

Chestnuts Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132733
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	360427
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	James Henry

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ramesh Mistery
Headteacher	Alison Wright
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons, and 13 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with senior leaders, governors, staff, pupils and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school assessment information, curriculum planning, reports from the School Improvement Partner, pupils' work and school policies, particularly those involving the safeguarding of pupils. In addition, 89 parental questionnaires were analysed, as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- The attainment of pupils in English and mathematics in different classes, but in particular by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The progress that different groups of pupils, especially the more able, make across the school, particularly in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and the difference it is making to improving pupils' learning.
- The effectiveness of senior leaders and the governing body in identifying and addressing any weaknesses in the school and whether improvements are being sustained.

Information about the school

Chestnuts is an average-sized primary school that has seen its pupil numbers fall over the past few years. There is a higher percentage than normal of pupils who leave and join the school at times not usually expected. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. However, the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. There have been significant staffing changes over the past year, with nine new teachers joining the school. The school has a specialist unit for hearing impaired pupils who attend the school from across Milton Keynes. Pupils who attend this unit are integrated into mainstream classes within the school. There is a nursery on the school site that is managed by the local authority, and there is an after-school club that takes pupils from other schools. Both are inspected separately. The school has the Healthy Schools Bronze award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Chestnuts Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education. Provision has improved since the last inspection due to the determination of the headteacher and deputy headteacher to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, the rate at which pupils make progress is improving quickly and this is also beginning to raise attainment across the school. The headteacher and newly established leadership team, along with the governing body, are committed to continuing this process and are building on the established key strengths of the school, which are:

- the good behaviour of pupils, both in lessons and around the school, as shown by the care and respect they show to one another and to adults
- the positive relationships between pupils and staff, enabling pupils to contribute to the school community by undertaking a variety of responsibilities, including acting as members of the school council
- pupils feeling very safe in school and having the confidence in staff to deal with any problems they may have
- the different enrichment activities, offered both during and after school, that promote pupils' enjoyment and understanding of how to be healthy
- the effective support that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with hearing impairments, receive that allow them to access the curriculum and enjoy school life
- the pleasant and well-maintained school environment

At the start of their school life, children make satisfactory progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is not better than this because planning and assessment do not always ensure that children's needs are met in all areas of learning. Attainment, as seen in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics, is low. After a period where pupils were under-achieving, they are now making satisfactory progress. School assessment data, observations of pupils' learning in lessons and the standard of their written work show that attainment is rising securely and that pupils, including statemented and hearing impaired pupils, are making at least satisfactory and, in some cases, good progress. However, some of the more-able pupils, although making satisfactory progress, are not achieving their full potential in English and mathematics. Many staff are new to their posts. They have brought a determination and drive to raise the attainment of pupils across the school. This is a key factor in the rapidly improving progress of pupils. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching, although improving, is satisfactory. This is because tasks are not always matched to the needs of all pupils, especially the more able. In addition, marking does not consistently inform pupils how to improve and pupils often do not have opportunities in subsequent lessons to respond to

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feedback, especially in mathematics. Evaluation of the work of the school by senior leaders is satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through their monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning. However, other leaders are not as effective in monitoring the attainment of pupils and holding staff to account for their pupils' performance. While the governing body and other senior leaders are supportive, they are not fully involved in the self-review of the work of the school. Given the improvement in the rates of pupils' progress, rising attainment, the establishment of a new teaching team and senior leaders' determination to continue to raise standards, the school has a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of pupils in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 by:
 - increasing the role of middle leaders in the monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress and in holding staff to account for this
 - making better use of assessment to identify any underachievement and provide appropriate strategies to ensure that more-able pupils achieve their potential.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring tasks are always matched to the needs of pupils, especially the more able
 - ensuring that marking is consistent in informing pupils how to improve and that subsequent planning gives pupils the opportunity to respond to feedback, especially in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of assessment and planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure children make good progress in all areas of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children make a satisfactory start in Reception. They enter school with abilities and knowledge well below those normally expected and make sound progress in their learning. Children enter Year 1 with communication, language and literacy and mathematical skills lower than expected nationally. Results in previous national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been low, and there was evidence of underachievement in the past. Pupil tracking data show that the rate of pupil progress is now securely and rapidly increasing, especially across Key Stage 2. For example, by the end of Year 4 and Year 5, pupils' progress in reading and writing was often outstanding. In lessons, in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils were showing sustained concentration and producing written work that reached, and sometimes exceeded, the level appropriate for their age. In Year 1, for example, pupils were confidently putting adjectives into simple sentences and were showing good understanding of the need for full stops and capital letters. This was due to teachers having high expectations of pupils and planning activities that engaged them in their learning. This is raising the attainment of pupils across the school. However, progress in mathematics is not as good as in English. This is because pupils lack confidence in using and applying their basic calculation skills in problem solving activities.

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The quality of learning in lessons is satisfactory, and sometimes good. Pupils show good concentration in lessons and are being actively involved in their learning. As a result, they are beginning to making accelerated progress. For example, pupils' vocabulary and writing skills were being extended through discussions about writing effective headlines for a fictional newspaper article. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with hearing impairments were fully involved in the lessons due to effective support from teaching assistants.

Pupils said they felt very safe in school because not only was good behaviour encouraged and rewarded, but problems were dealt with fairly and quickly. Attendance is satisfactory and the school works hard to ensure a minority of pupils who are persistently absent improve their attendance. The school is an inclusive community that soundly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, pupils' understanding and knowledge of other cultures is less developed. Pupils with hearing impairments are included in all the school activities and valued as individuals. Pupils enjoy school as a result of their increasing learning in lessons and because of the wide range of sporting and creative activities that are readily taken up. Different activities offered on Friday afternoons were particularly enjoyed, although one pupil commented, 'But I like maths as well.' Pupils are aware of how to live a healthy lifestyle, as shown by their participation in sporting activities. However, some do not show this consistently, for example in their food choices. Pupils make an effective contribution to their school community through the school council. For example, at break times, pupils from the school council are available to speak to other pupils who may have a worry or concern. However, pupils' involvement in the wider community is less well developed.

Given their satisfactory progress in their learning and sound personal development, pupils are adequately prepared for their future education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

The rate at which pupils learn is increasing because the quality of teaching is improving. However, it is still inconsistent across the school and ranges from satisfactory to good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. This enables all groups of pupils, especially those with hearing impairments, to feel confident in taking part in question and answer sessions. Teachers use technology to engage pupils in lessons and actively encourage pupils to learn from each other through assessing their own and other pupils' work. Where teaching is good, teachers plan together to build on pupils' previous understanding and make sure that the needs of pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are met. However, there are occasions when more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and opportunities to assess pupils' learning, particularly at the end of lessons, are missed. The school has a system for marking pupils' work. While teachers mark work regularly, following this system, the quality of feedback that pupils receive on their work is inconsistent, particularly in mathematics. In some classes, very clear steps are given for improvement, but in others, pupils are congratulated on their work rather than guided on how to improve. Also, pupils are not regularly given further activities to help them to respond to and build on feedback given in marking.

The school has just introduced a new curriculum that uses topics to link different subjects together. For instance, the school was turned in to a mock evacuation centre following the

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scenario of a natural disaster. Pupils re-enacted the scene by staying overnight in school. This led to pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of volcanoes through geographical and scientific investigations. Although this creative approach is just being embedded in the school, it is already beginning to securely improve pupils' attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy through providing opportunities to apply these basic skills in other subjects. There are a wide variety of sporting and creative enrichment activities that extend and engage pupils' interest and enjoyment. Often, specialist teachers are used to provide activities such as football and netball and there are opportunities to learn to play a variety of musical instruments.

There is good support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for pupils with hearing impairments. This includes good liaison with other agencies to ensure that pupils are fully involved both in lessons and in the life of the school. Consequently, these pupils grow in confidence and their personal development is good. Pupils who join the school during the school year settle well as a result of the good care shown by staff and other pupils. Staff know their pupils well and there are effective transition arrangements as pupils move through the school and leave, either during their primary education or as they move on to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Good leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is ensuring that the previous underachievement of pupils is now being securely and rapidly addressed. The majority of the teaching staff have been appointed to the school during the past two years and the headteacher has ensured that new staff have the skills and ambition to raise pupils' attainment and accelerate the pace of pupils' learning. A new senior leadership team, with the same ambition of raising attainment, has been established, although many of these teachers are new to positions of responsibility. A positive start has been made to develop their skills and capacity to bring about improvements but their role in raising attainment is not fully embedded in the work of the school. The governing body is supportive of the headteacher, especially in the appointment of new staff. However, governors have not focused enough in the past on the achievement of pupils. With guidance from the local authority, they are beginning to challenge and hold senior leaders to account for the performance of the school. Safeguarding procedures are securely in place and reviewed regularly. A strength of the school is its inclusive approach to all groups of pupils, especially those with hearing impairments or learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They are valued and given an equal opportunity to achieve and be involved in the life of the school. While all pupils are effectively incorporated into the school community and the

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school works with other groups locally, actions to engage with other communities from different cultures nationally are less developed. Given that new leadership and management and teaching teams are quickly raising achievement, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

From low starting points, children make satisfactory progress in their learning in the Reception class. Sound induction procedures ensure children settle quickly and parents and carers value the care shown towards their children. Links with local nurseries and outside agencies, such as the health services, allow individual children's needs to be quickly identified and this helps to inform planning. Relationships between staff and children are good, resulting in children feeling confident and safe. The outdoor area is not as well utilised as the classroom. However, it provides children with opportunities for exercise and helps to develop their awareness of the importance of being healthy. The pleasant, stimulating and well-resourced environment allows children to explore and learn through play. Consequently, children enjoy school. For example, children were captivated when observing dead fish through a magnifying glass. Children are well behaved and work happily with each other. They readily help around the classroom and share play equipment. Given their low starting points, children make sound progress in their personal development.

Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are new to the Early Years Foundation Stage and the assessment of children's progress and subsequent planning do not always meet individual needs. However, planning does ensure that there is a sound balance between activities that children choose and those that have an adult input. The Early Year Foundation Stage is soundly led and managed. The teacher in charge has only been in post since the

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beginning of the school year and is developing her role in monitoring and identifying areas for improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the provision for their children at the school. Most said their children enjoyed school and that the school kept their children safe. Of the number of responses, most focused on the school taking account of parental suggestions and concerns and the effectiveness of leadership and management. The school accepts that parental involvement is an area for improvement and has drawn up a plan to address this. During the inspection, it was observed that parents were welcomed in to the school and that the school was using a variety of methods to engage with parents, including regular newsletters. Given the significant changes in staff, senior leaders have had to adjust the organisation of the school. Despite these changes, inspectors found that senior leaders were approachable and available to parents and were providing sound leadership and management.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chestnuts 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 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 263 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	49	41	46	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	39	44	49	8	9	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	30	51	57	10	11	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	36	47	53	9	10	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	32	36	49	55	5	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	34	50	56	5	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	38	54	61	1	1	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)	21	24	51	57	3	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	26	54	61	6	7	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	27	56	63	3	3	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	22	48	54	9	10	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	22	25	46	52	16	18	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	35	48	54	9	10	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.



15 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chestnuts Primary School, Milton Keynes MK3 5EN

I am writing to thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed watching you work well with each other and your teachers in lessons. While the school gives you a satisfactory education, some of you do not reach standards that are normally expected. However, this is changing quite quickly due to the hard work of the adults at your school. Here are some of the things we found out during our time at your school.

- You enjoy school because it is a friendly place in which to learn. You behave well and work and play happily together.
- You feel safe in school
- You are keen to learn and do your best.
- You thoroughly enjoy the opportunities to take part in different sporting, artistic and musical activities.
- Adults look after you very well and make sure you are safe.
- You make a positive contribution to your school and local community through activities such as raising money for local charities.

To make sure that your school improves, we have asked teachers and other adults who have responsibility for your school to do three things.

- Raise the standards that you reach in English and mathematics by the time you get to the end of Year 2 or Year 6, through teachers checking that you are not falling behind in your learning.
- Make sure that the teaching in all your lessons is good and that marking always helps you to improve your work.
- Make sure that teachers of young children carefully observe what they are learning so that they can plan activities that help them get off to a good start in school.

Yours sincerely

James Henry

Lead Inspector

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