

# Oaklands Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114882
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326080
<b>Inspection date</b>	5 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Messer

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	132
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>	Mr Alison Barnwell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Cheryl Allard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 September 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>	Vicarage Road Chelmsford Essex CM2 9PH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245352166
<b>Fax number</b>	01245347098

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), pupils' progress in writing, and the standards that pupils attain. Evidence was gathered from visits to classrooms, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, scrutiny of pupils' work, analysis of parents' questionnaires and examination of school documentation, including assessment data and the school's self-evaluation. 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 form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. There are five classes, including two for children in the EYFS. Children's attainment on entry is broadly in line with expectations for this age group except in communication, language and literacy, where it is below expected levels. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a fifth are from minority ethnic families. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language and several are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average.

The school has the Activemark Award for promoting physical education, the Healthy Schools Award, the Silver Eco Award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspection findings confirm the school's judgement that its overall effectiveness is good. Although the school is going through a challenging period as the governing body strives to appoint a new headteacher, leadership and management are good. In the absence of a substantive headteacher, the acting headteacher has done an exceptionally good job of maintaining school improvement. Under her good leadership, staff expertise has continued to improve, especially in the development of teaching assistants, who are becoming increasingly skilled. Some are becoming experts in promoting play therapy or providing for pupils with autism, for example. Also, teachers are developing their leadership roles and are taking greater responsibility for improving pupils' achievement. Governors are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring pupils' achievement and holding leaders to account for the school's performance. Leaders analyse data thoroughly. When assessment results suggested that standards in writing could be improved, action was quickly taken to accelerate pupils' progress. This is already having a positive impact and standards in writing, especially for the faster learners, are rising.

Assessment results in 2008 show that standards attained by pupils in Year 2 were well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who exceeded the national target of level 2, attaining the higher level 3, was above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. The school has set challenging targets for pupils' attainment in 2009 and staff are working hard to help pupils to reach their goals. Pupils learn a good range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills and explore the internet safely. They attain high standards in handwriting. Analyses of performance data show that all groups, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' outstanding personal development supports their learning exceptionally well. They are eager to learn and keen to succeed. Their behaviour is excellent in class and good around school. They are lively and curious to find out more about their world. The good teaching motivates pupils well. Staff devise exciting whole-school themes that stimulate that curiosity. A recent study of Mexico promoted a great deal of effective learning. Pupils practised carrying babies on their backs, acted out grinding corn to make tortillas, made sombreros and played Mexican music to accompany their dancing. Visits from parents to explain Divali and Eid also heighten pupils' understanding of different cultures and customs. Teaching is good, although teachers are inclined to provide information rather than encourage pupils to investigate more and to find things out for themselves.

The outstanding curriculum is highly relevant to pupils' needs and stimulates learning particularly well. There is a strong emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy. The rigorous system of teaching the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent, provides a solid basis for developing early reading and writing skills. Pupils read and write confidently. A great deal of learning goes on outdoors and children enjoy eating the vegetables they grow. They have a good understanding of the need to recycle as many materials as possible and conserve energy. Pupils' responsible attitude to the environment contributes much to their outstanding contribution to the community. They enjoy learning French. There is a good range of after-school clubs, including tennis, golf and yoga. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, especially the big events such as 'Festivals Week' and 'School Grounds Week'. During the school's celebration of Eid, Muslim mothers and grandmothers made Eid presents for all the pupils and gave each class a presentation about Muslim festivals, thus enhancing their understanding of different faiths.

Visits to places of interest, including to the local church and mosque, enrich learning well. All groups are given equal opportunities to access all aspects of the curriculum. The skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils develop prepare them well for the next phase of their education and for the future.

Outstanding care, guidance and support help pupils to feel secure and comfortable. This supports their learning well. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety are robust. They develop a good understanding of how to lead healthy life-styles. Parents are delighted with the education provided for their children. As one explained, 'Oaklands is a warm and welcoming environment where teachers and other staff are very approachable and where children are introduced to a wide range of interesting topics.' The school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion by helping pupils to understand the customs of different groups within the local community and the lives of peoples across the world.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Children make good progress. By the time they move on to Year 1 the vast majority are working securely within the goals expected for their age. Children who are born in the summer and start a term later make similarly good progress, although their writing skills are not as well developed as the older children in the class. The school has very thorough systems to introduce parents and children to school routines. Very quickly children play and learn happily together. Their behaviour is excellent and they grow in confidence in making independent and sensible decisions. Teaching is good, and a very good number of adults are fully engaged in supporting children's learning. There are plenty of chances for children to listen and speak, although adults do not consistently encourage them to explain or reply in full sentences. The exciting range of activities captures the children's imagination and helps them to build up their knowledge and skills well. Children enjoy creeping into the 'dark, dark cave' to find things with torches, as part of their study of light and dark. The firework theme stimulated some excellent art, both in paint and on the computer. Children make enthusiastic use of the redesigned outdoor area for creative and imaginative play. Leadership and management of the EYFS are good and the children are cared for well. Close links with the nursery schools ensure a smooth transition in their learning. Teachers are developing their expertise in judging how children are progressing in relation to national expectations.

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

- Encourage pupils to learn independently and find information for themselves.

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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?	2
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	2

**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?	2
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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

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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>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
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>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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**

5 November 2008

Inspection of Oaklands Infant School, Chelmsford CM2 9PH

Dear Children

We thoroughly enjoyed our short visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. Here are some of the things that we found out.

- You are willing workers and try hard to do your best.
- You know about letters and the sounds they make and use your skills to help you in reading and writing.
- You make good progress in reading, writing, handwriting, mathematics and ICT.
- You know how important it is to recycle as much as possible and to save energy.
- You are getting good at growing vegetables.
- You are lively and enjoy having fun.
- You are sensible and thoughtful.
- You like learning about how people live in different countries, such as Mexico.
- You know that sweets are bad for your teeth, which foods are good for you and which types to avoid if you want to stay healthy.
- You know that you need plenty of exercise to stay fit.
- You enjoy school and like all the teachers and the other members of staff.
- The school governors are trying hard to find a new headteacher but in the meantime, Mrs Allard is doing a good job of making sure that the school continues to improve.

We think that there is one important thing that could help you in your learning. You are so sensible and so good at exploring that we think the teachers should let you investigate more, and find things out for yourselves more often. We are sure that you will continue to help each other with your work and continue to do your best.

I wish you every success in the future.

John Messer

Lead inspector