

Oakfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135179
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	333750
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	420
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	Julia Bellamy
Headteacher	Garry Ratcliffe
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Oakfield Lane Dartford DA1 2SW
Telephone number	01322 220831

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2009
Inspection number	333750

Fax number

01322 220831

Age group	3-11
Inspection dates	2-3 July 2009
Inspection number	333750

© 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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average size school. It opened in September 2008, when most pupils and some staff transferred from two previous schools that closed. Children will in future be joining the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception Years). The school's new buildings are being developed in phases and are not expected to be completed until October 2009. At the time of the inspection, pupils had only recently moved into the classrooms which form the first phase of the development. The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school offers a range of extended services to families, including breakfast and after-school clubs. The school shares the site with a separately managed children's centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oakfield Primary provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils.

'The building work has obviously brought with it some difficulties, but I would like to praise the staff for the minimal disruption that has occurred, and for the precautions that have been taken to keep our children safe.' This comment from a parent sums up the views of the great majority who appreciate the way the headteacher and staff have steered this new school through the continuing challenge of a staggered move into new buildings while construction work continues. Parents describe Oakfield as 'going from strength to strength'. They recognise how well their children are cared for and many contrast their children's experiences here with previous schools. As one put it, 'The children are beginning to learn at their full potential and have a much better educational opportunity than previously.'

Pupils transferred to the school with low standards, especially in Years 4 to 6. Parents are correct in observing that many pupils brought with them a legacy of past underachievement. At the end of this first year, standards are below average, and especially low in writing, but achievement is satisfactory and rates of progress are accelerating so that pupils are now beginning to catch up on previously lost ground. Much of this success is due to the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the staff team that he has built. Again, this is commented upon by many parents. As one explained, 'The headteacher is giving a strong lead and taking the school in the right direction. He has identified the areas that need addressing and is constantly implementing measures required to make the necessary improvements.' Among these, parents list 'affordable, regular and exciting excursions and experiences for the pupils, along with new homework, behaviour and teaching policies'. Parents share school leaders' and governors' realistic picture that the school still has further to go to raise standards and further accelerate pupils' progress. In the words of another parent, 'The headteacher just needs time for his good work and ideas to be seen.' Nevertheless, leaders' success in already securing such noticeable changes for the better in just a few months show the school's good capacity for continued improvement. Leaders' monitoring of lessons and of pupils' progress has helped to raise the quality of provision and guided newly qualified teachers in making their lessons increasingly effective. Although leaders have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and where further improvements are needed, monitoring has given them an overly positive view of the effectiveness of some lessons because it has focused more on the features of teaching than on how much pupils are learning.

Standards are beginning to rise because staff expect more of their pupils. That is particularly the case for those pupils who need extra help with their learning. These pupils make good progress because of the support they are given. More could still be expected of able pupils. Work is not always tailored so carefully to their needs, and sometimes whole-class teaching goes over ground that is already familiar to them. Relationships throughout the school are good and pupils are well motivated and eager to learn. Parents have noticed this too. One described how, 'My son has changed a lot. He wants to come to school now.' Pupils' behaviour is good and they mostly listen well in lessons. The pupils especially enjoy the lessons where they are given varied, practical activities, but the curriculum is still in the process of being developed because of the limitations of the building. This means, for example, that the school has so far been unable to make use of the large suite of computers that have been bought for pupils' use in information and communication technology (ICT). Attendance figures are low, despite pupils' increased enthusiasm for learning, because some families take their children

out of school, for example for holidays in term time. The school has done much to promote better attendance, but there is scope for it to do more, for example by routinely contacting parents on the first day of any unexplained absence.

School leaders have correctly identified that writing is the area where pupils' skills especially lag behind. They have also identified that the first step in improving writing is to better develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, opportunities are missed for pupils to practise these skills in lessons by, for example, explaining their thinking or sharing with larger groups or the whole class what their 'talk partner' has told them when they discuss ideas in pairs.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

'My child has had a brilliant first year.' This very appreciative comment from the parent summed up the views of many about this well run provision. From a starting point below that expected for their ages, particularly in language, children have made good progress this year. Standards at the end of the Reception Year are broadly average in most areas of learning, although still below average in communication, language and literacy. Children make especially good progress in their personal and social development. A key reason for this is the well resourced outdoor area that provides the children with a stimulating learning environment where they initiate their own play, explore, investigate and give free rein to their imagination through role play. Some of the children's creative work is of a notably high standard. Their paintings in the style of Jackson Pollock come close to passing as forgeries! Staff are ever mindful of children's welfare and they keep a careful track of each child's progress. They then use these accurate assessments to plan the next steps in the children's learning. However, staff do not have accurate records of the prior learning of those children in the Reception Year (about a third of the year group) who join the school from other pre-schools rather than the Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by extending opportunities for pupils to use and develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Ensure that, in all lessons, activities are planned which challenge and extend all pupils, and especially the more able.
- Improve attendance by dissuading parents from taking their children on holiday in term time and by immediately chasing up unexplained absences.
- Focus leaders' monitoring of lessons on pupils' learning and on the progress they are making.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average, and especially low in writing, but this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to the standards that pupils were assessed at the start of the year and in their previous schools. Progress is accelerating, enabling pupils to catch up on previous underachievement. That is especially the case in reading. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they benefit from well targeted support. More able

pupils do not all do as well as they could because they are not always set work that extends and challenges them to the full. The progress that pupils make in their key literacy and numeracy skills prepares them adequately for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their new school, feel safe and, because they enjoy school, are increasingly keen to learn. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is reflected in all aspects of school life, particularly in celebration assemblies and in the range of rewards which help to promote the school's positive ethos, culture and good behaviour. Pupils treat each other with respect and consideration, and this has helped make Oakfield a harmonious community. Pupils are confident that there is an adult they could talk to if they were worried. Members of the school council, lunchtime 'buddies' and peer mediators all take their roles very seriously. Pupils appreciate the diversity of the world around them and contribute to the wider community, throwing themselves enthusiastically into fundraising for charitable events and enjoying Oakfield's links with schools in other parts of the world. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles and they are keen to take part in the range of physical activities that the school provides to help them keep fit. Attendance remains significantly below average because too many families take their children on holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers get on well with their pupils and are increasingly effective at motivating them so that they are attentive, concentrate well and get through a reasonable amount of work. They vary activities in lessons, which helps keeps the pupils interested and involved and, in the words of the pupils, 'makes learning fun'. So much so that parents comment that their children are 'keen to tell us what they have been learning'. Teaching assistants are deployed well, particularly to support pupils who need extra help with their learning. Leaders' monitoring shows how this effective use of support staff has improved over the course of the year in response to the feedback teachers have been given on their lessons. Although work is tailored to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, it does not always challenge and extend more able pupils. Questioning is used well to extend pupils' thinking, but teachers do not always capitalise on this to extend pupils' speaking and listening skills as a prelude to improving pupils' writing. There are examples of good marking that shows pupils how to move their work on to the next level, but this is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Teachers are adept at adapting the curriculum to make it relevant to pupils' experience and to help bring learning to life. Like almost every other school, Oakfield has been plagued with headlice, but here this has been seized as a learning opportunity – so pupils have studied and made monstrous models of headlice linking work on minibeasts in science with art and design technology. Several initiatives have helped to bring about improvements in basic skills, especially in reading, and the school has appropriately prioritised writing as the focus for the coming

year. Good use is made of visits and visitors to broaden pupils' experience, with pupils going out, for example, to places of worship covering different faiths and having the chance to meet well-known children's authors. Some pupils have started to learn Japanese words and phrases, alongside the classes that learn French. The many extra-curricular clubs are well attended. Although there is much about the curriculum that is good, the build has had a negative impact on some important aspects of provision. In particular, building works have greatly limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT. The distance some pupils have to travel this term to move safely between the play areas and their classrooms results in some temporary loss of teaching time.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Careful attention is paid to ensuring pupils' safety and welfare. Staff know the pupils well and they act promptly when help is needed. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in particular, benefit from good support, drawing well on links with outside agencies. As a parent of a child with additional learning needs commented, 'The staff have supported my son every step of the way.' Pupils, and their families, benefit from the range of extended services that go beyond the ordinary school day. The school does much to promote and reward regular attendance, but there is scope for further action to discourage avoidable absence. Parents confirm and value the strengthening partnership that is involving them more closely in their children's education and keeping them well informed about their children's progress. Pupils have targets to help guide them on the next steps in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Although older pupils are very aware of their targets, younger pupils are much less clear about what their targets are.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and governors have been very successful in bringing together experienced and newly qualified staff in a united team with a shared vision for raising standards through higher expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Although all are well aware that there is further to go, initiatives that they have introduced to raise pupils' confidence and to accelerate progress have already shown positive impact. As a result, pupils are beginning to catch up on ground lost in previous years when many underachieved. Senior staff have made good use of pupils' assessment information to set challenging whole-school targets that have helped to drive improvement, most notably in reading. Staff with leadership responsibilities regularly monitor the quality of lessons, planning and pupils' work. This could be sharpened by focusing more on the learning of all groups of pupils rather than the features of teaching. In a short time, the school has developed good provision for community cohesion. Including through the neighbouring children's centre, it has developed a strong partnership with families and the wider community and it is broadening pupils' awareness of other beliefs and ways of life in Britain and the wider world.

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

4 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakfield Community Primary School, Dartford DA1 2SW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your new school. You are seeing a lot of changes at the moment as the new buildings are gradually finished and it is certainly an exciting time for you all. Several of you, and lots of your parents, told us how much things have improved at the school in its first year. Oakfield is giving you a satisfactory and speedily improving education. Much of the credit goes to your headteacher and the staff of your well run school. They, and governors, have a clear picture of what to do to improve things even more, but we have asked them, when they visit lessons, to look particularly at how well you are all learning. Credit is due to you too for the way you are increasingly keen to learn. We were pleased to see how well behaved everyone is and how well you get on together. This is helping to make Oakfield such a happy place to be, where you are looked after well and feel safe.

The children in the Nursery and Reception are making good progress. There is good progress too for those of you who need extra help with your learning. Overall, though, the progress you make in your learning is reasonable, and getting better. We have asked staff to make sure that they always give you work that stretches you. You can help by telling teachers when you find things are too easy. It is writing where you do least well. Staff are well aware of this and have plans to help you to develop your writing by, in the first instance, improving your speaking and listening skills. We agree that this will help you and we have asked them to give you more opportunities in lessons to explain your thinking and to report back on what your 'talk partner' has shared with you. Some of you are losing out because you miss school unnecessarily. We have asked the school to do more to remind your parents of the need to make sure you are always in school and to make faster contact with your parents any time you are not there.

Thank you again for being so helpful to us on our visit, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector