

The Oaks Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105176
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	336440
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2010
Reporting inspector	David Byrne

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Beverley Clayton
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Warren
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed, taught by eight teachers. Meetings were held with parents, carers, groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at some school documentation including samples of pupils' work, documents relating to safeguarding and the school's assessment and tracking information. Eighty-four parental questionnaires were scrutinised together with questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- Whether the quality of teaching and learning is good enough to ensure good progress.
- How the curriculum impacts on the promotion of learning.
- Whether the inspection findings for the quality of care, guidance and support matches the outstanding judgement made by the school.
- The effectiveness of management in ensuring that the monitoring of the school's performance informs effective self-evaluation.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds with a small minority of others of different ethnic origin. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals. A number of awards and accreditations have been gained by the school including Healthy Schools status, Investors in People, Active Sportsmark, the Becta information and computer technology (ICT) Mark, The Basic Skills Award and the Green Flag Award. There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection and during this inspection two classes were taught by temporary staff.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school which is a highly valued part of its local community. It fulfils its motto of 'Bringing Learning to Life'. As a result, pupils love school and thrive on a rich and exciting curriculum which takes account of their interests and reflects the teachers' strengths. Pupils leave Year 6 with high attainment, advanced personal and social skills and excellent attitudes to learning. The vast majority of parents and carers rate the school highly; the view of one parent typifies most, 'The school isn't just a place to learn, it is a warm and caring environment.'

Both achievement and enjoyment are outstanding. Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although the nature of the outdoor area is such that staff have difficulty planning as effectively as possible for learning out-of-doors. Across the school a wide array of approaches to learning develops excellent levels of confidence, a desire to take on responsibility and the ambition to do as well as possible. Good teaching guides pupils very well. Staff do not rest on their laurels; they recognise that many children start school with relatively advanced levels of development and successfully extend them as they move through the school. As a result, pupils become highly articulate and literate; they develop a good knowledge of mathematics and use of information and communication technology. Throughout the school all pupils make good progress, with strengths in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is good but slightly slower than literacy. Many pupils also do well in sport and the arts with the choir gaining many accolades for its quality. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their next stage of education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This contributes to outstanding behaviour and excellent relationships between pupils. The large majority act safely and do their best to be healthy by eating sensibly, taking exercise and being hygienic. Pupils constantly help others; whether it is as playground helpers or servers of food or simply holding open doors – courtesy is the norm.

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. This clear-sighted, strong but caring leadership has established an ethos in which staff and pupils are valued and respected. There is a culture of being innovative to great effect. The staff team has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses which triggers action for improvement. Many staff demonstrate good leadership skills which are nurtured by the headteacher through very effective staff development. This is one of the reasons why there have been significant improvements since the last inspection and a key factor in the school's excellent capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise further progress in mathematics, by:
 - - taking action to implement existing plans to make learning in mathematics more relevant to the pupils' lives.
- Improve the quality of learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - devising and implementing a strategy to upgrade the outdoor learning facilities for children in Reception.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The pupils' love of school is evident in their smiling faces and total engagement in all that they do. This is one reason why attendance is high. Learning is a joint venture in this school; staff and pupils chat, think and adjust their thoughts as they go along. Pupils thrive on the many opportunities they are given to work together and share thoughts and ideas. During a Year 4 lesson, pupils entered into extended discussions with their partners to resolve problems relating to one and two-step mathematical calculations. They then set about finding the correct solutions with a sense of expectancy and satisfaction when they were found.

From a good start to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children advance at a good rate; they leave Reception with above average attainment. In Key Stages 1 and 2, good progress is the norm with some outstanding progress where more experienced staff work. By the end of Year 6, pupils are highly articulate and read and write very well. They are also competent mathematicians but despite their high attainment, progress in mathematics is slightly slower than in literacy. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from good support and guidance and make good progress towards their individual targets. Higher-attaining pupils generally do well and reach what are challenging targets for them in English and mathematics. There is no discernible difference in the pattern of the performance of boys or girls or of pupils of different minority ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils respond gleefully to the rewards for desirable behaviour emanating from the school's Golden Rules and show great pride when they receive praise from staff and other pupils. Excellent relationships are formed by pupils with others and many acquire advanced skills of negotiation to reach a consensus of opinion. This adds greatly to the quality of learning in lessons and to the development of excellent social skills. Their voice is very influential in school. The school council and eco council are active and influential on decisions made within the school.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Teaching is consistently good with outstanding elements. A wide variety of techniques is used to extend and exploit the pupils' good language skills and develop their ideas. Systems such as 'shoulder partners' contribute to developing pupils' ability to pursue their own enquiries. High expectations exist for pupils to set work out neatly; this adds to the pride they have in their work and the school. Very effective teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants makes sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given good support. Assessment is used to guide planning and pupils are involved in evaluating their own progress. One Year 4 girl commented: 'we know how well we have done and I like to "switch on the light" at the end of my work to show whether I understand or need help.'

An inspiring and innovative approach to the curriculum reflects the interests of pupils and recognises the strengths of teachers and adults. While all subjects are planned for, the imaginative way they are taught using relevant contexts, adds excitement to lessons. Consequently, pupils are bursting with enthusiasm to learn; even reluctant learners are inspired to put pen to paper and create stories, solve mathematical problems and research into events and facts, for example, the way that the skeleton operates. A strong emphasis is placed on developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills but much time is also given to sport, aspects of the arts and music, in particular singing. The school correctly identifies that more needs to be done to plan mathematics activities to be more closely connected

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with real life as is the case with activities in reading and writing. Pupils talk of how much they enjoy the academies that occur weekly enabling them to get involved in a host of different and exciting activities. Educational visits are used wisely to supplement learning, for example, to the local science and technology centre or a trip to a viewing point to view the landscape of Bolton as part of geography. Extra-curricular activities are popular and enrich the standard curriculum.

Underpinning all that goes on in the school are outstanding levels of care, guidance and support. Each pupil is an individual and treated as such. Staff are sensitive to those who are vulnerable and offer support and guidance to ease their worries. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very effectively supported. The school uses external agencies very effectively to support pupils with specific needs. Much is done to enable parents and carers to participate in their children's education, and home–school partnerships are very positive factors in the guidance pupils receive.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are outstanding. It ensures high achievement for all groups regardless of background. This is a school that is not afraid to take risks and think for itself which is the main reason why its outcomes are so high. The needs of the pupils are paramount and the professional development of staff is very high on its agenda. As a result, a strong staff team, with high morale, is driving the school forward and setting high expectations for all. The headteacher inspires staff and pupils alike. Imaginative thinking and very effective monitoring makes sure that the school's provision is evaluated and adapted to meet all pupils' needs. Very effective school development planning involves all, pupils, staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers so that the best possible options for moving forward are identified.

The governing body keeps a close eye on the school's performance and monitors spending carefully. Although members of the governing body understand the school well, opportunities are not fully taken to get into school and classes. Much is done, however, to ensure that all statutory requirements are met and good levels of safeguarding are secured. All procedures for health and safety, child protection and in securing the suitability of all adults are fully met. The school promotes excellent partnerships with parents. Good quality communication, including a good website and opportunities for pupils to work at home enables very good levels of parental involvement. The school is committed to promoting community cohesion and through excellent links with local schools and organisations within the community does this well. Plans exist, but are yet to

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be fully realised, to widen links with schools globally. The school manages resources very well and takes great care to get the best possible value from its income.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. When starting school the children's levels of development are higher than typical for their age. Many command a good vocabulary, have a good knowledge of mathematical ideas and possess a vivid imagination. Personal and social skills are good and children play happily together. Good teaching with careful use of assessment means that children are suitably challenged to extend their good skills. Activities are planned to capture the interests of children, for example, they were fascinated by the topic of dinosaurs. Staff cleverly used this topic to promote discussions, heighten observations and identify letter sounds as part of a dinosaur trail outdoors. The resources for learning are good overall. Outdoor provision, however, is spread out and difficult to manage and organise. This restricts the options for staff and children to benefit fully from free-choice learning outdoors. The good teaching offered to children ensures that good progress occurs. By the time children move on to Year 1, a higher than average percentage achieve above average attainment in each area of learning.

The provision is well led and managed. Good and improving links with other Early Years Foundation Stage settings contributes to staff development. Effective assessment systems help staff to plot progress and keep parents and carers informed about their children's progress. The base is safe and secure with responsible steps taken to remove all reasonable risk.

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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 vast majority of parents and carers who responded through the completed questionnaires were happy with the school's provision and indicated that their children enjoyed school. The vast majority of parents and carers also agreed that the school helped their child to have a healthy lifestyle and that the pupils' behaviour was good. Inspection findings endorse the parent's positive views. There were a small number of concerns about behaviour but inspectors found no evidence to support these. The school is working hard to involve parents and carers even more in their child's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Oaks 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 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 209 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	80	15	18	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	67	80	17	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	52	62	31	37	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	67	26	31	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	69	25	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	62	29	35	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	70	25	30	0	0	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)	47	56	28	33	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	62	29	35	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	43	40	48	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	43	39	46	5	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	53	63	28	33	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	65	28	33	1	1	0	0

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. 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 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.



13 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Oaks Primary School, Bolton, BL1 7HS

Thank you for cooperating with myself and the team during your recent inspection. We were very impressed by your school and how you are excellent ambassadors for it. You grow into mature, articulate and caring young citizens who are very well prepared for making the best of your future.

Your attendance is excellent. An important reason why you like school is the exciting lessons you receive. The way you negotiate with each other and develop your opinions so that a consensus is reached is unusually advanced. This helps you to do well with academic subjects such as English, mathematics and science but also in the way you progress in other aspects of learning such as sport, art and aspects of music.

Your attainment is high and all of you make good progress from above average starting points to school. Your good academic progress is matched by that in your personal development. Your behaviour is excellent and the awareness of others needs adds to the excellent personal qualities you have. You know how to act safely and keep yourselves healthy which contributes to your obvious zest for learning.

Your school has so many strengths it is judged to be outstanding. A key factor in creating such an effective school is your headteacher and staff who work tirelessly to give you all the best possible education. There are two things though that could be better; one is to increase progress even more in mathematics and the other is to upgrade the outdoor learning area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Byrne
Lead inspector

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