

Oak Meadow Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104341
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	324025
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Sarah Conway

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	370
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	John Walklett
Headteacher	Sarah Morris
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ryan Avenue Ashmore Park Wednesfield Wolverhampton WV11 2QQ
Telephone number	01902 558517
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Oak Meadow Primary School is a larger than average school situated on the outskirts of Wolverhampton. Most pupils are of White British background and a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and are taught in the classroom or the school's resource base. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception classes. The school governors are responsible for the 'Funsters' after school club which was inspected by the team.

In 2007, due to falling rolls, the school merged with a smaller nearby primary school and for that year, pupils were taught on two sites.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oak Meadow Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The merger with another local primary school in 2007 caused some instability and a number of staff changes. For example, governors have been unable to appoint a permanent deputy headteacher for a year. During the first year of the merger, staff and pupils travelled between the two sites with pupils coming together in one building in 2008. Provisional test results and school monitoring information show that the school has emerged from a difficult time and is improving. School leaders have an accurate view of where improvement is still needed and recently introduced measures to raise standards are beginning to have a positive impact. During the past year, the headteacher has worked hard to create a unified staff and has taken robust action to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that underachievement is being tackled successfully. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress and attaining standards which are just below average in all subjects in Years 2 and in Year 6.

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although recently improved, is inadequate, which means that children are not making the progress they should. Teaching has improved in Key Stage 1, particularly in Year 1, and it is now good so that by the time pupils move into Year 3 standards are broadly average. They are below average in writing. In Key Stage 2, satisfactory teaching overall ensures pupils attain broadly average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in line with others. Based on their average skills in English and mathematics and their good personal skills, pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and future life.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. There are some strengths in both but they are not sufficiently widespread to ensure that all pupils make good progress. For example, there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils in Key Stage 2. This means that fewer pupils than expected attain the higher levels. Pupils' personal development, however, is good and measures the school has taken to improve attendance means that it is now satisfactory and improving. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy, as shown by their insistence that they should avoid sugary snacks. The headteacher places a high priority in providing good quality pastoral support for pupils and securing their well-being. The school is a harmonious and safe environment in which to learn. As a result, pupils enjoy school, feel well cared for and behave well. Parents are supportive of the school, appreciating the commitment of staff and the provision of an after-school club.

The school has recently introduced systems to track pupils' progress against challenging targets and monitor standards attained. However, this information is not yet used sufficiently well by school leaders and governors to improve all pupils' achievements. Academic guidance is consequently not as strong as personal care and support, and pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is now a stable and effective staff and the school is poised to move forward under the positive leadership of the headteacher. Improvements to teaching so far, led by the headteacher and supported by recently appointed phase leaders, demonstrate that there is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

The relationships between children and adults are good. Adults are caring of children, getting to know them and their parents before they start. As a result, children settle well, feel secure and there is a happy atmosphere in the classroom. Children enter the school with the range of knowledge and skills expected for their age but the staff do not make their own assessment of children to ensure teaching is effectively and promptly targeted. The pace of teaching is too slow. Too many activities are led by adults and there are too few planned practical activities to allow children to learn independently. As a result, children have left Reception in the past with skills and abilities well below those expected for their age group. The newly appointed phase leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage has introduced appropriate systems to assess and monitor children's progress and these are beginning to be used to inform planning. Children are now making better progress but standards remain just below those expected for their age group.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure activities meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and that they are given opportunities to learn independently so that they make at least satisfactory progress.
- Make sure the quality of teaching is good for all ages, especially in writing, in order to secure better progress and higher standards, particularly for the most able.
- Improve the use of monitoring information by school leaders, including governors, to identify what needs to be done to raise the standards attained by all groups.

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: 3

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory but the progress they make is uneven. This is because the school has suffered in recent years from some instability in teaching. Children arrive in Reception with skills and abilities broadly in line with expectations. They make insufficient progress in Reception and enter Year 1 with standards well below average. Pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008 made up for lost ground, making good progress, and attaining average standards overall, but below average standards in writing. Pupils currently in Key Stage 1 who experienced weak teaching in the past are also making good progress and are on track to attain standards just below average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school's assessment information shows that pupils in Key Stage 2 are now making satisfactory progress. Standards in 2008 were broadly average but fewer pupils reach the higher standards of Level 5 than expected. Pupils currently in Year 6 have suffered from a legacy of weak provision. This is being addressed so that pupils are making accelerated progress and these pupils are now on track to attain just below average standards overall. Standards in writing remain weaker than in other subjects. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory, in line with the whole school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because pupils, including those from the merged school and the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, get on well together. They are caring, considerate and courteous to each other and adults. Pupils work and play constructively together and have a well developed sense of fair play. They say they are free from bullying and know that when they go to an adult with a concern it will be dealt with. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance has improved. It is not any better because some parents take children on holiday during the term. Pupils enjoy the number of opportunities to take on responsibilities throughout the school, for example as a member of the active school council or as a class monitor. Older pupils help younger ones and they are quick to befriend those who might need extra support at lunchtime. Pupils have a strong community awareness and are keen fundraisers for charities. They contribute to their local and regional communities by, for example, singing in the local authority's multi-faith service or at a local residential home. Pupils are safety conscious and concerned for the welfare of others. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and enjoy the many sporting activities on offer.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Sharper monitoring has helped to improve lessons. Planning is detailed, providing a clear structure to lessons. Teachers' explanations of the intended learning are clear so that pupils know what to do. As a result, pupils behave well and come to lessons prepared to learn. Teaching is adequate rather than good because, despite the use of setting in English and mathematics, work is not always appropriately matched to the needs of all pupils. Where the pace of teaching is faster and there are more opportunities for pupils to work independently or in groups, pupils make faster progress. When work is too easy and there is not enough challenge for more able pupils, a minority of pupils lose concentration. Teachers' questioning skills to secure pupils' understanding are good. However, there are missed opportunities when questioning pupils to probe further and challenge pupils to expand on their answers. Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning, especially to those who need extra support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Sound provision is made for the development of pupils' skills and knowledge in English, mathematics and science. The school acknowledges that an increased emphasis on the development of pupils' vocabulary and their skills in sentence construction is needed in order to raise standards in writing. In addition, the school is rightly beginning to promote opportunities to develop pupils' science investigation skills. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities both within the class and in the resource base. More able pupils mark time in some lessons because work is too easy and this limits their progress. The very well planned personal, social and health programme contributes to developing pupils' positive attitudes to learning and each other, and their knowledge of how to live healthily. Opportunities are sometimes missed in lessons to develop pupils' decision-making skills and ability to work independently.

Pupils benefit from a good range of educational visits, visitors and clubs which enrich their learning. The after-school club, 'Funsters', is efficiently run and provides a sound range of learning opportunities enabling pupils of different ages to play amicably together.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are robust and regular, and health and safety checks are carried out. The school makes good use of outside agencies and works closely with parents to secure pupils' well-being. The support and guidance for pupils' personal development is a key strength and this underpins pupils' good personal development and well-being. Support and guidance for pupils' academic development is less secure and is reflected in uneven progress across the school. All pupils have targets in English and mathematics but not all children know them or what they need to do to improve. As a result, their involvement in monitoring their own progress is underdeveloped. Pupils' work is marked regularly but teachers do not always give clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is a strong pastoral leader who ensures that pupils receive a high level of care. School evaluation has accurately identified areas requiring improvement and most weaknesses in teaching have been addressed. The recently introduced tracking system provides regular information about pupils' progress but this is not yet used effectively by leaders to refine school development or to ensure that all groups of pupils benefit equally from provision. The role of phase leaders has been successfully developed and has ensured that there is a shared focus on raising standards.

The school's attention to the well-being of pupils has contributed to the successful merger of two schools into one harmonious unit. It is a cohesive community and welcomes pupils from all backgrounds. Understanding of diversity of the wider community is promoted through the curriculum and assemblies. The school has also formed links with a primary school in Germany but acknowledges that, although pupils meet children from other backgrounds at regional events, they would benefit from more direct and extended experience of working with pupils from other backgrounds. Governors are highly supportive, steering the school successfully through the merger, but do not provide a sufficiently rigorous level of challenge to help drive up standards.

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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	Yes
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?	4
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	4
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	4
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

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

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?	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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	3
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**

30 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oak Meadow Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV11 2QQ

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome during our recent visit to your school and ensuring we did not get lost!

We found that your school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Here are some more things we found.

- The headteacher and staff take good care of you.
- Children in Reception do not make as much progress as they should.
- You reach the standards expected for your age by the time you leave school in most subjects but standards in writing are lower and not enough of you get the higher levels in tests at the end of Year 6.
- You make satisfactory progress across the school.
- The curriculum and teaching are satisfactory but work is sometimes too easy for some of you.
- Your behaviour is good and you look out for one another.
- You know how to lead a healthy life.

You said you enjoy school, you feel safe and you know who to talk to if you are unhappy. To make your school an even better place to learn, we have asked the school to do three things.

- Provide more practical activities in Reception for children to work on their own so that they learn faster.
- Improve the quality of teaching for all ages, especially in writing and for those of you who find work easy, so that you achieve as well as you can.
- Make better use of information about how well you are learning to help all of you to make as much progress as possible.

You can help your teachers by continuing to come to school regularly and making sure you know your targets.

My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Conway

Lead inspector