

The Orchard Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117155
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	363862
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

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	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alec Thomas
Headteacher	Paul Sutton
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 10 teachers in 22 lessons, and held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan and those of the subject departments, minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, they carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work and analysed 95 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Has attainment in writing at Key Stage 2 continued to improve for more-able pupils?
- How good is the progress made by different groups of pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities that require external support?
- Have the new strategies to improve levels of attendance been effective this year?

Information about the school

The Orchard is an average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average but no pupils are currently in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a part-time Nursery and a Reception class. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the Activemark.

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

The Orchard Primary School is a good school where pupils of all abilities achieve well.

Parents, carers and pupils appreciate the good quality care and enjoyable learning opportunities provided by the school. One parental comment summed up the views of the majority: 'I am very happy with The Orchard, children love coming to school and they are enthusiastic about learning and know what they need to do to improve, the teachers do a great job. The staff are committed and dedicated and the headteacher manages the school well and has introduced many good changes.'

Pupils confirmed an equally positive view: 'We enjoy school, especially maths and physical education. We are lucky to have so many good clubs, trips and visits.'

The headteacher, governing body and senior management team provide strong leadership and clear educational direction that is ensuring good outcomes.

These are the key strengths of the school.

Pupils achieve well and make good progress throughout the school because teaching and learning are good.

Attainment in mathematics is consistently above average, both for pupils reaching expected National Curriculum levels and those reaching higher levels.

Relationships are strong and the school ethos is warm and welcoming, and consequently pupils make good gains in their personal development.

Pupils gain a good knowledge and awareness of how to stay fit and healthy and lead an active lifestyle, as acknowledged by the school's awards.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the limited space currently available for outdoor learning is used very well to extend and enhance all areas of learning.

Care, guidance and support are strong, particularly for pupils who need additional support from external specialists, so pupils behave sensibly and are enthusiastic learners who have a mature attitude to their work.

Good links with parents and carers and the local community enrich provision, and links with other schools through sports partnerships enable pupils to benefit from additional cultural and sporting activities.

Effective systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school, together with its good organisation, strong and shared vision, continual drive for improvement and success in tackling issues identified in the last report, demonstrate its good capacity to continue moving forward.

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These are the key areas for improvement.

In contrast to mathematics, improvements in writing have not yet led to enough pupils reaching the higher levels, largely because teachers occasionally miss opportunities to challenge more-able pupils in this area.

Although attendance has improved a lot, it is not yet good because too many families take holidays in term time.

Promotion of community cohesion at national and global level has not been fully evaluated by the school, and is not as strong as it is within the school and local community. As a result pupils' knowledge of other religions, festivals and cultures is limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By May 2012, increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing throughout the school by ensuring that teachers use assessment information more rigorously to plan challenging tasks for more-able pupils.
- Raise levels of attendance by increasing parents and carers' awareness of the positive impact that regular attendance has on learning, so that they avoid holidays in term time.
- Improve the school's promotion of community cohesion by May 2012 by:
 - evaluating the impact of national and global initiatives
 - using the information gained to enhance current provision and pupils' understanding of different backgrounds and beliefs
 - establishing links with other schools nationally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From starting points that are below the levels expected nationally, pupils' attainment by the time they leave the school is broadly average in English and above average in mathematics. The school's tracking data and inspection evidence confirm that over time, attainment has been consistently high in mathematics but more variable in English, especially writing at the higher level. Progress is good for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, because lessons are well planned and good relationships with staff contribute to a positive climate for learning. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils made good progress in small groups preparing a drama sketch to show a scene from a Shakespeare play. Skilful teaching helped them to articulate their ideas and appreciate those of others. All pupils were able to identify and record the features evident in good-quality writing. Excellent challenge in a Year 1 numeracy class ensured all pupils learnt how to represent information about dinosaurs seen on a recent trip to the Natural History Museum in a systematic way.

Pupils' good teamwork skills and their well-developed skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics contribute well to their future economic well-being. Writing skills have improved throughout the school because of the success of initiatives taken to raise attainment. All pupils take a pride in their work, which is neatly presented. Attainment in physical education is good. The quality of pupils' running and throwing skills is particularly impressive.

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Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are polite to visitors, behave well and are sensitive to the needs of others. Pupils develop good awareness of their own personal safety and they say they feel safe because they can discuss any problems they have with adults. They have a good knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, selecting healthy options from the school lunches and attending the wide range of activity clubs. After-school clubs are enjoyed by all pupils. They learn to make a positive contribution to their school, and to the local and wider community. The school council successfully raises money for a range of local, national and international charities. The school ethos encourages pupils to reflect, be thoughtful and be responsible members of their school community. Playground leaders do an effective job in helping younger pupils on the playground at break times.

Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies make a superb contribution to learning and spiritual development and provide excellent opportunities for reflection. Although pupils' knowledge of other cultures and religions is less well developed, they reflect strongly on issues facing the world and they are aware and sensitive to others with different beliefs. Their attendance is satisfactory.

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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers typically use assessment information well to plan interesting work for different abilities and year groups, and use questions effectively to check pupils' knowledge. Pupils

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know their targets well and what they have to do to improve their work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants in class and small groups so they make good progress. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to challenge more-able children to produce high-quality writing. In mathematics, teachers consistently challenge all abilities throughout the school.

Pupils enjoy the curriculum and this contributes to their enthusiasm for learning. It is well planned, and the strong personal and social education programme assists pupils' good personal development. Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced through other subjects such as history and geography, and staff use ICT well to support learning in other subjects. Enrichment through the many clubs, activities, trips and visits, such as the recent trip to the Houses of Parliament and the Year 5/6 residential outdoor activities trip, all contribute to a good curriculum.

All adults effectively help pupils, parents and carers to get the best from learning. The school works very effectively with external support agencies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Intervention and early morning literacy and numeracy sessions using the computers are effectively organised and help pupils who need the extra support. There are good induction and transition arrangements for children entering the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage and when moving on to other schools. Staff go the extra mile to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The pastoral support worker contributes effectively and recently introduced measures are reducing absence and raising levels of attendance.

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 all staff communicate drive and ambition effectively and they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The monitoring of pupils' progress is thorough and senior leaders identify any dips and intervene effectively with sensible strategies to promote improvement, for example the additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and leaders at all levels are dedicated to making sure all pupils and staff achieve well. The governing body is supportive but also challenges the school. It evaluates the work of the school well and ensures that school improvement initiatives are successful.

The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has audited its provision and is well aware that pupils have a strong understanding of the immediate area and do a great deal to help the local community. It has established links with Bama School in

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Burkina Faso, a school in Africa. However, pupils have few other opportunities to mix with people from other cultural backgrounds abroad or in other parts of this country. Child protection, risk assessment and safeguarding procedures meet current statutory requirements. All checks on adults are very robust. Equality of opportunity and elimination of discrimination are effective, as reflected in the profile of good achievement across different groups.

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	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children soon settle into the Nursery and Reception classes because links with parents, carers and the local community are good, and good provision ensures that they make good progress in all areas of learning.

Relationships are strong and, consequently, children make good progress in their personal development. Expectations are very clear and children all learn to behave well. Children are challenged to respond to individual questions and to talk about their ideas and consequently they make good progress in their speaking and communication skills. Personal aspects of care and welfare are good and this contributes to a very positive start. Staff provide interesting activities and children have good opportunities to learn through activities led by adults as well as those they choose for themselves. Although the outdoor space is small, staff work very hard to make it a stimulating and exciting integral part of the learning environment.

Most activities are fun and challenging. Teachers seize every opportunity to extend all areas of learning. In the 'garden centre' children allocated roles and developed a good understanding of paying for goods and giving change. Adults used questions well to help children observe the shape and characteristics of minibeasts. Children in the Nursery were very excited by the live tadpoles in the garden. They learnt to identify and name the main

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body parts and were able to talk about them developing into frogs. Children in Reception make good progress in learning to link sounds to letters. Occasionally, however, opportunities are missed to challenge different groups of children, especially the more able.

The provision is led and managed well. The manager is new to the role but has made an impressive start to developing the provision.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are happy with the school. They say that their children enjoy attending and make good progress. The overwhelming majority regard the school as very safe and a very large majority say it is caring and supportive. They identify a number of strengths in the school, including: the good quality of teaching and learning; the increased number of clubs and activities; the good progress all pupils make; the good care and support for pupils and families; the school ethos; the children's enjoyment; and the good leadership and management of the school. There were a few criticisms from parents and carers about the style of leadership and management. Inspectors confirmed the positive views expressed by parents and carers, and judged leadership and management to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Orchard 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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	67	28	29	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	58	37	39	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	50	53	40	42	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	49	42	44	4	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	56	38	40	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	48	41	43	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	52	42	44	4	4	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)	41	43	42	44	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	45	41	43	4	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	39	43	45	7	7	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	39	47	49	5	5	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	49	52	39	41	0	0	5	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	58	34	36	2	2	1	1

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



23 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Orchard Primary School, Watford WD24 5JW

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and will remember how polite you all were and how much you and your parents and carers enjoyed the whole school assembly led by Class 1. Both you and your parents and carers told us that The Orchard Primary is a good school, and we agree. These are the things that it does particularly well.

You get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception and make good progress through the rest of the school thanks to good teaching.

Your attainment is above average in mathematics by the end of Year 6.

You all enjoy school and benefit from the many fun activities, clubs, visits and visitors. You particularly like the residential trips.

Your behaviour is good, and you are sensible and know how to keep safe and stay fit and healthy.

Your school cares well for all of you, and teaches you how to care for others.

Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors lead the school well, and all the staff work effectively together as a team to make sure that The Orchard Primary School is a safe and secure, fun place to learn.

There are three things we have identified for staff and governors to improve.

Ensure your teachers challenge those who can learn quickly to reach higher levels in their work in writing.

Help you to improve your attendance and punctuality even more by encouraging you to avoid taking time off school during term time for holidays.

Ensure you develop a good awareness of national and global communities.

Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit to your school, and best wishes for your future. You can all help by continuing to work really hard.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace

Lead inspector

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