

# The Oaks Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134249
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	328865
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clare Henderson

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	98
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>	Ms Elizabeth Scotney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Susan Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 July 2007
<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>	Rochester Drive Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH65 9EX

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	328865

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average school is situated in an area of high social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The number of pupils identified with social or emotional vulnerability or as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Higher than average numbers of pupils join the school throughout the school year. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages. None of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided for in the Reception class. The school offers resource provision for a small number of pupils identified with behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties. It has gained the Inclusion Quality Mark, Healthy Schools, Gold Snack and the Activemark awards. On site, there is a pre- and after-school club which is subject to a separate 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 a good school that provides good value for money. The school motto, 'Make a difference', is truly lived out through its inclusive ethos. Pivotal to the good progress made is outstanding leadership from the headteacher. She has led the unstinting focus, by all staff, on raising standards and extending opportunities for pupils to develop life skills. This has increased pupils' self-belief and confidence. As a result, all pupils, many of whom experience significant barriers to their learning in terms of behavioural, social and/or emotional vulnerability or learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress in their personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school does for their children. A comment typical of many is, 'The Oaks has gone from strength to strength; it is an asset to the community.'

Pupils' achievement is good. When children begin school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, many have skills well below those typically expected at this age. They make good progress at this key stage, but they do not have enough opportunities to develop their investigative and creative skills outdoors. Some pupils enter Year 1 with skills below expectations. All groups of pupils continue to enjoy and learn. Although standards by the end of Year 2 are still below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, the strong focus given to developing pupils' personal skills pays off and they acquire a real interest in learning. The good all round achievement of most pupils continues in Years 3 to 6. Standards attained in Year 6 have improved significantly since the last inspection and are broadly average in mathematics, science and reading. Standards in English are below average overall; this is because more able pupils do not achieve as well as they could in writing.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Despite the very challenging behaviours of many pupils, behaviour is good. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in good levels of attendance. This, together with their increasing skills in literacy, numeracy and the use of computers, contributes to their future economic well-being. Their love of school is tangible and they are eager to say, 'Adults really listen to us in our school.' Pupils are enabled to really believe they can succeed and excellent attention is given, within the good quality curriculum, to this vital aspect of boosting pupils' confidence. This is also lived out in their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are extremely attentive to each other's needs. This is the product of the outstanding care, support and guidance they receive. For instance, pupils who have been excluded from other schools are welcomed and quickly settle within this supportive environment. The same attention is paid to all pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities consequently make similar good progress to their classmates.

Teachers really understand pupils' personal and academic needs and the quality of teaching and learning is good. The curriculum focuses effectively on developing skills that enable pupils to lead healthy and safe lifestyles. Because of this, skills such as teamwork and cooperation promoted through, for instance, residential visits for pupils in Years 2 to 6, enable pupils to be well prepared when they leave for the next stage in their learning.

The quality of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, is good. Outstanding management from subject leaders, excellent partnerships with external agencies, reflective self-evaluation and a shared belief in raising aspirations for all pupils and their families are given top priority. Because of this, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those typically expected at this age and particularly low in their social, communication and creative skills. Good teaching, excellent links with parents and extremely supportive and caring adults ensure children settle quickly and make outstanding progress in their personal development. They make good gains in their speaking and listening skills and adults provide daily sessions that focus on developing children's knowledge of letters and sounds. Similarly, activities to develop children's mathematical skills are initiated by staff and are enjoyed by the children. However, they do not have enough opportunities to explore and investigate outdoors and thus enrich their creative skills and understanding of the world. When they move to Year 1, the skills of some children remain below the typically expected levels. However, given their very low starting points, this represents good achievement. Children are very well supported and parents agree, saying, 'Every child is safe and well cared for'. Leadership is good. The manager has a good knowledge of how well children progress. Ongoing observations of children are reflective and informative and are used effectively to plan children's next steps in learning.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing for the more able pupils.
- Provide children in the Early Years Foundation Stage with more opportunities, on a daily basis, to extend their investigative and creative skills in the outdoor environment.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is good. Many pupils overcome significant barriers within their learning to reach broadly average standards in mathematics and science by Year 6. Standards in English are below average overall. Although good teaching and good whole-school strategies have raised standards in reading, the level of writing is still below average because not enough of the more able pupils achieve the higher levels in writing. Standards have risen because staff provide a very close focus on developing pupils' personal skills alongside their academic skills. Leaders set challenging targets and these are being met; pupils' achievement has improved steadily since the last inspection. Most pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with behavioural or social vulnerability make good progress in their learning and achieve the challenging learning and personal targets which are set for them.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils are really proud of their school and say they feel that their teachers really care for them. Consequently, they thrive in an extremely caring environment. Pupils eat healthily, keep fit and understand that healthy lifestyles are important. Breakfast club followed by 'wake up-shake up' give pupils a healthy start to the day. Healthy lifestyles are developed through a wide range of sporting activities and residential visits. Pupils remark how well their worries and concerns are dealt with and made easier by 'teachers who really care for us'. Pupils thrive on responsibility, such as acting as school councillors, road safety officers or as part of a circle of friends who are there to support those who have behavioural or emotional needs. A wider awareness of

their impact on local and global issues is evident in pupils' understanding of sustaining the environment. This has been achieved by developing in them a strong awareness of green issues such as recycling, through the establishment of a sensory garden and by developing the school allotment. Pupils' awareness of different socio-economic areas in the United Kingdom is currently less developed though the school has detailed plans to extend this. Links with a school in Africa extend pupils' life experiences and knowledge of cultural differences effectively.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

There is a real oasis of calm within each classroom environment. Pupils benefit from small class sizes and individual attention, particularly when staff address their personal and behavioural needs. All staff work hard to make certain that any obstacles to learning are eliminated. For instance, techniques of relaxation and breathing are taught before lessons. This ensures pupils are ready to learn. The good progress pupils make in lessons is the result of the good teaching they receive. Pupils are clear about each lesson's purpose and eagerly engage in well thought out activities. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) at every opportunity to engage pupils' interest. As a result, pupils' ICT skills are good. When working in groups, pupils collaborate well and enjoy their learning. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable are expertly managed by a talented team of staff. Teachers' extremely detailed and regular assessment of pupils' work ensures pupils have a clear idea of what needs to be done next. Tasks on the whole are suitably matched to pupils' ages, interests and varying abilities. For instance, in Year 6, writing on personification resulted in high quality work, as one pupil wrote: 'The roof wants to blanket us with its comforting skin so we stay cosy'. However, in some year groups in Key Stage 2, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to extend their writing skills and reach the higher levels of which they are capable.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Programmes of education such as forest residentials outside the classroom provide an alternative curriculum for all pupils and, in particular, those pupils who find engagement in learning difficult. Through such experiences, pupils' enjoyment of learning and of the skills needed within a range of career options are extended. This prepares them well for their future lives. Provision in the curriculum for pupils' personal development is highly successful, and particularly its effect on encouraging them to respect the personal feelings of others. First-hand experiences of other cultures, beliefs and religions through excellent partnership both within the local and international communities prepare them well for life in a diverse world. French is taught throughout the school and pupils quickly begin to express themselves in simple French. Residential visits and a good range of after-school activities add purpose to pupils' learning experiences in music, sport and the arts, while extending opportunities for them to show initiative. Pupils comment very positively on their enjoyment of the practical activities which they experience during, for example, health and personal safety week or in preparing their music and dance production for the Ellesmere Port Festival.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

'My child has more self-esteem and a more positive attitude towards his work and life'. Comments such as this sum up why pastoral care is outstanding. Input from the excellent learning mentor and within the 'A Quiet Place' provision, which focuses on identifying those 'sparkling moments', builds pupils' self-confidence and self-reliance very effectively and enables them to make good progress in their learning. Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements. Health and safety arrangements, including risk assessments, comply with statutory regulations. Pupils' academic guidance is excellent. Their work is marked consistently and effective use is made of this to guide pupils in the next steps needed to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported very well. This contributes very well to their good progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The determination of the headteacher that all pupils can succeed is equally shared by curriculum subject leaders and, in particular, those with responsibility for English, mathematics and science. Tracking and monitoring systems are used rigorously by teachers to set challenging targets for all pupils. Expectations of what can be achieved are extremely high and have focused closely since the last inspection on continual improvement and equal opportunities for each pupil's academic and personal development. There is a strong commitment to the elimination of discrimination. Within this small school, teachers have a wide range of responsibilities. They manage these extremely well and all staff, including administrative personnel, share an enthusiasm and commitment to extending their skills for the benefit of the pupils. In the main, the school has accurately identified strengths and areas for continued improvement. Governance is good. It is self-critical and reflective and enables governors to challenge and hold the school to account. There are extremely close ties with all parts of the local community and the school's contribution to community cohesion is good.



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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	1

### 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?	1
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	3
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	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	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?	2
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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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**

I thoroughly enjoyed inspecting your school and appreciated the friendly welcome you gave to me. I enjoyed talking to some of you and hearing how much you love coming to school. I really enjoyed joining you in your 'wake up-shake up' session and watching you perform your festival dance. These were excellent whole school performances of which you should be really proud. I was impressed to see how much you enjoy your lessons, and the playtimes and lunchtimes you spend with your friends.

You go to a good school. These are some of the things the school does well.

You are taught well and receive outstanding care, support and guidance. You make good progress in lessons and your behaviour is good. I was very impressed with your responsible attitude and the way you consider each other's feelings and are there to help each other, for example in your circle of friends.

You thoroughly enjoy the many interesting activities arranged for you. Your school's leaders are determined to continue to improve your school, so that you all continue to do as well as you possibly can. You are exceptionally well looked after and your headteacher and staff work extremely hard to make certain that no one is left out. Your parents are very pleased with your progress in school. I have asked your staff to improve your school further by:

- giving more able pupils further opportunities to extend the quality of their writing
- for the children in the Reception class to have more opportunities every day to develop their investigative and creative skills outdoors.

You can help improve your school by continuing to attend regularly, listening very carefully to the advice of the staff and working as hard as you possibly can. This will help you continue to achieve well and reach even higher standards.

Thank you for helping me with this inspection.