

The Oaks Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103165
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336025
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Catharine Grundy
Headteacher	Mrs Anne-Margaret Phelps
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They spent half of their time looking at learning and visited 18 lessons or parts of lessons. Inspectors observed 13 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, records of meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 28 parent and carer questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of strategies to improve standards, especially in writing
- the progress made by pupils in Years 1 and 2
- how well teachers use assessment information to consistently challenge groups of pupils of different ability
- the extent to which governors are involved in school improvement.

Information about the school

This average sized school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in Nursery and Reception classes. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is below average. Most pupils are White British. The daily before and after school clubs are managed by governors. There is also privately managed pre-school provision on two half days each week. The school has gained the Leading Parent Partnership Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school is a caring and friendly setting in which to learn. The headteacher provides focussed educational direction based on raising standards. All staff and governors share her clear vision for school improvement and a strong team ethos is evident.

Accurate self-evaluation enables leaders to identify and target the correct areas for development. Their actions have led to a trend in improvement, particularly in mathematics, but some weaknesses remain. Plans reflect what the school needs to do to consolidate success and gain further improvement. Governors are supportive of the school but are not involved enough in planning for improvement or fully effective in holding leaders to account for its performance. Established management systems allow the school to run smoothly. The capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a good start to their education and achieve well. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress and, by the end of Year 6, attain standards that are below average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science. This represents satisfactory achievement from their starting points on entering school. Strategies introduced over the last year have successfully raised standards in reading, mathematics and science. They have been less successful in writing, which remains a weak aspect of pupils' performance. Leaders rightly acknowledge there is more to do in widening pupils' vocabulary to enrich their creative writing, and in providing more opportunities for them to write purposefully across the curriculum. Some teachers are not adept at showing pupils exactly how they could improve their writing.

Inconsistency in teaching and learning is the main reason for progress being satisfactory rather than better. Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to challenge pupils of different ability. This is particularly evident in Years 1 to 4. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not sharp enough to iron out these inconsistencies. This leads to teachers not being entirely accountable for the progress their pupils make. Pupils behave well and enjoy coming to school, as reflected in their improved attendance. They have positive attitudes to learning, showing curiosity and interest in their activities. A wide range of enrichment activities add variety and further interest to the curriculum. The school places a high priority on the care of pupils and staff cherish them as unique individuals. This is much appreciated by parents and carers. Pupils say they are looked after well and feel safe and secure in school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by:

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- developing teachers' skills in showing pupils the next specific steps they need to take to improve their writing
- extending pupils' vocabulary to enrich their creative writing and providing more opportunities to write purposefully across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information effectively, in order to set challenging work that matches the abilities of different groups of pupils
 - making sure teachers are fully accountable for the progress their pupils make.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - sharpening the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
 - developing the skills of governors in planning for improvement and in holding the school to account for its performance.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils engage in their activities and work collaboratively in pairs and small groups to complete tasks. They work steadily and are willing to ask for help when faced with difficulties. Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities. This was evident in a design and technology lesson for pupils in Year 6, in which they were creating a Three Dimensional poster to appeal for help for survivors of the earthquake in Haiti. Pupils enjoy books and read well. Nonetheless, they do not have a wide vocabulary and this limits their creative writing skills. Pupils appropriately use their mathematical calculation skills to solve number problems in real life situations. Their competent investigational skills enhance work in science. They confidently use information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects. There is no significant difference between the achievement of different groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as other pupils because of the extra support they receive.

Pupils are polite and considerate towards others and this contributes positively to the harmonious atmosphere throughout the school. They engage with those from different backgrounds and understand that they share common values. Pupils contribute well to school life by willingly taking on responsibilities and carrying them out diligently, such as being a member of the school council or a play leader. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and know about the main threats to their health and how to avoid them. Pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers manage classrooms well so that they are calm and friendly places in which to learn. As a result, pupils maintain their concentration for long periods and little time is lost. Secure subject knowledge enables teachers to ask relevant questions to find out what pupils know and understand, and to take their learning forward. Planning is successful in building on previous work so that pupils can use what they already know to support their current learning. Nonetheless, not all teachers consistently provide work that is sufficiently challenging. Teaching assistants are soundly deployed to support all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The curriculum satisfactorily matches pupils' needs and provides adequate preparation for their future lives. It is enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities, including cookery, gardening and sports clubs. These are enjoyed by pupils, as is seen in their high take-up rate. Pupils have the opportunity to experience educational visits and work with a variety of visitors to extend their skills and widen their horizons. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to refine and extend their writing skills by writing purposefully across the curriculum. Partnerships with other organisations have been especially successful in meeting the needs of those pupils who are potentially vulnerable.

The school provides a safe learning environment for individuals and groups of pupils. Staff are firmly committed to the well-being and safety of all pupils. Robust child protection arrangements and risk assessments are in place. Staff know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about the well-being of a pupil. The school has worked successfully over the last year to raise attendance, which was low and is now

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average. Early morning provision by the school has impacted positively on pupils' attendance. The good support for potentially vulnerable pupils plays an important role in fostering their learning and development. The good links with outside agencies ensure that extra support for individual pupils is readily available when needed. Good transition arrangements throughout the school and on to secondary school contribute well to pupils' well-being and development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders establish ambition and drive improvement in a satisfactory way by ensuring the school focuses on the priority areas for development. Relationships with parents and carers are good, and the school helps them to support their children's learning in different ways. This has been recognised by the school gaining the Leading Parent Partnership Award. The school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination well. It has relevant information about different groups of pupils and regularly checks their performance and their contribution to school life. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning lack sharpness. Leaders promote community cohesion within the school well and are working hard to strengthen engagement with a range of groups in the local community and beyond. All safeguarding requirements are met and arrangements are regularly reviewed. The school works well with other agencies to reduce the risk of harm to pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Nursery with skills that are below those expected for their age. Consistently good quality teaching and learning in Nursery and Reception means that they make good progress and achieve well across all areas of learning. Teamwork between adults is good and they have a good understanding of the needs of children of this age. Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves and this contributes to their development as independent learners. They are eager to learn and show much enjoyment in their activities. This was evident when they were excitedly making up and selling packets of seeds in the area set up as a garden centre in the Nursery. Children behave well, taking turns and sharing fairly. Good leadership has improved the rate of children's progress recently by ensuring staff always use assessment information effectively to set tasks that are interesting and matched to their individual abilities. The leader has correctly identified that the outdoor area has not been fully developed to support children's learning throughout the day. Good quality care places strong emphasis on children's well-being. Parents appreciate the way they are kept fully informed about the progress their children make.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to inspection questionnaires were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. Two comments were typical of many: 'My child likes it there. The staff are lovely and look after my child very well,' and, 'The school always acts promptly when I have any concerns.' A very small minority did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. There was no such behaviour during the inspection and pupils say it is dealt with promptly if it occurs. A few indicated that the school did not inform them of their child's progress. Inspection evidence does not support this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Oaks Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 227 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	61	9	32	2	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	63	9	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	48	10	37	3	11	1	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	59	8	30	3	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	59	8	30	3	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	52	12	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	44	13	48	2	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	50	12	46	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	57	9	32	3	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	44	11	41	4	15	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	50	11	39	0	0	2	7
The school is led and managed effectively	16	59	8	30	1	4	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	63	9	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Oaks Primary School, Birmingham, B14 5RY

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do. Yours is a friendly school that helps you make satisfactory progress.

This is what we found out about your school.

You are keen to learn and enjoy coming to school.

Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe, in and around school and on visits.

You do better in reading, mathematics and science than in writing.

Behaviour is good and you work well together in pairs and small groups.

In the pupil questionnaires many of you commented that you enjoy lessons because teachers make learning fun.

You enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council.

The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to help you do better.

These are the things we have asked your school to do now to help to make it better.

Improve your writing skills.

Make sure teaching always challenges you to think hard and make good progress.

Support governors in developing their skills in helping the school to improve.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector

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