



The Oaks Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105176
Local Authority Bolton
Inspection number 287144
Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sharples Hall Drive
School category	Community		Bolton
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire BL1 7HS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333171
Number on roll (school)	209	Fax number	01204 333172
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs C Wild
		Headteacher	Mrs Susan Warren
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school admits pupils from a wide variety of social and economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well below average. The majority of pupils are White British; about 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with the largest group being of Asian or Asian British-Indian backgrounds. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There has been a change of headteacher since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well and make outstanding progress in their personal development. The happy atmosphere in which pupils thrive is immediately apparent on entering the school; everything about it is bright and lively. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel safe and well cared for. They understand how to stay healthy and they acquire the skills that they will need for their future lives.

Until recently, performance data was inaccurate. This has now been rectified and the school's data matches inspection findings that pupils generally achieve well. Standards are well above the national averages in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils make good progress because teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons that are interesting and make learning fun. However, planning does not always take sufficient account of the needs of some of the higher attaining pupils. Consequently, they are not consistently challenged enough and sometimes find their work too easy. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well so that they make good progress. Provision for care and support for all pupils is good. However, guidance is only satisfactory because, as the school acknowledges, there is still work to be done in relation to its development of target-setting.

The curriculum is good and has some outstanding features. There are excellent partnerships with businesses and outside agencies which provide a wealth of enrichment opportunities for pupils. Its creative design impacts positively on the development of skills across the curriculum and is a firm foundation for raising standards. The links made between the different areas of the curriculum are very effective in helping pupils make sense of their learning. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is well designed and provides pupils with a good start to their life in the school.

Leaderships and management are good. All connected with the school agree that the headteacher's exceptional energy and educational direction have transformed the school since her appointment. Consequently, improvement since the last inspection has been good. In particular, the weakness in provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been transformed into a positive strength. The school gives good value for money and has a very good capacity for further improvement. The school has a clear picture of its effectiveness that largely matches inspection findings. The recent changes made to the management of subjects are having a positive impact on standards and achievement. However, curriculum team leaders do not currently have the opportunity for first-hand observations of teaching and consequently, are unable to identify what could be done better in classroom practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lesson planning fully takes into account the needs of higher attaining pupils so that they are consistently challenged.
- Develop the role of curriculum team leaders by providing opportunities for them to observe teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with average standards overall, but with above average social skills and physical development. They do well in the Foundation Stage and the school builds effectively on this good start so that by the end of Year 2, standards are above average. Good progress continues in Key Stage 2. Standards are high in English, mathematics and science. Provisional results for English, mathematics and science were well above average in the 2006 national tests at the end of Year 6. Results in English showed an improvement and exceeded the school's targets. However, some of the higher attaining pupils are not always consistently challenged and could achieve more. Pupils' work and school records show that high standards are also reached in other subjects, such as art and design, and information and communication technology (ICT). Contrary to the national picture, there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. This is a result of the school's success in developing the curriculum and teaching and learning styles to promote boys' progress better while ensuring that girls continue to do well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Behaviour is excellent. Relationships throughout the school are strong. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, respond very well to staff and greatly enjoy being at school. They say they are happy in school and that they feel safe, which is reflected in their good attendance. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a strength of the school. They are given a wealth of opportunities to reflect on issues in the community and the wider world such as in 'circle time', assemblies and focused class discussions. Pupils grasp every opportunity to take on responsibilities and work through the school council to make improvements to school life. A good example is the improvement to the school grounds that resulted from pupils' suggestions. Year 6 pupils support younger ones during lunchtimes and wet play times. This helps to develop their sense of responsibility. One Year 2 pupil said, 'they make us feel safe and they play with us.'

Pupils take full advantage of the wide range of lunchtime and after school activities to develop their interests and talents further. Pupils speak with increasing confidence and their independence and self-esteem are high. They participate in a wide range of community, mini enterprise, charity and fundraising events that helps equip them with skills for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and the principal reason behind pupils' good achievement. The strength of teaching lies in the way that teachers plan lively lessons that capture and keep pupils' interest because they make them think. Very good use is made of ICT, for example, interactive whiteboards and individual laptops, to support learning. This is a major improvement since the last inspection when the use of ICT was a weakness. Assessment information is mostly used well to guide planning but there are times when insufficient account is taken of previous progress made by higher attaining pupils. The result is that these pupils are not challenged consistently enough. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils that underpin the happy learning atmosphere evident in classrooms. Pupils respond to teachers' consistent expectations of work and behaviour so that little time is wasted and behaviour is usually exemplary. Many lessons are taught at a cracking pace that keeps pupils working hard. Teaching assistants are fully involved in planning so that they are able to provide sensitively targeted support that enables pupils with learning difficulties to make the same good progress as their classmates. The school is working on developing target-setting to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work but this is not fully established yet.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, good provision for literacy and numeracy and strong provision for ICT provide pupils with very effective basic skills for life. Statutory requirements are met; pupils' experiences are tracked through the projects of the curriculum to make sure that they learn as they should. Outstanding provision for health promotion helps pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils enjoy and learn a great deal from themed weeks such as 'Around the world'.

A wide range of educational visits and visitors broadens pupils understanding of the world. A good example of this was 'Careers Week'. Excellent partnerships with outside agencies and businesses provide a wealth of educational, sporting, cultural and community-based opportunities for enrichment. These help to support pupils' physical, aesthetic and outstanding personal development very well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff work very effectively to support pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. They ensure that pupils are well cared for and feel valued. There are appropriate procedures for child protection and assessing any risks ensuring that children are safeguarded. Children are well prepared for starting school and make a smooth transfer into the secondary school.

The school has made a determined effort to improve marking, assessment and target-setting, including encouraging pupils to assess the quality of their own work. This is beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards. Although vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties make good progress, parents are not sufficiently well involved in reviewing their individual education plans. This is a missed opportunity for them to contribute to their children's education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's vision for the school's improvement that puts pupils' development and achievement at the centre has been clearly communicated to staff. Morale is high and a strong team spirit is evident. Aply supported by the leadership team, the headteacher has reorganised the staffing structure and remodelled the curriculum to promote pupils' progress and their enjoyment of the school. The new structure of curriculum team leaders means that advantage is taken of individual expertise and that accountability for achievement and standards is clear. Although in its infancy, the system works well to support planning across the curriculum and is already contributing to raising achievement. Curriculum team leaders do check standards and progress by looking at pupils' work and talking to colleagues. However, they do not have the opportunity to observe classroom performance directly, which would enable them to fully assess the effectiveness of planning and to identify areas for improvement. The senior management team has established a programme of observations linked to professional development and training. This contributes to a self-evaluation process that enables them to know what is being done well and what could be better. The governors are well informed and bring professional expertise to supporting the school and holding it rigorously to account. They have shown their understanding of the school's needs by astute appointments, of the headteacher and other staff, and the allocation of resources to deal with weaknesses identified by the last inspection.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, a team of inspectors visited your school to find out if your school is giving you the education you should receive. Thank you very much for making us so welcome; everyone we met was very polite and helpful. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you enjoy. Yours is a good school and you are right to be proud of it.

Some of the best things about your school are:

- you all do well and many of you reach very high standards in your work
- the way everyone in the school cares for you so that you feel safe
- your excellent behaviour and your good attitude to learning
- the way your teachers make learning enjoyable for you
- how willing you are to take on responsibilities, help to make decisions about your school and care about one another.

We have asked your headteacher and your teachers to do two things to help make The Oaks an even better place to learn:

- to make sure that those of you who are quick to learn are given work that really makes you think
- to give the teachers who make the plans for the different subjects, opportunities to see how well things work out in lessons.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and wish you well for the future.