

Olney Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110246
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	325116
Inspection date	15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Charalambos Loizou

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	249
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	81
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeremy Rawlings
Headteacher	Mr Steve Dunning
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Spinney Hill Road Olney MK46 5AD
Telephone number	01234 711388
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Age group	4–7
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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 areas:

- the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS);
- standards in writing and the achievement of pupils of higher ability in this subject;
- the extent to which pupils assess and understand their own learning.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the analysis of test results and records of pupils' performance, as well as parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the 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

Olney is an average size infant school. Reception children join the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) each September and, like other year groups, they are taught in three classes. Throughout the school, the vast majority of pupils are White British. A small number of pupils come from a range of other minority ethnic backgrounds, including a few that are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low compared with most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is (LDD) is well below average. Their main areas of need are in speech and language, with a small number who have specific learning difficulties such as autism or physical disabilities such as visual impairment. The school has the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark. A private provider manages an after-school club which includes provision for children who are under five years of age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve extremely well at this outstanding school, most notably in the way they mature into courteous young people who show caring attitudes to each other and their community. Pupils demonstrate enthusiasm for everything that their teachers and support staff offer them. There is a real sense of harmony and cohesion because governors and staff are highly committed to the pupils' all round personal and academic development, as well as ensuring that the school plays a full part in its local and wider community. Highly effective leadership at all levels underpins the school's success and, combined with excellent teaching, ensures that pupils reach exceptionally high standards. The vast majority of parents have paid tribute to staff and governors and appreciate the dedication, care and attention they give their children. For example, 'The staff are approachable and always have time for both children and parents,' typifies many of the positive comments received, including many who rightly expressed their appreciation for the high quality of the EYFS. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 are exceptionally high, and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are well above those expected. Outstanding teaching enables pupils to make excellent rates of progress in relation to their starting points. Children in the EYFS benefit enormously from the high quality of both teaching and provision for their welfare. In Years 1 and 2, the pace of learning continues to be outstanding and is reflected in national assessment results. Current assessments show that standards continue to rise. The proportion of pupils at the end of Year 2 who exceed the expected levels is much higher than the national average in reading, mathematics and science. The proportion reaching higher levels in writing, whilst high compared to schools nationally, is lower than in other subjects. There are good opportunities for pupils to write that include stories and factual accounts. However, some lack the confidence to write more extensively and the school has rightly made this a priority. Teachers have made a good start improving writing standards by providing more opportunities for pupils to write their own books, like the recent pirate stories and extended writing on the current theme about Africa. Drama and role-play are used extensively and to very good effect, which helps pupils to explain and record their ideas and then structure or sequence their independent writing. The leadership team and staff use excellent tracking systems to check how well the pupils are doing. Skilled teaching assistants provide highly effective support for pupils who have learning difficulties because their progress is assessed regularly to provide appropriate support in lessons. Consequently, most of these pupils reach the standards expected for their age. The headteacher is innovative and inspires a highly qualified staff team. Well-devised programmes of training, excellent assessment systems and outstanding curriculum planning have produced very good improvements since the last inspection. There are many opportunities for pupils to link skills from different subjects during specially themed weeks such as the current work on Africa. They are also able to engage in stimulating topics when researching how best to maintain eco-friendly environments in science. In many lessons, there are excellent opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning as pupils are regularly asked to explain what they have learned best and which areas they need to improve. A group of Year 2 pupils were very clear about their work and explained, for example, that, 'We know what we are supposed to do because it is written here (pointing to their learning objectives) and we can always check and remind each other what to write'. Throughout the school, the excellent curriculum and outstanding teaching provide a rich programme of activities and lessons that are of enormous benefit to pupils' personal and academic development. Extra-curricular activities and lessons provide exciting opportunities for pupils to take part in art, music, drama, dance

and sport so they are active and adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils' enjoyment of school and learning are reflected in excellent attendance rates and the high quality of art, sculpture and literature displayed around the school. They thrive on the many opportunities they have to show initiative such as when school councillors show what they do using a multi-media presentation when meeting other school councils and the governors. Pupils are developing excellent entrepreneurial and mature life-skills that extend beyond their years when running and managing the school bank. The staff are very good at listening to pupils' views, for example, when designing outdoor areas or asking what they think about their lessons. The headteacher explained that some pupils felt that they used to sit on the carpet for too long and this prompted the staff to review their planning to ensure that less time was spent on 'carpet time'. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe when writing about road safety and understand why they, like everybody in the wider community, should recycle and care for the environment as they dispose of fruit waste at break-times into special compost bins called 'roly pigs'. The pupils are very active in supporting the wider community through fund raising and when collecting food packages for the celebration of harvest in the local church. The packages are to be donated to the community food bank for distribution to the neediest. Pupils extend their knowledge of other cultures, world religions, festivals and customs when, for example, writing to and reading letters from pupils in their link school in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Strong partnerships and links with the town of Olney, as well as other schools in more urban areas, contribute very well to their understanding of their community and of multi-cultural Britain. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well to enliven pupils' learning experiences, for example, when they make films or take photographs. Pupils are very excited about the prospect of joining the new film club to extend their ICT skills still further. Road safety, healthy lunches, eating fruit at break-times and special ECO projects, as well as sport and the national Activemark award, demonstrate the pupils' excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. The school is innovative and energetic in seeking to improve and works in excellent partnership with parents and others to do so. All the staff and governors are highly effective and are a credit to their school and community. They regularly seek parents' views and keep them very well informed. The school's capacity to keep on improving is excellent.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The children join the EYFS with skills and abilities that are above those expected of four-year-olds. By the time they start Year 1, the vast majority are working at levels that are comfortably within the early stages of the National Curriculum in all areas of learning. This represents outstanding achievement. Excellent induction arrangements, teaching and planning enable the children to settle and follow school routines quickly. There are outstanding links forged with parents and the staff provide regular feedback to parents about their children's progress. All areas of learning are exceptionally well planned for and resourced, and the staff are diligent in maintaining a high quality learning environment for children of all abilities. The staff accurately assess and monitor children's learning, development and welfare needs. They make effective use of the excellent outdoor areas and ensure that children learn and play safely as they explore wild areas and the gardens, or use large apparatus to develop their physical and spatial skills. Children are provided with high visibility jackets and waterproof clothing so that the outdoor areas can be used in all climates and conditions. Highly skilled staff carefully assess and adapt their planning to ensure that the children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities. The EYFS is exceptionally well led and managed. The staff team is very skilled in maintaining and evaluating provision and demonstrates excellent capacity to continue improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the improvements to writing standards to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils reach higher levels by the end of Year 2.

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 ¹ reached by learners	1
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

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?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	1
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**

23 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Olney Infant School, Olney, MK46 5AD

The inspectors were very pleased to visit your school. You made us feel welcome. Your school is excellent. You all work extremely hard with your teachers and I agree with the many parents who say that you are all doing very well. Your artwork is fantastic and we were enormously impressed with paintings, computer printouts and pictures as well the lovely sculptures of plants and animals as part of your work on 'Handa's Surprise', one of many African stories you are reading. There are many good things about your school so it is hard for us to pick out the very best. These are just a few of the ones we were pleased with most:

- you are extremely well behaved, polite and considerate
- you are right about your teachers, they really are 'brilliant' because they are helping you to reach high standards, including the excellent work the children do in the Foundation Stage
- you enjoy school and I can see why; there are lots of wonderful things to do in lessons and during special visits like the lovely forest walk
- I really enjoyed the rehearsal for your harvest and your singing was superb
- we were very impressed with the school council and how it helps to improve the school; school bankers do a great job too and these are skills that will help you in the future
- your parents are very pleased with you and your teachers and the school works very closely with them
- the staff take excellent care of you and make sure you are all safe and happy
- the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and governors manage the school extremely well and work hard to keep looking for ways to make the school even better.

I have asked your teachers to:

- build on the improvements already made to your writing standards and make sure that more of you reach even higher levels by the end of Year 2.

Well done, keep trying hard and helping your school to even greater things. We wish you all the very best. Yours sincerely Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector