

# The Oval Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103374
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	323808
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Hodgkinson

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	464
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeff Millington
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Chahal
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Whittington Oval Yardley Birmingham B33 8JG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01214 643248
<b>Fax number</b>	01214 641170

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the standards and progress of pupils throughout the school; pupils' attendance; and the quality of care, guidance and support for potentially disaffected pupils, especially those at risk of exclusion. Evidence was gathered through: discussion with school senior leaders, subject leaders, the chair of governors, parents, pupils, and representatives of the school council; visits to lessons; scrutiny of pupils' work; and analysis of school records and planning documents. Parents' questionnaire responses were also analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This very large school is located in an area of residential housing in the east of Birmingham. It is a popular school and increasingly oversubscribed. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is over twice the national average. Well over a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is around twice the national average. These pupils have a range of needs, including sensory and language impairment and autism; but most have moderate or severe learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional or social disorders. Almost half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with a little under a quarter of Pakistani heritage. A quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through full- and part-time Nursery provision and its Reception classes. The Oval Kids Club is separately managed but operates from the school site to provide after-school childcare.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The Oval is an outstanding school. The comments of one parent aptly sum up the views of the large majority of parents and of inspectors about the impact the school makes: 'Since being at the Oval, my daughter has grown in confidence, self-esteem, and is experiencing high academic success. It is not perfect, but it is excellent!'

When children join the EYFS in Nursery or Reception, many have skills that are at very low levels for their age. Nonetheless, they get off to a strong start in their learning, and make excellent progress through the school. Standards in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen significantly in all subjects since the last inspection, with results moving from below average to average overall. Indeed, the proportions of pupils gaining the nationally expected Level 4 and above in those tests have risen to exceed the national average in both English and mathematics. This excellent 'added value' is reflected in the school's performance measures, and is also clearly evident in pupils' books. This strong development of pupils' basic skills prepares them extremely well for the next stage of their education.

The key factor which underpins this very strong achievement is the school's rigorous evaluation of the success of all that it does. Central to this is the 'Vision for School Improvement' which establishes clearly defined and appropriately challenging targets for all pupils, which are translated into targets for classes and the whole school. Staff are accountable for ensuring that these targets are reached, and where the performance of a pupil is falling short, intervention is swiftly put in place to get the pupil back on track. The quality of academic guidance is outstanding. The school flexibly deploys a wide range of methods of support, in-class or through small-group and individual work out-of-class, to help pupils improve. Teaching assistants work highly effectively with teachers to coordinate and deliver this support.

Teaching is excellent. The strong culture of self-evaluation in the school has led teachers to be exceptionally reflective about the impact of their teaching methods. Lesson plans are evaluated by the teachers to indicate what went well and what needs to be improved in a lesson. The plans are checked weekly by the subject leaders of English and mathematics. The methods used in lessons are usually very engaging, stimulate excellent learning and are very much enjoyed by the pupils. The assessment of pupils' work is exceptionally thorough. Teachers' marking comments are highly detailed, and linked very clearly both to the objectives of the task and to pupils' individual targets. Pupils therefore have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to assess their own or other pupils' work. As a consequence, a small number of pupils are not fully aware of what they need to do to reach the higher levels, especially in writing.

Teachers make excellent use of high quality assessment information to plan tasks that are very well suited to the abilities and needs of their pupils. Outstanding and innovative curricular planning is very precisely focused on addressing the identified needs of the pupils, and on raising standards in skills identified as the highest priority. For example, while boys make strong progress in the school, their attainment lags behind that of girls in reading and writing. The school is using a variety of methods to successfully close that gap, such as visual literacy programmes, topics centred on 'boy-friendly' themes, increasingly effective use of information and communication technology, and the extensive promotion of and support for reading. Such monitoring and effective action to close attainment gaps confirms the school's excellent

promotion of equality of opportunities for all. Many methods, including therapeutic methods such as pupil massage, are used to stimulate pupils' readiness for learning.

Excellent assessment ensures that provision is very carefully tailored to fully meet the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As part of the outstanding care and support the school offers to all its pupils, it has extensive and highly effective links with external agencies to support pupils' welfare. Pupils speak favourably, for example, of the positive impact on their behaviour of guidance given by workers from a partner charity. The school works closely with parents to support pupils' learning, particularly where pupils are vulnerable. As one parent put it, 'This school has been brilliant in providing me with updates, feedback and invites to participate in the children's schooling, via the Inspire workshops, which I am attending and enjoy very much.' The school fully and rigorously meets government safeguarding requirements. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress, with their attainment generally higher than that of their peers.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, as they develop a strong awareness of right and wrong and a very good understanding of each other's cultures and faiths. The school's excellent provision to promote community cohesion makes a strong contribution here, by not only involving pupils and their parents fully in school and local community activities, but through developing effective links with other schools nationally and globally. The 'pupil voice' is heard on a range of important issues through their participation in the school council and other groups. The 'Food for Life' group has been actively involved in helping to promote pupils' excellent understanding of healthy foods and lifestyles. Pupils' behaviour is generally good, contributing well to learning in the classroom and to pupils feeling safe in the school. The disruptive behaviour of a very small minority of pupils is well managed through a range of effective strategies that have been largely successful in reducing exclusions and re-engaging the pupils in their learning. Attendance is satisfactory, and in line with that of similar schools. The school has been successful in raising attendance, partly by improving the attendance of a number of persistent absentees. However, it remains below the national average, mainly because of term-time, and sometimes extended, holidays taken by parents.

The school's success is driven by its outstanding leadership and management. A very clear vision for improvement has been established under the excellent leadership of its highly respected headteacher. This vision is shared and energetically pursued by all staff. Governors support the school effectively and ensure that resources are very well deployed to support pupils' excellent achievement. Staff and other stakeholders are fully involved in improvement planning. For all staff, the main objective is to 'make sure children achieve the vision'. The high degree of success that the school has enjoyed in helping children 'achieve the vision' offers clear evidence of its outstanding capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards by the end of the EYFS vary considerably year-on-year relative to the skills on entry of each cohort, and they have been rising strongly recently. Children join with very low-level skills for their age. The broadly average standards attained by those leaving the EYFS in 2008 represent excellent achievement for that cohort. Children currently in the EYFS are also making excellent progress in developing skills across all areas of learning, and particularly in writing and their knowledge and understanding of the world. A very good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities ensures highly effective learning. Thorough and regular assessment of

children's capabilities, informed by careful observation of their skills, enables staff to plan activities which fully meet all children's needs. Those with additional learning needs are identified early and highly effective support is provided for them. An excellent learning environment has been created, especially in the Nursery. The quality of the outdoor area in Reception is not as good as that of the Nursery, but in both years there is a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities.

Children's personal development and well-being are excellent. Children from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds work and play together well. They behave extremely well, and are courteous and well mannered. Children learn to work independently, and they readily take on responsibilities for small tasks, such as the issuing of milk and snacks. The headteacher's leadership of the EYFS is highly effective, and has helped to bring about a sharp improvement in the accuracy and use of assessment information. Children's welfare is given a high priority and is promoted exceptionally well.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve pupils' attendance and take further action to discourage parents from taking their children on term-time holidays.
- Raise pupils' awareness of how to reach higher levels of attainment by increasing their involvement in assessing the quality of their own and others' work.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

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

29 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Oval Primary School, Birmingham B33 8JG

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to my colleague and me when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We greatly enjoyed seeing you at work and at play, and were grateful for all the time you spent in discussion with us. You let us know your views very clearly, and this shows how much you grow in confidence during your time in the school.

We think your school is excellent. It helps you make outstanding progress to reach standards which overall are in line with pupils in other schools. Standards in your school have been rising rapidly since its last inspection. The proportion of pupils who reach the Level 4 expected for children of their age in the Year 6 tests in English and mathematics is now actually above average. This success has come about because of the excellent teaching and the very high quality of care, guidance and support you receive. Teachers set you very clear targets for improvement and check your progress carefully against those targets. If anyone needs extra help, the teachers, working closely with teaching assistants, identify them very quickly and set up extra support. In addition, teachers look very carefully at how they are teaching you to see what works best and what does not work so well, so they are able to plan activities which you really enjoy and really encourage you to learn. The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher and her team, and clearly everyone in the school is encouraged to get involved in its improvement. It was good to see how well all of you get on and work together. You behave well, are polite and courteous, and develop a very good understanding of each other's backgrounds and cultures. You say you feel safe at the school, and clearly have an excellent understanding about how to eat and live healthily.

We have identified two main ways in which we feel the school can get even better. First, too many of you still take holidays in term-time, and some for quite long periods. This affects your achievement. So we have asked the school to make even more efforts to improve your attendance, and you can clearly help here by making sure you attend regularly. Second, although teachers mark and assess your work in great detail, we have asked them to involve you more in the assessment of your work so that you become even clearer about how it can be improved, especially at the higher levels.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson Lead inspector