

Oxley Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134717
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	341511
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	430
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Webb
Headteacher	Cathy Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons, observed 15 teachers and spent the majority of their time observing learning. Meetings were held with governors, staff, parents and carers, and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement plans, key policy documents, assessment information, governors' minutes and pupils' books. Safeguarding procedures were also checked. In addition, 63 parent questionnaire responses were received and analysed, together with questionnaire responses from staff and from pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- how well the school's strategies to raise standards in mathematics are working
- how consistently assessment is used to plan for different groups and set targets for individuals
- the effectiveness of provision for pupils who arrive after the start of the school year in ensuring they make good progress.

Information about the school

This is a large primary school which opened in September 2005 with just over 100 pupils to serve a new housing estate which is being built around the school. The majority of pupils are now from the neighbouring area. In Years 3 to 6, many pupils have joined the school other than at the usual starting time, but this is happening less frequently now. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided for in three Reception classes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of pupils come from White British families, with about one third from a variety of minority ethnic groups. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Almost a quarter of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs mainly relate to moderate learning difficulties. The school has a number of awards, with the Internationalism bronze award and Sports Partnership being awarded in 2009. The governing body manages a before- and after-school club, the Ziggy club.

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

This good school is at the very heart of its community. As the first building completed in the development of Oxley Park, the school has made an exceptional contribution in establishing and providing services to help promote a cohesive community as new families have arrived. This has not been without its challenges. Many pupils in Key Stage 2 have arrived at times other than the start of that key stage. Governors, senior leaders and staff work very effectively to build a cohesive unit in school and seize this challenge as an opportunity. As a result, the school provides a welcoming and stimulating learning environment where the care and well-being of all is given a high priority, an environment summed up by one parent as 'a fun and exciting place to be but the vibe is happy, relaxed and safe. The school seems to be able to get the balance just right.' Consequently, a number of outcomes are outstanding, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the contribution which they make to the community.

Pupils achieve well from their different starting points in this school. Attainment is a mixed picture because of the school's changing context. It is average at the end of Key Stage 2, but pupils who are currently in Year 2 are reaching above-average standards. Most of them started at the beginning of Reception and are making good progress from their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress is good across the school because the quality of teaching and assessment is good, and teachers plan carefully for groups of different abilities within the class. The attainment of pupils arriving after the start of Key Stage 2 is carefully assessed. Where necessary additional support is put in place to close these gaps. From these points, the school's tracking demonstrates clearly that the large majority of pupils make good progress from these starting points. Occasionally, in the full-class parts of lessons, pupils make slower progress because teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for some pupils, notably the higher attainers.

Systems to track pupils' progress and set challenging targets for each individual are now well established across the school. As a result, attainment has risen in all subjects and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leaders evaluate the causes of underperformance carefully and put effective plans for improvement in place. Senior leaders' impressive track record of improvement, while at the same time establishing a new school, indicates that the school's capacity for further improvement is good. Although improving, standards seen during the inspection in mathematics are lower than in other subjects because fewer pupils reach the higher levels. This is because in some lessons the activities do not challenge the high-ability pupils sufficiently.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics for the high-ability pupils, so that the school reaches its challenging targets for Level 5, by incorporating a higher level of challenge into practical investigations and problem-solving tasks.
- Increase the pace of learning during the first part of lessons when the whole class is taught by the teacher by:
 - reducing the amount of time teachers talk to the class as a whole
 - improving the opportunities for discussions between pupils and their partners
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities and pose questions that challenge the range of abilities within the class, especially the higher attainers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. The very large majority of pupils make good progress from the point when they join the school. Many of the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language have arrived in the school after the usual starting point. They make good progress because their needs are clearly identified on arrival and appropriate support is put in place both in class and in small group provision. The quality of learning in lessons is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning, and when involved in an activity or discussion with a partner their learning accelerates. This is particularly so when activities have been carefully matched to the needs of the pupil. This was the case in a Year 6 English lesson where pupils were learning how to write an explanation. Pupils improved their writing by working productively with a critical friend. The teacher gave individuals a challenge for improvement based on her assessment of their previous writing. In a small minority of lessons, where teachers expect pupils to work at the same pace on the same task or when they talk to pupils for too long, the pace of learning slows.

Pupils show a good understanding of how to be safe. This has been particularly important during building work close to the site. They are confident that adults around them will help should they need it, although bullying and racist incidents are rare. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good. They are involved in developing class rules and value the reward of golden time. Pupils of all ages are very willing to take on responsibilities within school. Older pupils help Reception children at lunchtime to unpack their food and to have a positive social experience while they eat it. Pupils feel that their views are listened to and that they are involved in decisions about the school environment, such as the planning of the conservatory. The Sports Partnership award has enhanced pupils' excellent awareness of the benefits of exercise and a healthy diet. They take full advantage of the many opportunities for exercise during and after the school day. The arrival of pupils and staff from elsewhere in the United Kingdom and abroad has given pupils valuable opportunities to establish links with children in communities elsewhere. The receipt of the Internationalism award last year recognised the effectiveness of these links in promoting cultural development.

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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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

In the large majority of lessons, teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons carefully matching a range of activities to the different abilities and needs within the class. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are used well. Teachers deploy teaching assistants effectively and the quality of their support to individuals and small groups is good. The considerable intervention programme planned to meet the different needs of pupils who arrive after the usual starting time does much to boost progress. In a small minority of lessons, teaching is satisfactory because the pace of learning is slower. This is usually at the start of lessons when pupils spend too long on the carpet listening to the teacher and do not have enough opportunities to talk to each other about their learning. When only satisfactory, the explanation is pitched at one level and does not provide sufficient challenge to extend the learning of high-ability pupils. Teachers' use of assessment is good. Marking is developmental, telling pupils what is good and how to improve.

The curriculum is in the process of being developed to reflect an increased emphasis on creativity and cross-curricular themes. There is a clear focus within the curriculum on

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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promoting personal development supported by a wide range of enrichment activities. Extra-curricular sessions are well attended. There are good opportunities for pupils to engage in practical, real-life situations. For example, Year 6 pupils plan, cost, shop for and prepare a meal for friends. The recent emphasis on developing mental mathematics techniques has improved pupils' skills. Strategies introduced across the school are improving standards in writing. This increasing focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills, alongside competent interpersonal skills, helps to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their lives.

The large numbers of pupils who arrive other than at the usual admission time are well supported by staff and fellow pupils. They settle well and make good progress, and comment on the warm welcome they have received. Arrangements for pupils to move to secondary school are effective, with particular care given to pupils who might find the transition difficult. The school provides a wide range of support and intervention for pupils with particular needs and works very effectively with other organisations to enhance this provision. School policies are clear and well structured to support this. Systems to maintain above-average attendance levels are well established and the family support worker has been influential in reducing absence. The Ziggy club is run well. It meets the needs of parents and those pupils who attend, providing a healthy, safe and stimulating start and end to the day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 headteacher and senior staff are highly effective in sharing the school's vision with staff, pupils and parents. This motivates all members of the school community so that all are on board in carrying out the school's plans. Senior leaders base these plans on an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders have a range of experience, with some very new in post. Senior leaders provide effective support for those with less experience to develop their role. The provision is monitored thoroughly, but checks on the quality of teaching and learning tend to focus more on the quality of teaching and less on the impact of this on learning. There are effective systems in place to check rates of pupils' progress. These have been strengthened further this year, enabling earlier intervention when pupils are underachieving. As a result, equal opportunities are promoted well as the gaps between different groups of learners are narrowed. For example, a number of the strategies to improve writing have been aimed

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at boys, with subsequent improvement in their attainment.

Governors know the school well and are fully committed and involved in its work. They have played an important part in planning its direction from the start. They are rigorous in ensuring that pupils and staff are safe and all procedures for safeguarding meet government requirements. They have constructive relationships with staff and are frequently in touch with parents and pupils. They listen to and act upon their views. Senior leaders have excellent strategies in place to reach beyond the highly cohesive community at Oxley Park School and use its many links with communities nationally and internationally to promote excellent awareness of cultural and religious diversity.

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with the skills expected of four-year-olds. They make good progress across the six areas of learning and achieve well by the time they move to Year 1. Adults are very committed to the care and well-being of each child. This shows in the confident way children engage with the high quality and well-organised resources. They benefit from excellent accommodation, both inside and out of doors, which is used very well to provide interesting and exciting activities. Systems to guarantee children's welfare and safety are well established and consistently applied by all adults. Very good induction procedures and links with parents and carers enable children to settle quickly into the well-thought-out daily routines, resulting in good personal development and learning habits. Parents and carers support learning very well at home because of the creative systems the school has introduced. They are very much

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active partners in their children's learning and development.

Children are considerate towards each other and behave well when they play and learn together. They show enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning, especially when they choose their own activities. There is a structured approach to teaching communication, language and literacy skills which sometimes does not fully meet the needs of the whole group. Occasionally, children remain on the carpet for too long and start to lose interest, especially when they are given few opportunities to talk about their learning and practise their speaking skills. However, they re-engage rapidly when they can choose activities for themselves and pursue their own interests. They become engrossed and concentrate well, for example when they fearlessly handle and then talk about enormous African snails. Assessment practice through first-hand observations of children's learning is thorough and systematic. There has been some inconsistency in the accuracy of judgements in the past which is being tackled by the newly appointed leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

The overwhelming majority of the parents' and carers' questionnaire returns were positive. This comment from one parent is typical of many received, reflecting the high level of satisfaction: 'My son wakes up every morning excited to go to school and ready to learn. How lucky that he has all the opportunities the school offers.' Of greatest concern for very few parents was attainment in numeracy and literacy. This and all other concerns have been investigated during the inspection and, where appropriate, addressed in the body of the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oxley Park 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 430 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	79	10	16	2	3	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	44	70	17	27	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	70	15	24	2	3	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	68	15	24	0	0	4	6
The teaching is good at this school	46	73	13	19	3	5	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	71	13	21	1	2	4	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	63	22	35	1	2	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)	34	54	17	27	0	0	3	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	52	26	41	1	2	3	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	44	25	40	1	2	4	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	57	18	29	1	2	4	6
The school is led and managed effectively	47	75	9	14	1	2	5	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	49	8	13	1	2	4	6

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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4 March 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Oxley Park Primary School, Milton Keynes MK4 4TA

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome on our recent visit, and for sharing your views on the school in discussions and through the questionnaires. These have been very helpful. Now, I would like to share with you what I have found out.

- Your school provides you with a good standard of education.
- You make good progress in your work after you join the school and reach standards in line with other pupils nationally by the time you leave.
- You enjoy school very much. You appreciate interesting lessons which teachers plan. As one of you said, 'Teachers work hard to make things fun.'
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourself healthy, and it was impressive to see so many of you doing that at break times.
- You told us that you feel safe in school, and that there is always someone to listen to you if you have a difficulty. You think that this will be handled fairly. You behave well and older children are considerate of younger ones so that they gradually feel more confident in school.
- You welcome opportunities to serve your school and the number of jobs you willingly take on is impressive.
- It is good to see everyone getting on so well in school, particularly as so many of you have come to Oxley Park from other schools and places. You work hard with your teachers to make sure that everyone feels welcome.
- Your headteacher and all the staff look after you well.

We are asking the school to do two things to make the school even better. We would like to see some of you having more of a challenge in mathematics lessons so that you extend your learning. We are also asking your teachers to plan activities at the start of lessons that make you think more and to give you opportunities to talk to each other about what you are thinking. We hope that you will do your best to help your headteacher and staff to put these things in place and play your part in ensuring that

the school continues to 'achieve together'.

Yours sincerely,
Ruth Westbrook
Lead Inspector

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