for each class and these contribute to the good levels of welfare. The skilful observations and interventions by all the adults help promote the outstanding progress in personal, social and emotional development of the children, many of whom start school with low levels of confidence or awareness of the needs of others. There are frequent smiles and squeals of delight from children learning through role play into which the adults enthusiastically enter, for example on a 'flight to Scotland' or 'living in an igloo'. The leadership structure is not clearly defined but the professional commitment of the team ensures that collectively they are continually striving to further improve provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Adopt a more systematic approach to managing procedures, recording findings from checks on the school and planning meetings, so that all leaders can more efficiently carry out their roles.
- Improve teaching and learning in Key Stage 1, especially in relation to establishing consistently good relationships and behaviour throughout all lessons.
- Provide additional support to enable the governing body to ensure all its policies are being implemented and that it is robustly holding the school to account.
- Find ways of enabling the pupils to use their initiative more and make a greater contribution to the school and wider community.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities have made good progress during their brief time in this school. Many joined the new school with below average levels of attainment for their age. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in small groups, often by well-briefed teaching assistants, and they make good progress. The very good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not fully matched in Key Stage 1, but progress in Key Stage 2 is consistently at least good and in a few instances excellent. Standards at the end of Year 2 were below average in 2008, but these pupils are now making sound progress in Year 3. Pupils currently in Year 2 have made good progress since September and are on track to attain average standards by the end of the year. The school's first group of Year 6 pupils attained average standards in the national tests in 2008. Standards in writing were above the national average, with half the pupils exceeding national expectations for their age. This reflects the particularly good progress in writing, from low levels on entry, and this is being maintained this year. Standards in mathematics were a little below average in the Year 6 tests, but progress in mathematics is accelerating following a whole-school focus on the subject. Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are on track to reach their challenging mathematics targets, which, if attained, would be above national norms for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good whilst their social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have too little awareness of Britain's cultural diversity. Behaviour overall is satisfactory because, although it is good in most lessons, there are some incidents of poor behaviour, particularly on the playground and in Year 1 lessons. Pupils say they enjoy school a lot. Attendance has improved and is close to the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and the importance of eating healthily. They value the sporting and physical activities, such as being in the football club. The school has the Activemark award in recognition of its good work in promoting pupils' interest in keeping fit. There are relatively few opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities to help around school. The school councillors are from the older classes only. They meet relatively infrequently and do not feel they, or pupils generally, have the chance to be proactive in contributing to the life of the school or in the wider community, for example in charity work or caring for one another around school. Pupils are gaining a satisfactory level of skills needed for their future education and adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in the large majority of lessons across the school, with excellent examples, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the learning environment is exceptionally stimulating, and in Key Stage 2. Pupils receive a lot of individual attention. In Years 4 and 6, learning is enhanced by the creation of small parallel classes for part or all of the day. Teachers of these years carefully plan together, as in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to ensure equal opportunities and experiences. In all classes the effective deployment of teaching assistants means that those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the additional support needed. Teachers assess pupils' understanding frequently and use the information well to help plan work that is suitably challenging. They are increasingly involving pupils in assessing their own work and pupils are learning to collaborate well in pairs, as seen in a good Year 6 gymnastics lesson with boys and girls working together on sequences. In some lessons, particularly in Year 1, pupils are not sufficiently inspired or motivated, for example during overlong introductions, and basic behaviour management techniques are not consistently applied. In these lessons, learning slows because of interruptions whilst the teacher attempts to manage individuals' poor behaviour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides opportunities for the active participation and good progress of pupils. A good example of this is the well-structured and systematic approach to teaching writing, reflecting the pupils' interests and needs. Timetables show that the emphasis given to English and mathematics means there is less time for some of the other subjects than usually found, for example music or personal development. The school has recognised that pupils need more opportunities to use computers, and is in the process of introducing equipment for use in classrooms to supplement the time spent in the computer suite. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but there

are fewer planned ways to meet the needs of those pupils who are gifted and talented or to promote pupils' awareness of Britain's cultural diversity. There is a satisfactory range of enrichment activities, some of which are of good quality, for example the vibrant and well-organised after-school club, about which pupils are very positive, and the visit to Cardiff Bay.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The teachers show good commitment to pupils' care. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the school works closely in partnership with parents and external professionals to ensure these pupils receive the support they need. A parent of one such pupil wrote, 'The school has been very helpful.' The school has established a nurture group to help support the small minority of pupils who struggle to behave during less structured times such as the lunch period. Nevertheless, a small minority of parents are not confident the school is vigilant in the way it manages challenging behaviour and some pupils told the inspectors of their concern about worrying behaviour and the way it is not always dealt with by the adults. The school has satisfactory procedures designed to safeguard pupils. The range of guidance for pupils' academic progress is also satisfactory. In some classes, particularly of the older pupils, teachers effectively involve pupils in thinking about the next steps in their learning and how they can improve but this is not established fully across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership team worked effectively to establish a new school vision, involving staff and governors, whilst building on previous practice. Individual members of the leadership team have good ideas and action plans about how to develop their areas of responsibility, for example in improving mathematics or behaviour. However, they are sometimes thwarted by a lack of clearly organised systems, for example the arrangements for planning and recording meetings of the senior management team. This means some time is unnecessarily wasted and it is difficult for leaders subsequently to formally check on how well agreed decisions are being carried out. A strength of the leadership is the thorough way pupils' progress is monitored and tracked by the headteacher, subject leaders and teachers, and the good use that is made of this information to set challenging targets. This is clearly contributing to the pupils' good progress. There is a schedule of checks on other aspects of the school's performance, but the findings of these are not always efficiently maintained or readily accessible. Similarly, the work of the new governing body to review and monitor all the required policies is being hampered through a lack of a clear framework. Recent governor training has helped governors become clearer about their roles, and their experienced leaders have a good understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and are aware of the need for governors to hold the school more to account. The work of the school in promoting community cohesion is satisfactory. The before- and after-school provision and the school's commitment towards acquiring a children's centre on site are two strong aspects of this. However, work towards national and global cohesion is at an earlier stage of 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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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 learners' needs?	2
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

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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?	No

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

12 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Oswald's CofE Primary School, Kidderminster, DY10 2YL

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we recently visited your school in the snow. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing some of your work and are pleased that you enjoy your time in school. St Oswald's Primary is a satisfactory school. There are several things that are good and others that need to improve. Here are some of the highlights we found.

- You work hard in lessons and make good progress with your work, especially with your writing.
- The teachers plan well together and are good at giving you interesting work that is not too difficult or too easy.
- The headteacher, other leaders and class teachers have good ways of checking your progress and working out targets for you to reach by the end of the year.
- The Nursery and Reception classrooms are great places in which to learn with lots of really exciting things to do.
- Nearly all of you behave well in lessons, although not always in Key Stage 1 or on the playground.
- You know about how important it is to stay healthy by eating sensibly and doing lots of exercise. Your school has got a special award, Activemark, because of its good work with this.
- Your school councillors are keen to take on more responsibilities and told us they think many of you, not just the oldest, would like to help out some more.
- All the adults take good care of those of you who need extra support. They work closely with your parents and also other experts to make sure you receive the help you need.

We have asked the headteacher, governors and staff to work together on four things to make the school even better.

- Make sure leaders are always clear about arrangements around school and that meetings and the paperwork are organised better.
- Improve children's behaviour and the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1. This is something those of you in Key Stage 1 can help with by making sure you always do your very best.
- Help the new governors with all their work as they decide how things should be done and the best ways of checking up on how well the school is working.
- Find more ways of giving your school councillors, and you all, the chance to get involved in helping out around school and beyond in the wider community.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly

Lead inspector