

Oakley Vale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133551
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	341396
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andy Cuddihy
Headteacher	Mr Michael Deane-Hall
Date of previous school inspection	24 February 2010
School address	Cheltenham Road Corby Northamptonshire
Telephone number	01536 461199
Fax number	01536 461199
Email address	head@oakleyvale.northants-ecl.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The majority of the time was spent looking at learning and 18 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. All of the teachers were observed at least once. Inspectors held meetings with a range of staff, pupils, and members of the governing body. They also talked to a few parents and carers. They observed many aspects of the school's work, and looked at a range of policies, pupil tracking data, and communications with parents and carers. They scrutinised 107 questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

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

- what the school's tracking shows about progress, especially for boys and the most able pupils
- what the school is doing to improve writing
- the success and impact of the newly created curriculum
- how well the leadership at all levels, including the governing body, has developed this new school
- how well the Reception staff plan for children's learning outdoors.

Information about the school

The school opened in September 2008. It is above average in size and will grow by one class per year for the next five years. The majority of the pupils are from a White British background with a significant and growing number from other minority ethnic groups, especially those of African or East European descent. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and very high in some year groups. Their problems with learning are mainly due to behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties or moderate learning difficulties.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Since it opened, this good school has made great strides in raising standards and improving the quality of education. The school had a difficult beginning with 230 pupils, moving from many different schools, and starting in all year groups at once. The very strong focus on pupils' personal and social development has resulted in the creation of a close and purposeful community, where pupils and adults respect each other and which promotes learning. This view is supported by 100% of the parents and carers who completed questionnaires and who say their children enjoy school. The strong and positive views of parents and carers, evident in the questionnaire and among those spoken to, reflect the outstanding way the school has promoted effective links with parents and carers.

The reason for the school's rapid improvement has been the honesty and accuracy of its self evaluation, based on close monitoring of its work and the impact on pupils' achievement. Weaknesses have been swiftly recognised and addressed. For example, the early focus on reading had a positive impact on standards. After analysis of the first year's test data the school has now turned its attention to raising standards in writing. The good leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff was effective in getting the school up and running. More of their work is now being devolved successfully to other leaders who are taking the extra responsibility with great enthusiasm and skill. This, alongside the successful progress made by the school so far, is a further indicator of the school's good capacity to continue to improve. The governors have a good understanding of what else can be done to improve the school. The use of data from pupil progress tracking, and from other monitoring activities by senior leaders and governors, is effective in raising standards.

The current standards being achieved by the pupils in most classes are broadly in line with those expected for their age, reflecting their good progress while at the school. The current pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, the boys and those pupils capable of reaching the higher levels in national assessment tests, are all making good progress. Interventions for those pupils with behavioural or learning difficulties have also resulted in those pupils making good progress. The current Year 6 pupils are well on the way to achieving and possibly exceeding the national average in reading and mathematics, although standards in writing throughout the school remain below average. The school is working to improve this but teachers still lack an awareness of how writing skills progress. They do not provide sufficient opportunities for writing at length in other subjects and do not make enough use of role play and drama as a stimulus for good writing.

The good progress evident is largely a result of good quality teaching and learning.

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Teachers make lessons lively and challenging, with work often well matched to pupils' prior attainment. Even so, pupils do not always know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve further because assessment is not always used well enough. Relationships between adults and pupils are very strong. This encourages pupils' full participation in most lessons. Their behaviour is good because they respect the staff and each other and there is rarely any disruption to learning. The school has worked hard recently to develop a more creative curriculum, based on linking subjects together to make learning more meaningful. This is proving popular and successful, and was described very positively by one pupil as 'unique.' A lack of resources and effective planning means that opportunities for the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum are missed. The provision for children in the Reception class is good, responsive to parents' and carers' needs and the use of the outdoor classroom is developing well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school by
 - providing more high quality opportunities for writing across the curriculum
 - ensuring the planning provides sufficient progression in writing skills
 - making more use of drama as a stimulus for written work.
- Use assessment information more effectively to ensure feedback helps pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the consistency of the provision for information and communication technology by
 - ensuring pupils have sufficient planned opportunities to develop their skills across the curriculum
 - extending the use of the school's electronic communications with pupils and their homes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

From the lesson observations, and the work in pupils' books and displayed around the school, it is evident that the current standards in Year 6 and in most other classes are broadly in line with those expected in reading, mathematics and science, but still below average in writing. Pupils are making good progress from low starting points and in Year 6, where the teaching is often exceptionally effective, progress is at times outstanding. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress. Boys' progress is good because the school has put in place a curriculum and activities in and out of lessons that support their learning well. The current assessments of pupils' attainment show that the proportion reaching the higher levels is growing and more of the most able pupils are achieving appropriately high standards.

Attendance is above average. Pupils feel safe, achieve well and clearly enjoy their time

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at school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, and they readily take responsibility when given jobs or when taking part in the school council. The school is preparing pupils well for the next stage in their education by helping them enjoy learning and providing good opportunities for them to work as part of a team as well as independently. Pupils have a good sense of moral and social development and appreciate the diversity of other cultures. In the best lessons pupils' sense of wonder is very well engaged by exciting tasks and challenging activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning in the school is good and at times outstanding. The staff, including the teaching and support assistants, are enthusiastic and very committed to raising standards and doing the best possible for their pupils. Planning is often very detailed and flexible as it is often adapted to pupils' needs as a result of previous learning. Pupils are regularly asked to think about their learning and where they might benefit from more help from the teacher. The school has new systems for helping teachers assess pupils' progress on a regular basis. These need time to embed and

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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further discussion and training for some staff before the full potential of these systems is realised. Although staff know their pupils' abilities and capabilities well the feedback provided to pupils, both orally and through the marking in their books, is inconsistent and does not always help them understand how well they are achieving or what they need to do to improve.

The recent changes to the curriculum have already had a positive impact on provision and on pupils' learning. Pupils talk about how they enjoy seeing how subjects link together and how they can use the skills from one subject in another. A particular strength is the 'Forest School' work which gives pupils excellent opportunities for team work, problem solving and personal development, as well as developing their understanding of the environment. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in clubs, after school activities and 'booster' groups and other one-to-one or small group interventions to support particular pupils' learning.

This is a very caring school in which pupils tell how they have adults they trust and who they would turn to in need. The learning mentor has helped a number of pupils overcome significant barriers to their learning, thus supporting their good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants are providing pupils with behavioural and/or learning difficulties with good support. First aid arrangements and facilities are good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The success of the launch of this new school has been due to the hard work of a talented senior leadership team, whose strengths are complementary, alongside the effective governing body. Governors closely monitor the schools' work and support the leadership team in overcoming difficulties and moving the school forward. The improvements evident show how successful senior leaders and governors have been and what a promising future the school has. The leadership is being developed as more staff are appointed and the school has been able to appoint strong and talented staff. The work of the school is monitored and evaluated in some detail, and outcomes used effectively to provide support where needed.

The school engages parents and carers extremely well through regular and effective communication, which they greatly value, especially regarding the curriculum changes that the school provides. Links with other agencies are also strong and some good partnerships locally are helping spread good practice further afield. The school has also

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developed some good international links. It makes good use of the range of backgrounds of its own pupils to teach about how others live, to reduce racial incidents and to eliminate inequalities. Pupils' understanding of how others live in this country is less well developed. The school is good at promoting pupils' safety through a range of systems, risk assessments, child protection arrangements and meets the expected requirements regarding safeguarding well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The good provision found elsewhere in the school is also evident in the Reception classes. Arrangements for starting school are good and take excellent account of parents' and carers' views. Children settle well and quickly become effective learners. The current classes are only the second to start at the school. The picture of attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected, although there are strengths in children's social development and in their knowledge of numbers. However, their communication and language skills are below those expected, as is their knowledge and understanding of the world. Their current attainment as shown by the school's own tracking shows they are making good progress in all areas of learning. The staff ensure the provision is safe and secure and children learn to stay healthy.

Teaching is consistently good. The staff provide a well-planned and caring environment for the children. The outdoor area has been improved greatly since the school opened and is now providing more opportunities for planned outdoor learning. A good variety of adult-led or child-initiated activities are provided and all staff take a full part in some detailed assessments and recording of children's learning. The parental involvement in

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this, by recording things that happen at home and sending them in written on a star for display, is a particular strength. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed as is shown by the plans for improving the children's transfer to Year 1 and in meeting all learning and welfare requirements .

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

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires and those spoken to during the inspection have very positive opinions about the school. This is clear when such a very large majority are happy with their child's experience at the school. A few parents and carers felt the school does not always deal consistently with behaviour issues. The reward and sanction systems are new but the inspection evidence showed that they were used effectively and there were no issues regarding inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour. A vast majority of the parents and carers feel that the school keeps their children safe. Some parents and carers particularly praised the provision for their children after they joined the Year 6 class when the school opened, and the progress they made over that year, in both their learning and their personal development.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oakley Vale 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 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 269 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	78	73	29	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	58	42	39	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	45	42	54	50	5	5	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	44	53	50	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	51	45	42	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	50	46	43	7	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	57	41	38	3	3	2	2
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)	41	39	51	49	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	44	47	44	7	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	40	48	45	11	10	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	37	52	49	7	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	58	54	43	40	2	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	60	39	36	3	3	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.



Tuesday 2 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakley Vale Primary School, Corby, NN18 8RH

I am writing to thank you for the way you welcomed us to your school on our recent visit. It was obvious that you were very interested in what we were doing and also very proud of your school and happy to tell us what you liked about it.

We agree with you that yours is a good school. It has done very well to be so good when it only recently opened, but we can see that you all really feel part of Oakley Vale and enjoy being there. Your school is well led by the headteacher and his senior staff. In particular they have built excellent links with your parents and carers and this is very positive because it helps them support your learning.

You have a very lively and talented set of teachers and teaching assistants who help you to learn. Because of this you are making good progress, especially in learning to read and in mathematics. You are also doing a lot of good work in your new curriculum topics.

We have asked the school to do three things to help it get even better and so you can make even more progress in your learning.

Help you improve your writing.

Help you understand more about how well you are doing and how you can get even better.

Give you more opportunities to use computers and other technology in all of your work.

Thank you again for your help. Enjoy your time at Oakley Vale and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector

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