

Oakhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124000
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	340471
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Newman
Headteacher	Mrs Lyn Paxton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent approximately 50% of their inspection time looking at pupils' learning, visiting 17 lessons and observing 13 teachers. Meetings were held with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work; and looked at pupils' current work, the school's assessment and national assessment data, policies and minutes, including safeguarding documents and 65 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

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

- standards of attainment and pupils' progress in English and mathematics
- the quality of teaching and learning
- the accuracy of leaders' self-evaluation.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized school. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage, though an increasing number are from other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Nursery and Reception classes. A breakfast club is provided for pupils before school. Among the school's several achievements are Activemark, Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools awards and the International Schools 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

Oakhill is a welcoming school and, through exceptional work in promoting community cohesion, is highly regarded in the community. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked hard to bring about improvements since the last inspection and have successfully steered the school through a difficult period of staffing change and development. Improved systems for monitoring the school's work have resulted in better teaching and more effective use of assessment. These in turn are ensuring that pupils now make satisfactory progress. There has been good improvement in pupils' attendance.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start. Although they enter the Nursery class with very low abilities for their age across all areas of learning, they learn and develop at a good pace because of good provision for them. Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 in the past has been limited. Inaccurate and somewhat over-inflated assessments and some inadequate teaching led to gaps in pupils' learning not being properly addressed. This left the school with a distorted view of pupils' actual achievement. However, following local authority support in 2007/08, these shortcomings have been effectively dealt with. Despite the need for individual assessment of pupils to be more sharply focused, current teaching and learning builds satisfactorily on pupils' earlier achievement. Nevertheless, the school recognises that standards overall in English and mathematics are lower than they should be and are priorities for improvement. The school did not build on the much improved standards seen in 2008 and a significant number of pupils fell short of their expectations in the 2009 national tests, particularly in mathematics and writing. A contributing factor was the gap in pupils' knowledge of using mathematical skills in different ways and in different contexts. Strategies adopted by the school to rectify this are working and, although use of them is at a relatively early stage, it is evident from pupils' current work that standards are broadly average and improving in both English and mathematics calculation.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are well mannered and considerate of one another, behave well and have a strong sense of what is right and wrong. Their good cultural awareness stems from the powerful contribution which the school makes to community cohesion. Pupils' pastoral needs are very well provided for and the school's work with parents and carers has established a strong community spirit, an offshoot of which is the good improvement seen in pupils' current attendance.

Leaders and managers are clear about the school's strengths and areas for improvement and, given the still early stages of development, they have accurately assessed the school's effectiveness. Strengths have been drawn from the well-targeted staff

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development and support which have boosted confidence and raised expectations. The school's ambition is reflected in the way future targets have been raised to keep pace with the school's confident prediction that further improvements will be seen. Currently, the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - embedding assessment practices
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to investigate
 - planning for pupils to use mathematical skills and knowledge across the curriculum.
- Raise standards in writing by:
 - allowing pupils to write independently more often
 - providing opportunities for a wider range of purposes and contexts for their writing.
- Ensure that assessment focuses more sharply on pupils' individual needs in order to identify more clearly their next steps in learning and promote quicker progress.
- 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 have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. When asked why, they say, 'Teachers are nice and they make lessons fun.' Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils are attentive and they work sensibly, particularly when sharing tasks with partners. In their questionnaires they highlighted using computers, sports clubs and homework as some of their favourite activities. They learn at a satisfactory pace in lessons but their performance is slowed when tasks are either too easy or too difficult for them. For example, a pupil who could explain the value of three-digit numbers quite confidently was only expected to calculate in tens and units. This is because teachers do not yet pinpoint precisely what each pupil needs to do next in order to make the best progress.

Pupils' attainment is below average at the end of Year 6. Nevertheless, there has been improvement since 2007, when standards were well below average. The school's robust approach to establishing more accurate assessment and stronger teaching raised standards in 2008 but this was not sustained because of pockets of ineffective teaching which caused a dip in standards in 2009. Despite this, standards have not fallen to the levels seen previously. There is a more settled picture currently. Teaching is more consistent, expectations are higher and more pupils are on track to reach expected targets. Teachers are beginning to measure progress more confidently and with greater accuracy. This enables them to build steadily on pupils' earlier achievements. Pupils with

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special educational needs and/or disabilities are quickly identified and catered for through individual and small-group support and make satisfactory progress. A nurture class for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Key Stage 1 who have additional social and emotional needs gives their learning and personal development an important boost and ensures satisfactory and sometimes good progress from their varying starting points.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. Younger pupils say they like being helped in the playground by the older ones. Relationships are good and pupils understand the disadvantages surrounding bullying and racism. Pupils also understand some of the dangers they may encounter outside school and are prepared well to make informed choices about their personal well-being. Pupils are fully aware of the need to eat sensibly and maintain levels of fitness. There is good attendance at after-school sports clubs. Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities around the school and use the school council well as a means of sharing their views. Pupils give generously to a number of charity appeals and undertake joint projects with local schools. Pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding is widened very effectively through their links with schools across the world. Their work with a local business to improve the school grounds helps pupils to develop as community members and progress satisfactorily towards the skills they will need to secure their future well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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

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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

The majority of lessons are well planned and teachers make clear to pupils precisely what they are expected to learn. Teachers use electronic whiteboards well to lift the pace of lessons and keep pupils on their toes. Teachers generally take account of the different abilities of pupils and use different methods and resources to help them learn. As a result, pupils enjoy what they do. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They know the pupils well and are sensitive to their particular learning needs. Relationships in lessons are very positive and pupils usually strive to do their best.

Teachers' use of assessment information to check progress gives them an overview of pupils' needs and helps them to plan appropriate objectives for lessons. These objectives are not always the 'best fit', however, and at times leave pupils under-challenged because they are too easy or over-challenged because pupils do not have the knowledge and skills needed. Pupils generally know their broader targets but are not always made fully aware of the small steps they need to take towards achieving them. Time at the end of lessons sometimes focuses pupils on what they have done without challenging them to think about what they need to do next. The curriculum adequately enables pupils to progress in literacy and numeracy skills but their use across the range of subjects has not been sufficiently explored. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well provided for and there are good opportunities for art and sports. Pupils' experiences are enhanced, not only through the teaching of French but also by pupils' bi-annual residential visit to France. There is a good range of planned activities to support learning and good-quality sports tuition and after-school clubs. Parents and carers agree overwhelmingly that their children are well cared for in school. They are very supportive and appreciate the quality of information shared by the school. The most vulnerable pupils are very well cared for and nurtured well to ensure that they can learn alongside others. Arrangements for the induction and transfer of pupils work well. The school works effectively with other agencies to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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?

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The school is led and managed satisfactorily. More robust monitoring and evaluation by the headteacher and the early signs of success this has brought has strengthened the resolve of the whole staff to continue to improve progress and raise standards. Senior leaders support the headteacher well and play a crucial part in gathering an overview of the school's performance which contributes to the accurate self-evaluation of its current effectiveness. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is rigorous and has effectively eliminated earlier pockets of inadequate provision. Recent training has given governors a clearer understanding of their role. They challenge and support the school with renewed drive and determination, particularly over standards, and ensure that safeguarding procedures meet government requirements and go beyond.

The school engages well with parents and carers and provides many opportunities, for example through family learning activities, to enable them to support their children's learning. This is an inclusive school which challenges all forms of discrimination and strives continually to give all pupils the opportunities and support which they need in order to achieve. Work to promote community cohesion is outstanding. The school's very thorough analysis of the needs of different cultural groups means that each is recognised and valued for the contribution it can make. The school responds to the changing needs of the community it serves and seeks to raise local aspirations and skills, for example by providing training for adults in the use of ICT. There are positive working links locally and in other parts of the United Kingdom with schools that differ in character from Oakhill. Through work to gain the International Schools Award, pupils now have productive communications with schools in France and Australia and have set up a mutually supportive partnership with a school in Kenya.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's knowledge and skills are well below expectations for their age when they start in the Nursery class. Their skills are particularly low in areas of communication, language and literacy, social and emotional development, and mathematical development. Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has secured good provision for their learning and development. As a result, they make good progress and by the end of Reception are close to expectations in most areas of learning but still have some ground to make up in their writing skills. There are well-planned opportunities for indoor and outdoor play, and a good balance between activities led by adults and those which children choose for themselves. Lively and engaging teaching of letters and sounds, and early number skills, helps children to gain in confidence and become more prepared to tackle simple tasks independently.

Provision for children's welfare is good. Good communications between school and home help children to settle quickly. Adults are very watchful over the development and well-being of their designated groups of children. All share the task of gathering detailed records of children's progress and planning their next steps. Those with additional needs are quickly identified and best help is provided for them. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well resourced and children thrive in their stimulating environment.

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

A very large majority of parents express entirely positive views about the school. Inspectors agree with the overwhelming view that children are well cared for. A small minority of parents and carers expressed some concerns about behaviour but inspectors saw no evidence to substantiate those views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakhill 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 340 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	52	29	45	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	55	27	42	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	37	37	57	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	48	28	43	4	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	54	28	43	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	46	27	42	7	11	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	38	36	55	4	6	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)	24	37	31	48	2	3	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	48	32	49	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	46	24	37	7	11	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	38	33	51	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	45	29	45	4	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	55	26	40	3	5	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.



25 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakhill Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 5NS

Thank you very much for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. Your friendliness and the help you gave made it a pleasure for us to be in Oakhill. We were impressed by your good manners and behaviour and delighted to see how much your attendance at school is improving. That is very important, so do keep it up. I agree with you that your teachers make learning fun and can see why you enjoy school with all of the sports clubs, visits, etc. How exciting it must be for you to share your experiences with children in other schools in Kenya and Australia!

You are making satisfactory progress in your work but the standards you reach, especially in writing and mathematics, should be higher than they are at present.

Your teachers plan lively lessons with lots of activities and are working hard to make them even better. The grown-ups in school take good care of you and help you to feel and stay safe.

Your teachers, school governors, and parents and carers would like your progress and the standards you reach to be better. In order to help that happen I have asked teachers to give you more chances to investigate mathematics and to use your mathematics skills in different ways and in different subjects. I have also asked if they can let you write more often on your own and for different purposes. Finally, I have asked teachers to look carefully at exactly what each of you can do now and help you to plan what you need to do next so that you make the best possible progress. Of course, you must play your part by continuing to work hard, always attending school and enjoying your learning as much as you already do.

Best wishes to all of you.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Johnson

Lead inspector

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