

Occold Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124601
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328175
Inspection date	9 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	41
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	Mrs Michelle Grange
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Knights
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Street Occold Eye Suffolk IP23 7PL
Telephone number	01379 678330
Fax number	01379 678330

Age group	5–11
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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 impact of actions to improve pupils' writing so that standards are raised to match those in reading; how well the curriculum meets the learning needs of all pupils in the mixed-age classes; how well informed governors are about the work of the school and how well placed they are to hold it to account. 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

The school is much smaller than the majority of primary schools. There are three intakes to the Early Years Foundation Stage each school year, which means that the youngest children have only one term in the Reception Year before starting in Year 1. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are sometimes taught as a discrete group and at other times with pupils in Year 1. They begin school with overall attainment which is close to that expected for their age, but which is often representative of the full range of abilities. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds, although the percentage entitled to free school meals is very low. The percentage of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low and none speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school holds the Activemark award in recognition of the provision it makes for sport and the foundation level of the International Schools Award for its links with schools in other countries.

The school has recently become part of a federation and shares its headteacher with another nearby primary school.

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 a good school that is held in justifiably high regard by pupils, parents and carers and by the community it serves. Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding. Communication with parents and carers about their children's progress and the work of the school is good. The school also takes heed of parents' views and those of their children. One parent summed up the views of many when she said, 'We couldn't ask for more from Occold Primary. Its intimate family atmosphere and caring pupils and staff provide an ideal environment for children to thrive.' Parents and carers are eager to support their children's learning and to help in school. They raise significant amounts for the school through such events as the annual Summer Ball.

Pupils achieve well and make good progress from their various starting points. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Pupils' sustain their good progress throughout Years 3 to 6 and by the time they leave, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. Standards for the current group of Year 6 pupils are on course to be well above average, and some of these pupils, including those who sometimes find learning difficult, are achieving outstandingly well. Over recent years there has been a tendency for standards in writing to be slightly lower than those for reading. The school has successfully raised standards in writing by helping pupils to improve their basic skills and provided good opportunities for them to write for a range of purposes.

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. The foundation for this is based on the good care, guidance and support that pupils receive. Pupils' understanding of the importance of taking regular exercise is shown by their enthusiastic participation in the daily 'wake and shake' sessions. They also appreciate the need to eat healthily and are proud of the work of their Eco Council and the school's allotment. Pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school is exceptionally good. Their outstanding social skills and the standards they attain mean they are well prepared for the future. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning and feel secure. One pupil commented, 'There are lots of happy people at our school. The teachers are friendly and help you to make your work better.' All the current requirements to safeguard pupils are in place.

The school makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of the importance of contributing to the community. There are frequent coffee mornings for parents and members of the community. In addition to fulfilling a significant role in the local community the school is developing links with schools in France and Zimbabwe, helping to raise pupils' awareness of cultures that are different to their own. The school has been awarded the foundation level of the International School Award in recognition of its contribution to links with schools abroad.

Teaching, learning, and the curriculum are good and meet the needs of pupils in the mixed-age classes well. The school makes excellent use of teachers' specialist expertise and skills, for example, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and science all have a high profile and pupils progress well in these subjects. Pupils' work in art and design has improved since it was last inspected. However, in some subjects pupils do not take enough care in the presentation of their work and their handwriting is not always joined and well formed. Younger pupils frequently benefit from being taught alongside their older peers and the work provided for those who sometimes find learning a struggle meets their needs well. This is because teachers and support staff are very aware of pupils' individual learning needs. Arrangements to track pupils' progress over time and respond promptly to the needs of any who show signs of falling

behind and those who have special talents are good. Many pupils know about their targets and the progress they are making, although arrangements to ensure they understand these and the next steps of their learning are not yet applied consistently across the school. An exceptional range of additional activities enhances learning opportunities, including art and design, choir and cookery. Pupils are particularly appreciative of the sporting opportunities provided for them and the school is part of the High Suffolk Schools Sports Partnership.

Leadership and management are good, with the headteacher promoting effective teamwork amongst the staff that underpins pupils' good progress. Several members of the governing body are relatively new to their role, but they are knowledgeable about the school. They are also supportive of its work, and systems for them to evaluate its performance and hold it to account are in place. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The school has a clear plan, identifying what needs to be done to improve further and how such improvements will be evaluated. It also sets suitably challenging targets for pupils' attainment and has good procedures to evaluate the quality of provision accurately. The school's capacity to sustain improvement in the future is also good, as illustrated by the pattern of steadily improving standards and the increased pace of progress in Years 1 and 2.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Almost all children have attended the nearby pre-school, with whom the school has very effective links. These links ensure there is continuity of learning experiences. Leadership and management are good and staff provide a secure environment so that children settle quickly and happily into school. They look after children with the utmost care and attention so that children feel safe. Teaching is good and based securely on what children know and need to learn next, although more able children, whilst making good progress, are not always challenged to extend their learning as much as possible. Children thoroughly enjoy learning because there are well-planned links between areas of learning. They are provided with good opportunities to explore and discover for themselves; for example, programming a toy to carry a camera to take pictures of polar bears. Achievement is good, particularly in learning letter sounds. Children enjoy using the sounds they know to help them write. Parent and community volunteers increase the number of adults in the class so that small group work, or hearing children read, have a good impact on children's progress and their personal development. By the end of Reception, school data shows that most children reach standards appropriate for their age in all areas of learning and, in some years, a good number exceed these. A strength of the provision is that children develop very positive and confident attitudes to learning. They gain tremendously from working alongside the older pupils in the class. As a consequence, their social skills, ability to work as part of a team, and willingness to help one another are very well developed. Very good links are established with parents through visits prior to starting school and parent consultation meetings. The contribution parents make to their children's progress in reading is a strength.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that procedures for target setting and keeping pupils informed about the next steps in the learning are consistent across the school.
- Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting by building systematically on their early skills.

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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?	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?	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 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?	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	2
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	2

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	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

10 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Occold Primary School, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 7PL

You may recall we visited recently to inspect your school. I am sure you will be pleased to learn that, like you and many of your parents and carers, we think Occold Primary is a good school. We were pleased to see that you are making good progress and attaining standards for your age which, by the time you leave, are much better than found in the majority of schools. Much of the credit for this goes to your teachers, classroom helpers and to your parents and carers. Your teachers make your lessons interesting and you clearly find learning very enjoyable. We were very impressed by the knowledge of your Eco Council and by the ways in which you all contribute so well to your community, not forgetting how successful you are in a whole range of sports!

You deserve praise for your excellent behaviour and for the ways in which you work so hard during lessons. We were very impressed by the ways in which the older ones amongst you care for the younger children. Another reason why your school is so successful is that Mr Knights and the governors are good at making sure that everything runs smoothly and that you have all you need to learn successfully.

Mr Knights, the staff and governors are good at finding ways to make your school even better. With this in mind, we are asking them to consider:

- providing a system to help you understand your targets and keep you well informed about the next steps in your learning throughout the school.
- helping you to develop your handwriting and improve the presentation of your work.

Thank you for helping us during our visit. We would like to wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead inspector