

Oakway Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121900
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314142
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Barbara Crane

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Cheryl Buckle
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2005
School address	off Oakway Wellingborough NN8 4SD
Telephone number	01933 678714
Fax number	01933 403160

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average infant school serves an area in which many families face challenging circumstances. There is a high level of mobility among pupils. Pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, although most come from White British backgrounds. About a tenth of the pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils' families are Travellers of Irish heritage. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher in September 2007, following the retirement of the previous headteacher.

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. Good leadership and management mean that the school knows what it is aiming for and how to get there. The right priorities for improvement are drawn from good checks on what is working well and where improvements are needed. Parents are pleased with what the school provides for their children. The view of one parent typifies the views of many, 'The staff take pride in their work and really take an interest in each and every child'. This is reflected in pupils' good personal development and well-being. They are confident children who enjoy school, behave well and are keen to do their best. Smiling is infectious in this school and shows the extent to which adults and children enjoy being together. Pupils' good behaviour and relationships contribute very well to the school's warm, welcoming community and its calm atmosphere. They eat and drink healthily and know how to keep safe because of good guidance from adults.

Pupils make good progress over their time at school because of good teaching. Standards are average by the time pupils leave. This represents good achievement because children's starting points are lower than expected for their ages when they enter Reception. Pupils' progress is particularly rapid in mathematics and standards are above average. The school's work on improving writing has effectively boosted the progress made by boys and more able pupils. As a result, standards are rising. Pupils' understanding of what they read is not as good as it should be in all age groups. The progress of pupils in Year 1 is not quite at the same good level as other groups because the teaching does not aim as high.

The good curriculum includes plenty of practical activities that keep pupils interested and stimulate their curiosity about the world. Staff provide a good level of care for pupils and give them the guidance and support that they need to blossom as well-rounded individuals. Effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures their good progress. Pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language do well because their needs are effectively taken into

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching ensures that Reception children make good progress in relation to their starting points. As a result, most children reach the goals expected of them by the time they start in Year 1. The staff plan a curriculum that engages children and promotes their enjoyment in learning. A strong emphasis is placed on developing personal and social aspects of learning. Children settle quickly because expectations are clear and routines helpful. The teaching of letter sounds is skilful but children's language and communication skills are not fully developed because they occasionally lack stimulation to look at books. Good leadership and management lead to awareness of how provision could be improved still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Year 1 to match that in other year groups.
- Provide more opportunities for discussion so that pupils increase their understanding of what they read.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in Reception achieve well and reach the expectations for their age by the time they start in Year 1. This good achievement continues in Years 1 and 2 and so standards are average by the time pupils leave the school. In all age groups, pupils make rapid progress in mathematics because the teaching is very clear about what is to be learned. Teachers carefully check pupils' understanding in mathematics and help them to take the next steps. There has been good improvement in the teaching of writing and standards have risen because of the better level of challenge for the more able pupils. Boys' achievement has been raised through writing activities that engage their interest. Pupils' progress in reading is not as speedy. Their ability to recognise the sounds made by combinations of letters is good. This has been well supported by the whole-school initiative to improve pupils' skills but is not matched by pupils' understanding of what they read. They lack opportunities to think and talk about what they read to deepen their understanding. The school's tracking data for Year 1 indicates that these pupils make slower progress than others. This is because expectations are not as consistently high for these pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their targets. Those who are learning English make good strides in all areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The youngest children develop positive attitudes to learning and see the benefits of working with others. Pupils' good enjoyment of school is reflected in their desire to learn, their good relationships and sense of community. They are well prepared for the future because of their sound skills in literacy and numeracy and their good capacity to work together. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they develop a strong sense of their own worth. Pupils make a good contribution to their community. The school council decides how to improve things, such as resolving conflicts on the playground, and its members are proud of the difference they make. Pupils' attendance has improved and is average, but is affected by instances of low attendance that the school works closely with families to resolve. Behaviour is good. Pupils are sensible, polite and respectful to each other and adults. They put into practice what they have learned about keeping themselves and others safe. Most show a good understanding of how to keep healthy by eating nutritious food and many take advantage of the extra activities in sport to boost their fitness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils like their teachers and this is reflected in the good relationships evident in all classes. Teaching in Reception successfully builds children's confidence and skills in speaking and listening. Imaginative teaching across the whole school captures children's interest and ensures that lessons are enjoyable. Pupils of all ages are eager to get started on work and persevere. Teachers carefully check the understanding of pupils who are learning English. Teaching in mathematics aims high and so pupils make rapid progress. The starting point for lessons in mathematics uses the teachers' reflection on the quality of pupils' learning from the last session. Pupils know what they will learn and teachers help them to think about what they are doing.

Three factors limit pupils' progress in Year 1. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high and teaching is not as clear about the next steps that need to be taken to boost pupils' learning. The assessments of what pupils have learned are not used as effectively to fine-tune future work to meet individual needs as in other year groups. From Reception to Year 2, teaching provides too few opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of what they read by talking about words and pictures. Skilled teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities springs from good assessment of pupils' needs and careful planning that sets out the small steps needed to meet individual targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned to develop pupils' independence and ability to work together. Pupils' personal, social and health education is well planned and supports their good understanding of making the right choices in life. There are plenty of extra activities for pupils to take part in outside normal lessons and many take advantage of these. A good range of visits and visitors extends pupils' experiences and enjoyment in learning. Pupils' delighted faces, for example, showed how much they enjoyed learning from visiting musicians about the different sounds made by musical instruments. Pupils enjoy learning some basic French, and themed weeks, based on European or African culture, help them to widen their understanding of how others live. Pupils do not explore ideas and learn more for themselves because books related to topics are not displayed often enough to tempt them to do so.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good level of daily care by staff and their knowledge of individuals mean that pupils feel secure. Good relationships mean that pupils readily seek help from adults if they need to. One parent expressed it this way, 'My child is beaming with confidence because teachers take the time to talk to him'. There are good procedures to safeguard and protect pupils. Assessments of pupils' progress are mainly thorough but pupils in Year 1 sometimes lack the guidance required to understand the next small steps needed to make the best possible progress. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well organised and effective. Likewise, support for pupils from Traveller families is effectively planned. Advice from outside agencies, such as speech therapists, is wisely used to support individuals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good framework in place has meant that the acting headteacher has been able to pick up the reins and continue with taking the school forward seamlessly. The good partnership with parents and other agencies supports pupils' well-being effectively. The staff have a common purpose, as well as the skills and confidence to carry out the school's planning for improvement. Good self-evaluation means that the school knows where it needs to improve. This is achieved through effective monitoring of provision. The need to boost pupils' progress in Year 1 and the reading comprehension of all pupils has been identified. Effective action taken previously by leaders and managers to improve areas such as attendance, boys' achievement and pupils' ability to link sounds with letters demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve. The professional development of staff matches the school's priorities. There is still work to do in

ensuring that pupils' progress across their time at the school remains at a consistently good level. Governors provide good support for the school and check for themselves on how well it is doing.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

10 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oakway Infant School, Wellingborough, NN8 4SD

Thank you for helping us with our work when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you. We think you get a good start to your education. We can see why your parents are pleased that you go to Oakway.

You do well in your work and reach average standards. Good teaching helps you to do this. You are all doing very well in mathematics. The adults in school take good care of you. They are kind and give you extra help if you need it. It was lovely to see you being so friendly and getting on together in your work and play. You enjoy school and behave well. Well done everybody!

The grown-ups make sure that you have lots of interesting things to do every day. It is good that so many of you join in the extra activities. We are pleased that you know how to eat and drink healthily and keep fit.

Your school is well run and the staff work hard to get the best for you. They know what they need to do to make school even better for you. We have asked them to make sure that those of you in Year 1 make even faster progress. We have also asked that you all have more chances to talk about your reading. This will help you to understand better what you read.

Keep coming to school regularly so that you can make the most of your time at Oakway. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Barbara Crane Lead inspector

10 October 2007

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Barbara Crane
Lead inspector