

Oakwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117222
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326551
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

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)	293
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	Mr David Moore
Headteacher	Ms Zoe Berndes
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Oakwood Drive St. Albans Hertfordshire AL4 0XA
Telephone number	01727 753930
Fax number	01727 753931

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Inspection number	326551

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Oakwood is a larger than average primary school. It is situated on the outskirts of St Albans, in a relatively advantaged area, although pupils come from a range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most pupils are of White British background and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. There are 45 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision, in two Reception classes. The school has gained Healthy Schools status.

There is an after-school club managed by an independent provider on the school site and this was inspected at the same time as the school inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective school which is improving and has a good capacity to improve further. The team spirit among staff is good: caring and supportive. The majority of parents are very appreciative of what the school does for their children and are pleased with the progress they make. For example, one parent wrote: 'Oakwood is a happy school. The quality of teaching is good. There is a culture of good behaviour and it is an environment in which children learn and grow.' However, a third of the parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed concerns about lack of communication and consultation with the school. Although the school has consulted with parents over many issues, including the behaviour policy, and regularly carries out parental surveys, there is scope for involving parents more in the life of the school.

Pupils achieve well. Their results in the national tests in English and mathematics are above the national average and they make good progress in their lessons. Pupils enjoy their learning, especially in subjects such as music, art and physical education. The majority of pupils participate enthusiastically in the wide range of physical activities, educational visits and clubs provided by the school. Attendance is outstanding. Personal development is good and, on the whole, pupils behave well. Pupils have an excellent understanding of eating healthily and the importance of exercise. They apply their knowledge to the choices they make in the dining room and the packed lunches they bring to school. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated. Pupils are taught tolerance and respect and careful records are kept of any racist incidents.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils are keen to learn and they participate well in lessons. In a few lessons the tasks set do not challenge the more able pupils and the pace of lessons is too slow. Assessment and tracking systems are effective, and pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified and given help. However, the quality of marking is variable and sometimes does not tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work. The school has thorough systems to ensure pupils are safe and secure. Pastoral support is strong and pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to should they need help or be upset.

Leadership and management are good. The head teacher has been determined to keep the school successful during a period of high staff turnover and unavoidable illness. Monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior leaders is robust and the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. This analysis is translated into a well-focused school development plan and action plans for literacy and mathematics. English and mathematics subject leaders make a good contribution to monitoring standards, teaching and progress. However, this is not sufficiently well developed in the roles of other subject leaders. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesiveness.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in Reception and most make good progress from starting points of generally above average in most areas of learning. Their attainment when they leave Reception is above that found nationally. Children's personal development is good and contributes to their good progress and social skills. All children work and play harmoniously. The good provision for their welfare means that they settle into school quickly and happily, have positive relationships with staff, and come to enjoy learning. The staff get to know children well and

understand their learning and personal needs. There are good procedures to support children entering Reception and then moving into Year 1.

Teaching is good and most adults are skilled in helping children to develop their knowledge and understanding when they work with them in groups, for example, the children were excited when learning by closely observing a selection of snails and exploring the colour, texture and shapes of minibeasts. Staff provide a range of things for children to do which engage their interest and enthusiasm as seen, for example, in a slide show of spirals. However, a good balance for children between making purposeful choices for themselves about activities which consolidate their learning, and adults directing what they do, is not always ensured. The early introduction of strategies to link sounds and letters prepares children well in learning how to read and write. The new outdoor area is spacious, but not used sufficiently to extend and consolidate learning in all six areas of learning. Exposure to enrichment of this kind is limited, because children are not free to move between indoor and outdoor play activities.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Assessment of children's progress is carried out methodically and provides a good overview of their development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring appropriate pace and challenge in all lessons and ensuring that marking includes clear guidance for each pupil, including the more able, on how they can improve their work.
- Develop the role of middle managers in monitoring the quality of standards, progress and teaching across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils start school with skills above that usually expected and go on to achieve standards in tests that are above the national average. Progress was good in lessons seen and outstanding in two lessons. In previous years the rate of progress for older pupils has been adversely affected by unavoidable staff absence. However, the school's assessment shows that progress is now good across Key Stage 2. More able pupils are now achieving well at the higher levels in the school's internal tests, and pupils are on track to exceed their challenging targets. Pupils do better in English and mathematics than in science. Pupils from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated and achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve better results than usually expected because of skilled, individual support from well-trained teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the diversity of cultures both within the school and wider society. They are fully involved in the school community, for instance, through the active school council and through the opportunities they have to take responsibility within the school. However, there are insufficient opportunities for them to contribute to the local or wider community, so that overall their community contribution is satisfactory. Assemblies provide good opportunities for reflection and pupils' participation. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to lead healthy lives, both through what they eat and the very good opportunities the school provides

for physical exercise. They feel safe in school and are aware of some of the dangers, for instance, when using the Internet. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is exceptionally high. The school has recently introduced a new behaviour policy which parents and pupils understand. Behaviour is generally good. However, a small minority of pupils, often boys, can easily lose concentration and become distracted in lessons that do not maintain pace. Pupils develop good numeracy and literacy skills which equip them for their future lives, but they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) or their wider economic understanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives. Pupils' behaviour is managed skilfully and effectively and teachers foster good relationships with them. Teachers use a good range of activities which involve and engage pupils, for example, hot-seating and use of learning partners for discussion work. ICT is used effectively by teachers as seen, for example, with Year 6 to display photographs of role play from the previous lesson so that pupils could explore feelings, and in Year 2 when examples of work from a previous year were shown to help pupils to improve their current work. In weaker lessons the pace is too slow and there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils. The quality of marking is variable. In some classes work is marked diagnostically and pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve, but in others marking lacks clear points for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has recently revised its curricular planning to cater more effectively for the mixed-age classes and has made good links between subjects to ensure learning is more relevant. The programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education is very effective. Productive links with the local secondary school have also made possible specialist support in French and physical education, as well as extension work for gifted and talented pupils. The curriculum is extended and enriched by themed days and weeks, such as an Eid focus day and an Asian arts week. Places of interest are visited, such as Whipsnade Zoo and Bekonscot Model Village, and residential visits are made. Pupils have good opportunities for music through joining the choir or learning individual instruments. There is a good range of clubs, many of them in sports for Key Stage 2, but clubs are more limited for younger pupils. Time during the school day is not always used to full effect, for instance, in the planning of assemblies or sessions which are too long to hold pupils' attention. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school meets legal requirements for safeguarding its pupils. Child protection procedures are in place and risk assessments are carried out on activities both within and outside school. Attendance is promoted and monitored well. Relationships between adults and pupils throughout the school are good. The school tracks the progress of its pupils well, and this enables teachers to intervene appropriately to bring about improvement in pupils' performance. Pupils have

individual targets in English and older pupils know these well. Targets are not as well defined in mathematics.

There is effective, targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties. The Extended Schools initiative allows wider support to be given to pupils and families, for instance in the provision of parenting classes and after school care. Pupils are prepared well for their transfer to secondary school. Supervision in the playground is good. The organisation of school lunches is not conducive in making it a calm and congenial occasion for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has been adversely affected by high levels of staff absence which had led to a drop in performance in recent years. The senior leadership team have taken action to remedy the situation and have improved achievement by implementing a new behaviour policy, introducing a better assessment and tracking system and also a two-year curricular planning cycle. Subject leaders in English and mathematics observe lessons in their subjects and have contributed to raising achievement. However, leaders of other subjects do not have the opportunity to observe lessons in their subject areas or to monitor achievement.

The school's governors are supportive and are beginning to take a more active role in ensuring high quality teaching and learning. However, some lack experience and statutory requirements, with regard to a school profile and an impact assessment of the equalities policy, have not been fully met. The school gives good value for money in most respects, but a large sum in the budget, earmarked for refurbishment, remains unspent.

Staff have a good knowledge of the local area which the school serves, and they prepare pupils well for life in a diverse community, but the school has limited links with the local community and no international links, although some are planned. The head teacher has prepared an exemplary equalities plan which is an excellent template for future development.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	2
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?	2
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 ¹ 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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	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**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakwood Primary School St Albans AL4 0XA

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 17 and 18 June. We enjoyed talking with you. Oakwood Primary is a good and improving school. We thought you would like to know what was so good about your school.

- The school is well led by the headteacher and there is an excellent team spirit among the staff and governors, who want you all to do your very best.
- You are happy in school and enjoy your lessons; nearly all of you come to school every day, most of you behave well and are kind to each other.
- You are making good progress in your work and achieve good results in your tests.
- Teachers make your lessons interesting and they keep very careful records of how well you are doing in English and mathematics so they can give you extra help when you need it.
- You enjoy the wide range of activities provided for you in and out of school hours.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after. You are confident to report any incidents of bullying and you say these are dealt with promptly and effectively. There is good care and support for all of you.
- Older pupils feel confident and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

This is how we thought your school could get even better.

- Teachers could make sure that in all lessons the pace is fast and the work set matches your ability, and that you all know what to do to improve your work.
- A better check could be made on the progress you are making in other subjects, as well as in English and mathematics.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector