

Ox Close Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114091 |
| Local Authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 325940 |
| Inspection date | 17 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Andrew Scott |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 235 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Pam Sneath |
| Headteacher | Mrs Michelle Forbes |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 January 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Ox Close Crescent Spennymoor County Durham DL16 6RU |
| Telephone number | 01388 814860 |
| Fax number | 01388 810757 |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the consistency of progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 by all groups of pupils
- the provision for language development in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the standards of writing throughout the school
- the effectiveness of school development planning, especially in relation to pupils' academic achievement.

Evidence was collected from observations of lessons, analyses of pupils' work, performance data, parents' questionnaires and the school's documentation, and from discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves a community with broadly average socio-economic conditions. The pupil population is relatively stable and almost all pupils are from White British families. There is an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school holds a range of awards, including Artsmark Gold, Activemark Gold, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Mark and the Shining Through Award for their community garden project.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ox Close is a good school. It has some outstanding features which help to explain why it has improved well since the last inspection and why parents are very pleased with its provision. 'A fabulous school,' said one. Another wrote that her son 'loves going to school and enjoys every aspect of the school day'. Excellent leadership by the headteacher, supported by equally impressive leadership by new senior leaders and governors, has spearheaded its improvement. It is a happy school where pupils feel fulfilled and safe, not least because of the pervasive high quality of care. Pupils develop excellent attitudes to work. Relationships between everyone in the school are outstanding and result in excellent behaviour by pupils, allowing for occasional lapses. As a result, the atmosphere in the school is relaxed, calm yet purposeful.

Standards by Year 6 are above average and pupils' achievement is good. There are some variations between groups of pupils but little of significance. Standards in Key Stage 1 were below average in 2007 but a strong focus on basic skills and astute staffing decisions resulted in standards rising in 2008 to be close to average. They are continuing to rise in the current year in all subjects. This represents good progress for these pupils because many have learning difficulties. In Key Stage 2, standards slipped to average in 2008 but, as in Key Stage 1, new staff appointments have produced a distinct improvement. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to achieve above average standards, especially in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good support and make good progress equating with that of their peers.

Writing is not quite as good as reading but has improved because the school has adapted the curriculum shrewdly and has introduced more interesting topics to motivate pupils, especially boys. Pupils in a Year 5 lesson, for example, enjoyed sifting through 'evidence' to write up their explanation of a highwayman's murder. The school has devoted more time for pupils to boost key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Even so, not all teachers have high enough expectations of just what pupils can do. Often, pupils do work that is too similar which prevents them from proceeding at their own pace. In science, and to some extent mathematics, teachers do not allow enough for pupils' own way of learning. This is certainly the case for more able, older pupils who lack scope to plan their own experiments, but it affects all pupils especially when carrying out independent activity and solving problems in mathematics.

The school's self-evaluation is excellent. Senior leaders and governors know their school extremely well and have made astute decisions to improve its provision. They are very well aware of strengths and weaknesses; for example, they have made some very good new appointments to improve teaching. Although their development plans do not all show a tight link with standards, the school's actions are sharply focused on improving key skills and, in some cases, simply have not yet had enough time to become fully effective. The improvements to achievement in the current year are indicative of the school's success in responding to any emerging weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good overall. There is some outstanding practice but also some which is satisfactory. Common strengths include subject knowledge and the clarity of explanations, which enable pupils to have confidence in their teachers and know exactly what to do. Teachers generally plan lessons well based on pupils' prior learning, although this is not as consistent as it could be. In the best lessons, the teachers' expectations of pupils are high. Good use of resources, sensitive support by teaching assistants, helpful marking and target-setting all help

to motivate and guide pupils; they know how they can improve. The curriculum is broad-based, with some excellent enrichment. There is a raft of clubs after school, including cookery, netball, judo and Internet radio, and there are family clubs for photography and silk-printing. Special weeks, such as the Brilliant Book Week, are linked to school priorities.

The school takes excellent care of its pupils. All procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure and the supporting documentation is comprehensive and up to date. All staff take an intense interest in pupils' well-being, so pupils feel very safe and valued; they gain high self-esteem, as a consequence. The school has done particularly well in improving links with parents. Parents are extremely well informed, notably by the school's excellent website and weekly newsletters, and they are increasingly involved in pupils' learning. The school has not yet, though, been able to dissuade enough parents from taking term-time holidays to improve attendance from its current average levels.

The pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. They acquire good social and academic skills that will stand them in good stead in the future. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Pupils are very active within the school community. Their voice, especially through the school council, is crucial to the school's development. The wonderful community garden, currently being built, highlights their contribution to the locality. The school is well aware that pupils need to know more about the wider world and is in the process of implementing plans to do this.

The school has done well to improve since the last inspection. Teaching is more effective so standards are rising. The curriculum is more vibrant and diverse, and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are better. Overall, therefore, the school is in a strong position at present and has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Reception Year is good. Like the rest of the school, the atmosphere in classrooms is warm, supportive and encouraging. As a result, children settle quickly, acquire a healthy approach to learning and enjoy life, whether tackling phonics or 'rock-climbing' outside. Teachers have done well to minimise any shortcomings in the outside facilities caused by recent floods. Children achieve well. They tend to enter school with skills and abilities typical for their age, although sometimes these are lower. Aspects of language and personal development in particular have recently been weaker. Nevertheless, they make good progress and generally exceed standards expected of five year olds in all areas of learning. This reflects an improvement in teaching and learning. Teaching is good. It is lively, flexible and well focused on basic skills. Teachers allow children ample scope to learn through exploration and play. The good quality of care and helpful guidance from adults boost children's self-confidence and sense of security. They also ensure that children's personal and social development, including behaviour, is good. Good leadership involves all staff in the planning of the many stimulating activities, formal and informal, that underpin effective learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations of all pupils to improve standards, especially in writing.
- Ensure that teachers' planning takes full account of pupils' different learning styles, especially to improve problem solving and investigative skills.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are 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 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| 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

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| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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? | 1 |

Leadership and management

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| 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 | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ox Close Primary School, Durham, DL16 6RU

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. Mrs Thomas and I very much enjoyed our day with you. Your comments and, indeed, everything that you did helped us to gain a clear understanding of your school in a short time. We were also grateful for your parents' opinions, so please thank them for returning their questionnaires.

We think that Ox Close is a good school. It has some excellent features, especially the way that the staff take care of you. You are not only very safe, but also respond accordingly by behaving extremely well and enjoying all that the school offers. I know you particularly enjoy the exciting activities in and out of lessons. You get on together well. We like that your voice matters in the development of the school. We were also pleased that your parents are becoming more involved in the life of the school, and this is already helping your learning.

You achieve well in your work, and standards are rising throughout the school. It is especially important that standards are now back above average by Year 6, due to your hard work and good teaching. Your school usually expects good things from you, makes lessons interesting and helps you with good marking and advice. However, your writing is not as good as it could be, so we would like your school to be absolutely sure of your capabilities so that your work is really challenging. We have also asked the school to give you more opportunities to work in ways that suit you. This will help you, for example, in problem solving in mathematics and science investigations.

We were very pleased with the improvements in your school, including the huge new garden that you will be enjoying before long. The school's successes are due mainly to the outstanding leadership of your headteacher, and the excellent support of senior staff and governors. All staff play a vital role, though, as do you. We feel that the school is in good shape and in a very good position to improve even more.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector