

The Orion Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131970
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	341263
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Caroline McKee

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	478
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Dane Batley-Gladden
Headteacher	Christopher Flathers
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent around two thirds of their time looking at pupils' learning and 27 lessons were visited. Nearly all the teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, a few parents, the chair of governors and the staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school development plan, the self-evaluation form, pupils' academic records, monitoring files, safeguarding records and films of the pupils' musical and drama performances. One hundred and twenty one parental questionnaires were analysed.

The inspection team looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which the curriculum plays an important part in the pupils' all-round personal development
- the extent to which the improved Key Stage 2 national test results have been embedded and improved upon
- how effectively the senior leadership team monitors progress, particularly in terms of improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This larger than average school is federated with another primary school. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups, who speak English as an additional language, or, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are much higher than average. Most of the latter group have moderate learning needs. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school provides for children in Early Years Foundation Stage in its Nursery and Reception classes. It has been awarded the Artsmark and Healthy School award and has appeared in an Ofsted publication called Twenty outstanding primary schools-excelling against the odds in challenging circumstances. It provides a breakfast club each morning.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Orion Primary has maintained its status of being an outstanding school. It has a continual excited buzz that is infectious and invigorating. The inspirational headteacher ensures that achievement and 'The Orion Way' are celebrated in every corner of the school. It is at the very heart of the community and is held in particularly high esteem by the pupils and parents. 'I can't keep my child away, even when she is ill,' one parent said, and many agree with this sentiment. Each and every pupil is proud of their school and wants to achieve and aspire to great heights. Pupils find learning fun and love all of the different activities that give them the very best start in life and lead to personal development and behaviour that are outstanding. They talk with enthusiasm about their work, are keen to do their best, and tackle everything with energy and determination. Pupils love the staff and really appreciate how much they do for them. They know that they get only the very best. The pupils have an astuteness that enables them to make wise choices about their own health and safety and to suggest how to make the school even better. They successfully organise events to raise money to help others who are less fortunate than themselves. They are ambitious and well prepared for the next stages of their education and later life.

Since the previous inspection the school has not been complacent. It has improved teaching, raising expectations so that pupils make outstanding progress and attain above national averages by the time they reach Key Stage 2. Orion has adapted and adjusted the dynamic curriculum to meet the ever-changing needs of the pupils and their families, who welcome their input into planning what to learn next. It has organised exciting events and arranged many opportunities to perform on national stages. Its work within the federation has enabled staff to share further experiences, develop teaching, leadership and management skills, and share innovative professional ideas. The school has rightly identified its next steps as improving the sharing of knowledge of the children's learning between the nursery and the reception staff and improving the use of assessment, particularly by involving the pupils more in making choices about what they should learn next and how.

The overarching element that makes this school so successful is the motivational drive of the headteacher. His passion permeates throughout the school and community. He has built a trust that makes everyone believe that they can succeed and he enables this to happen. He is very well supported by his enthusiastic staff and governing body, who continually evaluate and look for ways to innovate and improve. Their care, support and guidance make an outstanding contribution to the lives of the pupils and to the confidence and esteem of the community. The school's capacity for sustaining these improvements is outstanding.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share assessment knowledge and check for accuracy more regularly between the Nursery and Reception classes so that the children can make a seamless progression between the two.
- Provide more detailed assessment information and encourage pupils to be more independent by making their own choices for the next steps in their academic learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons, pupils work with pride and enthusiasm, and drive themselves to succeed. They make rapid progress because lessons are fun, stimulating and relevant to their lives and experiences. They apply their skills across a range of subjects and in their topic projects. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson the pupils were able to see how the use of co-ordinates would help them with map reading or construction work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English make outstanding progress in line with their classmates, because their needs are understood so well and tasks and resources really stimulate their learning. From a low start on entering the school, pupils from Year 3 upwards show skills in English, mathematics and science that are above average for their age. Their books and work in lessons show that standards have been sustained since the impressive 2009 Year 6 national test results.

Pupils enjoy school immensely, grow in confidence and develop very positive attitudes to learning. Happy relationships support the hardworking atmosphere. Pupils are very aware of possible dangers and are clear about how to stay safe. They develop a good understanding of their responsibilities to the school and the wider community, and eagerly take advantage of the many opportunities to contribute to both. Pupils develop impressive social skills and work supportively together, with a genuine interest in each other's ideas. This, together with good and improving standards in the acquisition of basic skills, means that they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Their attendance is average and improving as fewer parents choose to take their children on extended holidays. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, and assemblies are celebratory and thoughtful occasions in which pupils are encouraged to think about others and their own place in the world, whilst constantly and successfully striving to raise aspirations.

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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is dynamic and exciting, based on broad areas of learning that promote a lively interest and active approach. It makes a strong contribution to pupils' improving progress and their personal development. Carefully and imaginatively planned themes, with strong links between subjects, have successfully enthused pupils and have done much to increase their confidence and skill as learners. Their contribution to the content gives them additional ownership and interest. The arts plays a significant role in developing their confidence in social and communication skills, and raising not just their self-esteem but also that of the community who travel considerable distances to see the pupils perform. The curriculum is enriched by an amazing range of clubs, visits and visitors, and sporting activities are a particular strength.

In classrooms, the climate for learning is exciting and purposeful, and expectations for rapid progress are very high. Much teaching encourages pupils to think for themselves, and tasks are closely matched to the needs of individual pupils. Assessment is used well to adapt work to meet these needs, but pupils are not always made fully aware of what they could do to help themselves with the next stages of their learning. Group work is a common feature, encouraging pupils to develop collaborative skills. Explanations are very clear and pupils are encouraged to ask questions if they do not understand, or to help each other. Teaching assistants lend good support and ensure all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, develop confidence that they can succeed. Marking is regular, providing supportive comments and points for improvement.

The school is a hub of support for the whole community. It is committed to the care and

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welfare of every pupil, and comprehensive policies and procedures support this commitment. The breakfast club is a good start to the day for many pupils. The school has worked hard, using innovative approaches, to improve attendance and this has been successful. A family ethos pervades and helps ensure that pupils feel valued, central to decision making, and well looked after. Close support for potentially vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, alongside particularly effective partnerships with outside agencies, ensures that the needs of these pupils are very well met.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Passion, drive and a belief that nothing is too good for these pupils lie at the heart of the school's continued success and improvement. The headteacher communicates his high expectations persuasively to staff and parents and together they work with determination to improve the opportunities and learning for the community and the federation. A positive and trusting climate has been established where everyone is working together to make the school even better. As a result, staff morale is high, and a strong sense of teamwork helps promote a quickening of pupils' progress. Recent gains have been consolidated and built on. In this way, the school is committed to promoting equal opportunities and makes sure that each and every child can strive to become a star. Any underachievement is picked up early and booster classes are put in place to ensure catch-up is achieved.

The governing body fulfils all legal requirements and ensures the welfare of pupils and staff. All safeguarding arrangements were found to be highly effective at the time of the inspection. A core team of governors hold the school to account for its work, and regular monitoring visits ensure that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governors realise that further training for the whole governing body is necessary so that all will have the same level of expertise. The school is an outstanding example of how to draw a community together. It recognises areas for development, plans effectively to build on strengths, has a good understanding of its context, and actively promotes a deeper understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of communities beyond the school. The school is central to the community and drives forward aspirations and self-belief.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills which are well below average, especially in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress, particularly in reading, writing and calculating, and in their physical development.

Relationships are good between children and adults, and also amongst children from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Most demonstrate through their behaviour that they know how to keep themselves safe. Classroom activities are characterised by stimulating and well-managed learning. This ensures that all children enjoy their learning and are busy and active, both inside and outdoors. All adults have high expectations, and good classroom management leads to good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. A well-balanced mix of activities is planned, with some led by adults while others encourage children to choose for themselves.

Assessment is used satisfactorily to guide the children's next steps in learning, but the school recognises that it is not carried out sufficiently regularly or accurately across the Nursery and Reception classes to ensure a seamless transition as children move between the two. Resources are well managed and good use is made of the outdoor area to extend learning. Adults offer clear explanations and skilfully ask questions to ensure all children have understood. By the end of the Reception year, children are well prepared for entry into Year 1. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and now has a well-established and good team. The team has rightly identified the areas for improvement with a strong focus on raising attainment.

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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

Responses were received from a third of the families at the school. The overwhelming majority were supportive and appreciative of the school. Almost all felt that the leadership of the school and the teaching were very strong and only a very few had any concerns, with no particular pattern. For example, one negative comment was made about the quality of the school dinners, but the inspectors found that they were nutritious and varied.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Orion 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 121 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 478 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	91	75	30	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	83	69	36	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	78	64	42	36	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	66	40	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	91	75	29	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	61	44	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	53	56	47	0	0	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)	63	51	52	49	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	67	55	51	44	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	76	63	42	36	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	41	67	59	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	86	71	30	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	86	71	33	29	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.



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11 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Orion Primary School, Barnet NW9 5FN

Thank you all so much for making us feel so welcome at your very special school. Nearly everything about your school is outstanding: the teaching, how well you make progress to attain above the national average, your behaviour, how well you help and support each other, your understanding of how to stay safe and live healthily, your aspirations to reach for the best possible and, most of all, your fun-loving spirit that make you the very special people that you are.

You have an exciting curriculum that gives you such a wide range of experiences and the chance to be the best and try the best in sport, music, drama and dance. The displays around the school are vibrant, exciting and show off so well all that you achieve. We found that the teachers and other staff offer you the best possible care, support and guidance so that you are safe and well prepared for your next school and life in general. We were most impressed with your headteacher and the way he makes you feel about how well you can do. He encourages the staff to improve their teaching and try new ideas to make your life exciting and learning fun.

There are two ways in which we would like the school to improve. First, the nursery and reception teachers should share information about what you can do more regularly, so that they can better plan your next steps of learning. Secondly, and this is something we thought is a challenge you could help the school with, is for the teachers to provide you with more detailed information in the classroom so that you can try to find out for yourselves what you need to do next to improve.

We all wish you every best wish for your exciting future lives!

Yours sincerely

Caroline McKee

Lead inspector

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