

Oak View Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135223
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	319620
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Niel Padley
Headteacher	Mrs Yvonne Davis
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Woods Avenue Hatfield AL10 8NW
Telephone number	01707 344400
Fax number	01707 344403

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school formed from the amalgamation of two primary schools in September 2007. It is on the site of one of the predecessor schools, situated in a large local authority housing estate near the centre of Hatfield. Pupils in the Nursery attend in the mornings only. Most pupils are of White British heritage. About a quarter are from minority ethnic groups. There are 20 pupils of Polish origin and several of these are at early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion claiming free school meals is average. An above average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In its first term, the school was led by a part-time headteacher for four days each week. The headteacher has been in post since January 2008. The school has an Active Mark award.

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 the progress that pupils are making and the standards they achieve, the quality of teaching and learning, the provision in the Foundation Stage and the school's accommodation and grounds.

The findings of the inspection agree with the school's own judgement that its overall effectiveness is inadequate. It is not providing an acceptable standard of education or giving satisfactory value for money. When it opened, several staff lacked experience in teaching pupils of the age group that they were assigned to teach. Consequently, a significant minority of pupils make too little progress from their starting points when they joined the school. With the support given more recently, there has been some improvement in teaching skills. However, teaching is inadequate. Weaknesses in planning remain, and too much of the teaching lacks pace and challenge. Standards at Years 2 and 6 are well below the national average especially in English and mathematics. Children in the Foundation Stage are not making enough progress because too much of the teaching is inadequate, as is the provision overall. There are also weaknesses in the school's accommodation for example, the layout and access to pupils toilets, and hand washing facilities. In their responses to the questionnaire, and in discussions, several parents expressed disappointment that promises made, prior to amalgamation, about refurbishing the school so that it would seem 'new', have not been kept.

The new headteacher has brought strong leadership, particularly a clear sense of direction. She has the confidence of parents and staff. Her expertise and skills have enabled her to identify quickly and accurately what is needed to improve the school. The short-term plan drawn up from this evaluation rightly focuses on accelerating pupils' progress in order to raise standards. Staff and governors are right behind her, and are working hard to implement the plan. Already there are clear signs of improvements in provision, particularly in the learning environment and academic guidance for pupils, although it is too early to see any impact of these on standards. The school has constructive partnerships with the community, including the local authority, which has committed additional financial and human resources to help with improvement. Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall, as is the school's capacity to improve.

Most parents are happy with the school and pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Staff care well for the pupils, whose personal development is satisfactory. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles at school and take part in a wide range of sporting activities. They get on well together, behave sensibly and safely, willingly take on responsibilities, and help others. However, the very low level of their basic skills means that they are inadequately prepared for secondary education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

Children enter the school with lower levels of knowledge and skills than is usual at their age and find it hard to settle. The headteacher has used her considerable expertise to diagnose accurately the weaknesses in provision and targeted support to areas of greatest need. Planning

has recently improved through the support of an advanced skills teacher, and is now secure. It ensures that children have a suitable balance between teacher-led activities and those they choose for themselves. Staff care adequately for the children. Weaknesses in the accommodation such as insufficient space restrict learning opportunities in the Reception class. Teaching, however, is inadequate. There is a lack of awareness of how children learn, and how best to question and talk to them. The deployment of teaching assistants is not always sufficiently effective to ensure children's full participation in the activities. Children are not making the progress of which they are capable and none are on track to achieve the early learning goals by the end of Reception.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in English and mathematics across the school by increasing the pace and challenge in lessons.
- Improve the proportion of good teaching through ensuring planning matches more closely the needs of the pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and provision in the Foundation Stage.
- Governors should work with the local authority to ensure that refurbishments originally planned are completed.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Assessment information shows that standards in the school are well below average. It also indicates a very patchy picture of the progress that pupils have made since they started at the school. A significant minority of pupils in each year group is underachieving in one or more of the key areas of reading, writing and mathematics. In writing, progress is very slow and standards are particularly low. Inadequate progress and very low standards are linked to weaknesses in teaching and to the difficulties that some pupils experienced in settling at the school. The headteacher has acted decisively to improve matters. Weaknesses in teaching are being tackled and pupils are now more involved in their learning. Challenging targets have been set to raise pupils' attainment. However, it is too early to see any impact on standards. The school has not yet analysed the progress made by different groups of pupils, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but inspectors found no evidence that they are doing any better or worse than others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They are friendly and sociable. Their tolerance of differences makes the school a harmonious community. They look after each other, particularly through the play leaders' scheme, and they raise funds for charity. Attendance is below average but the school is doing all it can to improve this. Pupils say that they enjoy being at the school, that they feel safe, and that they trust their teachers to deal properly with any problems that they may have. Behaviour is satisfactory, both in lessons and at play, although they say that they would prefer to see improvements in the play facilities so that they could enjoy the extensive grounds all the year round. Lunchtimes are sociable and relaxed, assisted by the staggered timings. Pupils make increasingly healthy choices at school and know how to keep themselves safe. However, they are making too little progress in their basic skills to contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching is inadequate overall. Although most of the teaching is satisfactory, too much remains inadequate and too little is good. In satisfactory or better lessons planning is sufficiently detailed and lessons have a variety of activities that engage pupils in learning. Most of the pupils cooperate well and respond with interest. Increasingly accurate assessment is helping teachers to match work more closely to pupils' needs and direct the support of teaching assistants more effectively. Where teachers use questioning skilfully to clarify pupils' knowledge and understanding, classes make good progress. Many pupils, however, make more modest or inadequate progress because their work is not yet closely enough matched to their needs and provides too little challenge. Where this is so, pupils lose interest and the pace of lessons becomes too slow. Too much time spent on whole class teaching often limits the development of pupils' skills for independent learning. It also reduces opportunities for them to participate and so they lose concentration and motivation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum includes the required range of subjects at each stage. It is complemented well by popular additional activities that extend pupils' learning and personal development, particularly the strong provision for physical education (PE) and sport. Increasingly, special arrangements are being made to help pupils who are at risk of underachievement. A good range of visits, visitors and clubs enrich pupils' experience, including some provided for gifted and talented pupils. The school is strengthening its teaching of writing, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to consolidate this and other basic skills in their work in other subjects. The school's arrangement for history and geography teaching restricts the contribution of these subjects to pupils' multicultural education. The headteacher has identified these deficiencies in the curriculum and plans are in place to improve the provision, including linking subjects together to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The staff provide good pastoral care and support for the pupils through their supervision and advice, and with a strong commitment to inclusion. Systematic attention is paid to matters of safety. There are secure risk assessment and child protection arrangements in place, including robust checks on adults who work with the pupils. There is suitable encouragement for pupils' personal development, and good quality school meals encourage healthy eating. Effective use is made of other agencies where the school needs specialist expertise making a satisfactory contribution to the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and for those learning English as an additional language. The headteacher is rightly giving academic guidance high priority in the drive to raise standards. Increasingly, pupils are aware of their targets and receive helpful information about the standard of their work. While marking has improved, it is not yet consistently good. Revised testing and recording arrangements enable the staff to gauge pupils' progress more accurately and identify those most in need of further help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership. Leadership roles are widely shared amongst staff, and all take their responsibilities seriously. Key stage leaders are successfully leading their teams in developing more accurate assessment skills. The headteacher is coaching staff with subject responsibilities in developing their roles, for instance, by undertaking joint lesson observations. Teaching assistants are now trained to deliver additional support programmes for pupils who need a boost in basic skills. Teachers are being well supported in developing their skills, although not all are responding well enough yet. Governance is satisfactory. The chair and vice-chair of governors are strongly committed and experienced, although others are relatively new to their roles. Governors have started positively and developed a protocol and programme for visits to the school. Their role in monitoring the development plan is clear. Although all policies are not yet in place, this is ongoing and governors have chosen to develop their own rather than adopt models from elsewhere.

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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	NA
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	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oak View School, Hatfield, AL10 8NW

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and talking to us about your work. We enjoyed our visit.

We were pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe there. Most of your parents are happy with the school too. We know that some of you found it hard to settle in your new school but we could see that you now feel 'at home'. It was good to find that you all get on well together. You behave sensibly and safely around the school and in lessons. At lunchtime, we noticed that you eat a healthy meal - you are lucky to have such delicious school lunches! You also take a lot of exercise, in PE lessons and yoga as well as after-school clubs. Your School Council gives you the chance to have your say, and you help others when you raise money for good causes like Children in Need. You do quite a few jobs around school too.

Your school needs to improve in quite a lot of ways, so inspectors will be returning in about six to eight months time to see how well things are going. Mrs Davis has done a lot in the short time she has been your headteacher. The main thing that staff will be concentrating on is helping you to improve your English and mathematics skills because at the moment too many of you have fallen behind, and these skills are very important for you to be able to get on at secondary school and in adult life. Staff know that they need to make the teaching better across the whole school. There is still work to be done to the school building and grounds to make it look like the 'new' school you were all promised. The governors are going to work with the local authority to make improvements.

You too can help to make things better. Some of you already know what your targets are. You should all get to know them and try your best to reach them. You should also do your very best to attend school every single day.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Mrs S Aldridge Lead inspector