

INSPECTION REPORT

The Oaks Primary School

Bolton

LEA area: Bolton Metropolitan Borough

Unique reference number: 105176

Headteacher: Mr R Livesey

Reporting inspector: Sheila Pemberton
20810

Dates of inspection: 10 to 11 June 2002

Inspection number: 198517

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sharples Hall Drive Sharples Bolton
Postcode:	BL1 7HS
Telephone number:	01204 333171
Fax number:	10204 304089
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs C Wild
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is very popular with parents and has many more applications for places than its capacity allows. Although parents from a wide area apply for places for their children, pupils are drawn mainly from the surrounding suburb of owner-occupied homes. Successful appeals for places result in large classes in most year groups. However, admission is to be cut from 35 pupils in each year group to 30 from September 2002. Of the 239 pupils on roll, 128 boys and 111 girls are mainly of white ethnic origin. Other pupils are from Pakistani and Indian backgrounds. A very low proportion of pupils, 6.3 per cent, speak English as an additional language and all these pupils speak English competently on entry into the school. Gujarati and Turkish are the main languages other than English. Most children attend nurseries or playgroups before they start school. At the age of four, their early achievements are above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, 1.2 per cent, is well below the national average. A much lower percentage of pupils than nationally, 3.3 per cent is on the school's register of special educational needs, mainly for varying levels of difficulty with their learning. A below average proportion of pupils, 0.8 per cent, have statements of special educational needs for learning difficulties and physical disability. The school provides tuition in French for pupils in Year 6. It recently received a national award in recognition of the very high standards it achieves consistently in English, mathematics and science.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Oaks Primary School provides a good education for most of its pupils. The strong leadership and efficient management of the headteacher motivate the good teaching that maintains very high standards in English, mathematics and science. The school benefits from very positive partnerships with supportive parents and the work of a knowledgeable and committed governing body. It provides good value for the funding it receives.

What the school does well

- The school achieves very high standards in English, mathematics and science as a result of very good teaching in these subjects in the infants and Year 6.
- Teachers provide children in the reception class with very good support for their personal, social and emotional development.
- Very positive partnerships with parents make strong contributions to pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- The school misses opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) to extend pupils' learning in other subjects.
- More support is needed for some of the pupils who have difficulties with their learning.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has maintained very high standards in English, mathematics and science since it was last inspected in 1997 and has made steady improvements to issues that were identified for improvement. Teachers now provide more able pupils with tasks that allow them to do as well as can be expected. The way that most pupils' learning is assessed is strong enough to ensure that teaching in English, mathematics and science meets their needs as they progress through different year groups. Also, when children in the reception class carry out independent activities, teachers work alongside them to make sure that they benefit from all experiences.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	A*	A	B
mathematics	A	A*	A*	A
science	A	A	A*	A

Key

well above average A
 above average B
 average C
 below average D
 well below average E

From above average starting points, children in the reception class make good progress in all areas of learning and many are already working at the first steps of the National Curriculum. The standards reached by seven and 11-year-olds in English, mathematics and science remained either high or very high at both key stages from 1998 to 2001. In 2001, the standards reached by seven-year-olds were in the top five per cent nationally in reading, writing, mathematics and science. They were also in the top five per cent in mathematics and science for 11-year-olds. However, in the English tests in 2001, the most able 11-year-olds did not do as well as more able pupils in similar schools. Similarly, the standards that seven-year-olds achieved in writing, although well above the national average overall, were not as high as in reading. This was because fewer more able pupils reached the same high standards in writing as they did in reading, mathematics and science. Comparisons with similar schools were very favourable for seven-year-olds in 2001. They achieved well above average standards in reading and writing and very high standards in mathematics.

Inspection findings show that the school has improved the performances of its ablest pupils whose standards in the current Years 2 and 6 are high or very high in English, mathematics and science. Overall, standards are above average in reception and well above average in Years 1 to 6. The school did well by exceeding the targets set for 11-year-olds in English and mathematics in 2001.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils bring enthusiasm and enjoyment to their learning. They try hard to do their best in lessons and other activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. While most pupils' good behaviour enables them to get the best out of their time in school, small groups of pupils in some classes in the juniors disturb others by their restlessness during lessons. Behaviour is exemplary in the reception and infant classes and in Year 6.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are usually sensible and reliable. Good, harmonious relationships between most pupils and teachers make a positive contribution to effective teaching and learning.
Attendance	Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in very high levels of attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Children get off to a good start thanks to the very caring relationships and encouragement they enjoy in the reception class. Teachers in the reception class and infants are good at teaching reading, writing, mathematics and science. They provide most pupils with the skills and confidence to achieve the best they are capable of in these subjects. Teachers in the juniors build steadily on the high standards many pupils achieve by the end of Year 2. Very knowledgeable teaching coupled with high expectations and firm control of pupils' behaviour accelerates pupils' learning in Year 6. It encourages them to do their best and underlies the school's very high standards in English, mathematics and science. Although most teachers ensure that pupils are well behaved, sometimes teachers allow small groups of pupils in some classes in the juniors to get away with behaviour that produces a restless atmosphere. Teachers are not using ICT effectively enough to extend pupils' learning in other subjects. They also lack the skills needed to improve the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school provides a full curriculum and a satisfactory range of activities for older pupils outside lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Although the school provides good help for pupils with statements of special educational needs, it takes too long to identify and to provide skilled teaching for pupils who meet with difficulties in their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The learning of pupils with English as an additional language benefits from the good teaching in English, mathematics and science that the school provides for most other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision for pupils' social and cultural development makes them aware of the traditions of their own and other cultures. Satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development makes them aware of the effects of their actions
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is good at making sure that pupils are safe and secure. In the main, teachers keep close checks on pupils' behaviour and personal development. The use teachers make of information from assessment ensures that pupils do their best in English, mathematics and science. A strong feature of the school's care is reflected in the very good partnerships it maintains with parents. These provide a good basis for pupils' learning and personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership and management for the school. Good leadership is based on the encouragement teachers receive to maintain high standards and very positive partnerships with parents. Efficient management ensures that the school is in a good position to meet essential changes to its provision and developments to pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed to the success of the school and they work to its benefit by fulfilling their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Through thoroughly checking the quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science, the school has a clear view of the strengths in its performance and takes effective action to improve areas that need developing.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes satisfactory use of available resources. It takes all essential measures to ensure that it gets good value from its spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like coming to school and make good progress with their learning. • The school is well led and managed. • The teaching is good. • Teachers provide the right amount of homework. • Teachers expect children to work hard and do their best. • Their children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They would like a more interesting range of activities for their children outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with parents' very positive views about the school. They agree with parents that while there is a satisfactory range of activities outside lessons, access to them is usually limited to the oldest pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school achieves very high standards in English, mathematics and science as a result of very good teaching in these subjects in the infants and Year 6.

1. Almost all children come from homes where their parents are interested in their learning and get a good start to their education by attending nurseries or playgroups before joining the reception class. As a result, most children's early achievements at the beginning of the autumn term are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and in all other aspects of early learning. Many children make such good progress that they achieve the national objectives early and work at the first level of the National Curriculum before the end of their reception year.
2. Adding to this good start to children's learning, teachers in the reception and infant classes place very strong emphasis and devote considerable time to teaching the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and science. To increase the impact of their teaching they systematically provide pupils with work in these subjects to complete at home with help from supportive parents. The teaching of reading is particularly strong for these pupils as teachers spend time reading with every one of them individually on a daily basis. They also take care to ensure that pupils learn through the sort of practical approaches that deepen their mathematical and scientific understanding. Consequently, by the time they are seven-years-old, a very high proportion of pupils make the same strong progress with their learning that is evident during their reception year. This has meant that over recent years, the school has consistently maintained either high or very high standards in reading, mathematics and science in national tests and assessments by teachers in Year 2.
3. While the teaching is sound in Years 3, 4 and 5, it becomes very strong again in Year 6. This gives most pupils the opportunity to reinforce their earlier learning in the juniors and accelerates their achievements in the time before national tests. An example of teaching of high quality in Year 6 flowed from the careful analyses of last year's results in the national tests in English. Although standards were above average in the subject, teachers realised that there was room for improvement when the results of more able 11-year-olds were compared with those of such pupils in similar schools. This resulted in the teacher putting considerable effort into widening the range and style of pupils' writing. As a result, the achievements of all pupils in the class have improved but especially those of the most able.

Teachers provide children in the reception class with very good support for their personal, social and emotional development.

4. As children enter the classroom, their teachers greet them with the sort of calm and welcoming approach that sets the tone for very good behaviour and positive relationships. Children also witness the growth of friendly relationships with their families as teachers and parents exchange relevant news and discuss their concerns. The warmth of their welcome into school contributes to children's emotional development. It clearly gives them the comfortable and secure feelings they need to leave familiar adults without fuss and to settle quickly into daily routines. Once inside the classroom, children gain strong approval for their sensible behaviour from the teachers. They know that teachers appreciate their achievements and expect to be treated with courtesy and respect. As a result of the treatment they receive, children respond with very good manners. They need no prompting when moving about on the

carpet to say, *Excuse me*, to one another and take good care not to step on anyone's fingers.

5. The self-confidence children gain in the reception class is evident during discussions. They show no embarrassment or reservations when talking to a teacher before the whole class. When another adult entered the room, for instance, two birthday children, five-year-old twins, greeted him by name and told him their news, *Hello, it's our birthday today!* They needed little encouragement to tell everyone about their cards and presents and shared their delight in the day by spontaneously hugging the teachers. Very good help and guidance allow children in the reception class to make very good progress with their personal development. They establish the self-confidence that allows children to become enthusiastic learners and improves future chances of strong achievement.

Very positive partnerships with parents make strong contributions to pupils' learning.

6. Most parents are confident that their children attend a good school. Their views stem primarily from the success pupils achieve in a school that maintains very high standards in English, mathematics and science. For its part, the school is conscious of the way that strong partnerships with parents impact on pupils' learning. Teachers are well aware of the benefits gained when knowledgeable and well-informed parents extend their children's learning and become involved in school activities and events. After seeking parents' views in a recent questionnaire, the school shows that it values their opinions by implementing good ideas.
7. To emphasise the value they place on partnership, teachers encourage parents to take part in the life of the school. Parents are inducted into the school community by attending seasonal occasions, formal meetings and informal events and by accepting invitations to work in classrooms and to support activities outside lessons. The school helps new parents to understand the value of annual reports about their children's progress and personal development. It places strong emphasis on the importance of good attendance and its positive effect on pupils' learning. In response to parents' requests, the school provides them with details of the work covered termly by each year group. All these initiatives ensure that parents know not only what is taught but also where their children are up to with their learning and how to add to the value of the work they do in lessons.
8. The school's booklet, *Adding to and Supporting Children's Learning*, further strengthens parents' understanding of how to guide their children's learning at home. By involving themselves in activities and suggestions provided by teachers, parents have a very successful impact on standards. An example of the contribution some parents make to the school's high standards is when they boost pupils' skills and interest by reading with pupils in infant classrooms. Similarly, the *Friends of the Oaks Association* strengthens relationships between teachers and parents. It also raises substantial funds for the school that are used, for instance, to subsidise educational visits and valuable resources for teaching and learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school misses opportunities to use ICT to extend pupils' learning in other subjects.

9. The school has sufficient resources and has allocated generous amounts of time for the co-ordinator to teach ICT to small groups of pupils. However, most teachers are still at an early stage of teaching ICT systematically or using it consistently to develop pupils' learning in other subjects. Although pupils in Year 6 can cite examples of using the internet to *expand the knowledge you can get from books*, they are not using ICT regularly enough; for example, to use the skills they gain in mathematics, to record, present and interpret data in subjects such as geography. This is because the school lacks the detailed guidance and programme of work it needs to develop the skilled use of ICT as a tool for learning across the curriculum. The subject also lacks a thorough system for assessing pupils' learning and guiding the next stages of teaching. This is especially important in a school where many pupils gain their initial knowledge of computers at home. A weakness in the quality of assessment, combined with some pupils' lack of expertise in the subject, means that their skills are developed to different levels and their attainments are patchy and uneven.
10. Although teachers know how to cover the work in ICT for different year groups, it is the co-ordinator who has done most of the teaching in the last two years. While this situation is beneficial as long as it exists, it means that teachers lack the experience needed if they are to teach the subject well and are unaware of its value as a tool for learning. As a result, computers that are stationed in classrooms are not fully used and some pupils see them as a bonus for finishing work before the end of lessons. For example, older pupils sometimes use word processing packages to copy their writing from exercise books rather than to draft and edit their work. Access to computers outside lessons is also seen by pupils in Year 6 as a chance to play games rather than to practise new skills. Similarly, teachers are unaware of the benefits of ICT to the learning of less able pupils and pupils with special educational needs who are capable of gaining high levels of skill in the subject and using it to overcome some of the difficulties they encounter in other lessons.

More support is needed for some of the pupils who have difficulties with their learning.

11. The school takes good care of pupils with statements of special educational needs relating to their physical disabilities and learning difficulties. It provides these pupils with strong guidance and very good resources for their learning. The installation of a stair lift, for instance, gives all pupils ease of access to the hall for assemblies and lessons in physical education. The school's provision for pupils with less serious difficulties is not always sufficiently supportive. It is often not helpful enough to reduce the gap between these pupils' achievements and the standards in English and mathematics achieved by many pupils of the same age. Although pupils have individual education plans that thoroughly record the difficulties they encounter, the plans lack information for teachers about the stages pupils are at on the register of special educational needs. In some instances, there is no information about reviews of pupils' progress or of the contacts that the school makes with their parents.
12. The targets and activities listed in some individual education plans are not demanding or challenging enough to meet pupils' needs or to improve the progress they make in their learning. This is especially the case in reading, writing and mathematics when wide gaps exist in pupils' learning. Also, the resources to support pupils' learning that

are specified in some individual education plans are not provided by teachers for their use during lessons. In English, for example, pupils who encounter difficulties with their writing work without dictionaries, lists of important words or word books to improve their spelling. The learning difficulties encountered by some pupils in the juniors are not identified early enough for them to be placed on the register or to be met with skilled help as they arise. In these respects the school is not fully implementing the Code of Practice. It is not always planning tasks at the right level, providing suitable resources, or allocating sufficient time during lessons for teachers to work alongside pupils with special educational needs.

13. The school has identified the need to improve its provision for pupils with special educational needs in its current development plan.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

14. The school should

- (1) make better use of ICT to improve pupils' learning by
 - providing detailed programmes of work that link the development of skills in ICT with the acquisition of knowledge and skills in other subjects
 - giving staff the expertise and confidence to use ICT during lessons

(Paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report)

- (2) improve its provision for pupils with special educational needs by
 - providing teachers with training that allows them to fully implement the Code of Practice for special educational needs
 - placing all pupils who encounter difficulties with their learning and personal development on the register of special educational needs
 - ensuring that the parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept informed about their children's progress.

(Paragraphs 11 and 12 of the report)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	13
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	4	6	1	0	0
Percentage	0	15	31	46	8	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents almost 7.7 eight percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	239
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	8

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	17	17	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	16	17
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	34	33	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 [91]	97[91]	100 [94]
	National	84 [83]	86 [84]	91 [90]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	17	17
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	33	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 [91]	100 [94]	100 [91]
	National	85 [84]	89 [88]	89 [88]

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	18	15	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	18
	Girls	15	14	15
	Total	31	31	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 [100]	94 [97]	100 [97]
	National	75 [75]	71 [72]	87 [85]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	17
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	31	32	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 [100]	97 [91]	97 [91]
	National	72 [70]	74 [72]	82 [79]

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	5
Pakistani	9
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	190
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.9
Average class size	34

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	27.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	454801
Total expenditure	441277
Expenditure per pupil	1927
Balance brought forward from previous year	15399
Balance carried forward to next year	28923

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	239
Number of questionnaires returned	50 (20.9%)

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	82	14	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school	82	16	0	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good	66	30	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	44	56	0	0	0
The teaching is good	82	16	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	40	48	8	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	78	16	2	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	82	16	0	2	0
The school works closely with parents	36	54	6	4	0
The school is well led and managed	80	18	0	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	80	18	0	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	34	38	16	0	12

NB: figures are rounded to nearest integer; sum may not = 100%

Nil responses (i.e. blank boxes) are included in category 5.

Five (2.5%) parents made additional comments

No significant points were raised.