

Christow Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113193
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357286
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Stevens
Headteacher	David Lamoon
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed seven lessons taught by four teachers and held meetings with staff, a member of the governing body and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including that relating to pupils' attainment and progress, monitoring, evaluation and development planning, and pupils' safety. They analysed responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 57 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The attainment and progress of current pupils, especially in reading and mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
- The quality of teaching, in order to resolve uncertainties in the school's own evaluation of its performance.
- The attendance of current pupils and the effectiveness with which leaders and managers tackle persistent absence.
- The extent to which the recommendations of the last inspection have been acted upon, especially that relating to pupils' understanding of the diversity of society and faith in the United Kingdom.
- Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to see if they make good progress in all aspects of the curriculum.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than the average sized primary school and serves the village and surrounding area on the edge of the Dartmoor National Park. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mostly moderate learning difficulties, is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of boys currently on the school roll is unusually high.

The school shares the site with a private pre-school which is not managed by the governing body and hence was not inspected on this occasion. Children who attend the pre-school, play and work alongside those in the school's Reception class. The headteacher was absent from November 2010 to April 2011; during this period a teacher from within the school took on the role of acting headteacher.

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?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well. Attainment in English and mathematics is above average and rising. All pupils, including the more-able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their work. This includes the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 in reading and mathematics, which formerly was less good. This good progress is due to consistently good teaching. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils as shown by the good mix of challenging tasks that are planned to meet the needs of the full range of ages and abilities in each class. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to use their good skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. For example, most mathematics lessons require pupils to solve problems they might encounter in their daily lives, helping them to see the relevance of the work. They are encouraged to assess their own and each other's work, as shown when Years 5 and 6 assessed each other's punctuation and used criteria to advise their partner on how a higher level might be reached.

Pupils behave well in and outside the classroom and have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They have plenty of opportunities for exercise but regret their limited opportunities to take part in competitive sports, which is due to the small size of the school. School leaders are rightly exploring the potential for greater collaboration with other schools, in both this and other areas. Nevertheless, the curriculum is varied and encourages pupils to learn more outside school through reading and study of their rich environment. Pupils' attendance is average. It has been adversely affected by poor weather during the last two winters, and the governing body is not sufficiently rigorous in challenging families' requests for holiday leave in term-time. In other respects, pupils are cared for well. The school has strong links with external agencies and other schools. Most pupils start their education in the pre-school which works closely with the school. Links with the secondary school to which most transfer enable this to be an effective process.

Parents and carers take a great interest in their children's education as is shown by the high level of response to the inspectors' questionnaire. Almost all rightly believe their child is safe and happy there and most, also rightly, believe the teaching is good. However, the majority lack confidence in the leadership of the school. This is understandable as there are a number of uncertainties relating to future staffing, governance and management arrangements. Nevertheless, inspectors found that these matters had no impact on the quality of education the pupils receive. Effective subject leadership of both English and mathematics has led to improvements in teaching and hence pupils' progress. Accurate self-evaluation has identified potential weaknesses, for example in the accommodation and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has led to improvements in these areas that have resulted in better learning opportunities and hence progress by the children. The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, such as the setting of targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have been largely

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addressed. The governing body challenges the school and meets its legal responsibilities effectively, but it has on occasion failed to take timely action or to keep parents and carers adequately informed of its plans. Nevertheless, school leaders have shown good ambition and drive for improvement, and the school's successes in those aspects of its work that have the most impact on improving pupils' progress show that there is good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - drawing up and publicising a clear policy detailing the circumstances in which absence for family holidays may be authorised
 - introducing incentives for pupils to attend well.introducing incentives for pupils to attend well.
- Improve the confidence of parents and carers in the leadership and management of the school by:
 - setting out and consulting on options for the future direction of the school
 - improving communication of all types with parents and carers.improving communication of all types with parents and carers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In recent years, attainment in English and mathematics has risen from average to above average. Current pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain high standards in both subjects by the time they leave the school. Scrutiny and observation of their work, and the school's own assessments, show that all should attain the nationally expected levels, with around three-quarters attaining above this level. Similar evidence shows good progress in all years from pupil's broadly average and sometimes above average starting points when they enter Year 1. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 write accurately and neatly, setting out their work in a way that clearly shows their thinking. For example, they could explain why nine bicycle tyres will only make four bicycles roadworthy, and why 13 eggs require three six-egg boxes to prevent breakage. Lower-attaining pupils understood these concepts through use of a computer game. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use their good knowledge of letters and sounds to begin to read and write with fluency. This good progress builds on the good start children receive in the Reception class where, for example, with no adult support, they used a computer program that tested their understanding of the size and shape of trees.

Pupils show care and concern for each other, with older pupils understanding that younger ones might be frightened by rough play. Relationships in lessons are very good, although this occasionally leads to an overly relaxed atmosphere that can slow the pace of work. An example of pupils' good contribution to the community is the healthy tuck shop run by the school council, profits from which are used to improve resources such as play equipment. The very occasional 'unhealthy tuck shop', with proceeds going to charity, helps pupils to understand which foods are healthy and which are not.

The area has experienced two successive harsh winters. The school remained open on all but two days, but some pupils were unable to attend for longer periods. This inevitably

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had an impact on attendance. However there remains potential for attendance to improve, for example, no incentives are offered to encourage pupils to achieve high attendance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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 seen was consistently good. Teachers explain the work clearly, using information and communication technology well to help them do so. Tasks for more-able pupils are often very demanding, as when those in Year 6 explored the geometry of circles with only light intervention by the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by teachers and teaching assistants and make good progress as a result. In a few lessons, the informal atmosphere slows the pace of learning, for example when groups of pupils are reorganised. Assessment is used well to plan work that meets each pupil's needs and takes into account particular issues, such as the preponderance of boys in Years 4 to 6. Effective marking and use of targets enable pupils to understand how to improve their work. Good use is made of the local environment, with a range of visits and visitors and many horticultural and environmental activities. Pupils have increasing opportunities to understand the range of beliefs and cultures in the United Kingdom, such as from a visitor who spoke to pupils about her Hindu faith and culture and also about her experiences as a British citizen of Asian heritage. Pupils believe that they have too few opportunities to study some subjects such as design and technology or geography but

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scrutiny of curriculum plans showed that these are incorporated into projects such as an investigation of the polar environment.

Pupils receive good care, guidance and support such as when more-able pupils are identified and given opportunities, for example to attend workshops at the University of Exeter. Good partnerships with agencies and other schools enable those with particular needs, or whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, to be supported well. While support is offered to the families of pupils whose attendance is low, too little is done to promote high attendance by all pupils.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, action taken by the headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body has contributed to higher attainment and improved progress by pupils. The last year has been a challenging one for school leaders. The absence of the headteacher and some other permanent staff led to a considerable use of supply and temporary teachers which unsettled some pupils and their parents and carers. A budget shortfall has led to a need to reduce staff. The governing body is openly considering whether the school should join a federation or academy trust. While there have been shortfalls in the effectiveness with which parents and carers have been engaged as partners in resolving these matters, leaders and managers have nevertheless successfully retained a focus on improving teaching and pupils' progress. External help has been used appropriately and ambitious plans and targets demonstrate the good drive and ambition for continued success.

The governing body effectively carries out its responsibilities to keep pupils safe, for example, by ensuring that all staff receive a high level of training in child protection and that the relatively large, sloping grounds are safe and secure. Discrimination is not tolerated and the fact that all pupils, including the high proportion of boys and fewer girls, achieve equally well, demonstrates the school's good commitment to equality of opportunity. While there are good links with the local community and a growing understanding of the wider issues of community cohesion, a plan to develop this aspect further has yet to be implemented fully and the school's work in this respect remains satisfactory, as it was at the last inspection.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have many opportunities to play and learn with each other and the children attending the pre-school. Their good social skills were shown, for example, in their table manners when they shared their morning snack, using vegetable sticks to eat healthy dips they had prepared and discussing whether breakfast cereal on a bed of lettuce was a tasty dish. The high numbers of adults present know the children's needs well, and provision for children's welfare is good. The excellent facilities provide a range of resources indoors and outside. It is a safe environment with effective security. Children undertake more formal learning of literacy and numeracy skills. While they make good progress, adults sometimes talk for too long and children become fidgety.

By the end of the Reception Year, children attain and often exceed the expected levels. There are excellent relationships with the pre-school which shares the facility, and children are well prepared for their more formal education when they enter Year 1. The good provision, especially the facilities developed since the last inspection, demonstrates the good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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	2

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Stage

Views of parents and carers

Over 70% of parents and carers returned the inspectors' questionnaire, which is a proportion that is well above average and reflects their interest in their children's education.

Almost all agreed that their child enjoyed school, was safe there and was taught to lead a healthy life. The very large majority agreed the teaching is good and that their child is prepared well for the future. Inspection evidence supports these positive views.

Small minorities of parents and carers felt that their child was making insufficient progress, that they were not helped to support his or her learning and that the school did not manage unacceptable behaviour well. No significant evidence in support of these views was found by inspectors.

The majority of parents and carers did not believe the school is led and managed effectively. Recent disruption and current uncertainties make this view an understandable one. Inspectors found that the governing body has not always taken timely action or communicated and consulted well with parents and carers over some of the issues which are explored in more detail in the body of the report. Nevertheless, there is overwhelming evidence that leaders and managers have been successful in their core duties to promote high achievement and the safety and welfare of the pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Christow Community 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 81 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	49	28	49	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	67	18	32	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	18	34	60	9	16	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	18	33	58	10	18	3	5
The teaching is good at this school	17	30	29	51	7	12	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	16	33	58	14	25	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	23	39	68	1	2	2	4
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)	13	23	31	54	5	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	19	38	67	6	11	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	11	34	60	9	16	4	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	12	34	60	9	16	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	1	2	20	35	17	30	15	26
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	23	30	53	10	18	2	4

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



27 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christow Community School, Exeter EX6 7PE

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing your work. This letter is to tell you what we found.

Yours is a good school. You all make good progress and pupils in Year 6 are on course to reach high attainment in their English and mathematics tests. You behave well and told us there is little bullying as older pupils care for the younger ones. You know how to keep healthy and safe and we were impressed by the healthy tuck shop run by the school council. You have good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Children get a good start in the Reception class. We know your attendance has been affected by snowy weather, but it could still be better. Always come to school unless it is too dangerous to do so or you are ill. We have asked the school to consider giving you rewards for high attendance, and to make sure your parents and carers are clear on the rules for taking holidays in school time.

The teaching is good and you are helped to understand how to improve your work. You told us that you would like to do more geography, design and technology, and games. You get some good opportunities, for example Years 3 and 4's polar project, but you might be given more. You are cared for well, especially when you start school and leave for secondary school, as your school has good links with others.

The headteacher and other staff lead the school well by making sure, for example, that the teaching is good. There are changes taking place at school about which the majority of your parents and carers are understandably concerned. We have asked the governing body to make sure they are told what is happening and that they are asked for their views.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler

Lead inspector

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