

Cherry Tree Primary School, Basildon

Inspection report

Unique reference number	132833
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	381477
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Beale

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Burns
Headteacher	Eileen Heaphy
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2008
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	19–20 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale	Additional inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over 14 hours were spent observing parts of 24 lessons taught by 14 members of staff, holding discussions with pupils about their learning and hearing pupils read. Inspectors held meetings with staff and members of the governing body including the chair. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data and case studies of specific pupils. They also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The inspection team analysed responses to the questionnaire returned by 91 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds in this larger than average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. Their needs are mostly associated with moderate learning difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery and two Reception classes. At the time of the inspection, pupils in Years 4 and 5 were taught in three mixed-age classes. The school has recently received the Inclusion Quality Mark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The school meets the government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The governing body runs a before-school club. An after-school club uses the school's premises. This provision is not managed by the governing body and as such is inspected separately.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	4
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- The school's effectiveness is not satisfactory because pupils' achievement is inadequate. Weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics have contributed to pupils making insufficient progress over time and their attainment is low. The teaching of phonics (the sounds made by letters) is not sharply focused on the next steps in learning for each pupil. As a result, pupils make inadequate progress and do not develop early reading skills quickly enough to help them read fluently.
- The quality of teaching varies considerably and is inadequate overall. Despite some effective teaching, in too many lessons pupils lose concentration and interest when the teaching does not hold their attention. The teaching is stronger in English than in mathematics and is more effective at Key Stage 2 than for younger pupils. The curriculum fails to challenge the more able pupils.
- Teachers are not consistent in their expectations of behaviour in lessons or their implementation of strategies to promote calm and well-ordered classrooms. There is some low level disruption in lessons that impedes the flow of learning. Occasionally, some pupils are defiant. Frequently repeated incidents of poor behaviour around the school are leading to 'lost lunchtime' punishments for a significant number of pupils on a regular basis.
- Leaders at all levels have not reacted decisively enough to long-term patterns of underachievement in mathematics. While some of the weaknesses have been broadly identified, action to tackle shortcomings in the teaching has not been robust enough. Concerns about pupils' attainment and teachers' performance, raised at the last inspection, have not been dealt with effectively.

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Improvements are fragile and have not been maintained over time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by:
 - introducing a rigorous programme to develop the subject knowledge and expertise of staff in teaching mathematics and monitoring its impact
 - planning opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills effectively across all subjects
 - consistently challenging the more able pupils so that they achieve to the best of their ability
 - providing more helpful comments to pupils through the marking of their work on the steps they need to take to meet their targets.
- Improve the teaching of phonics and accelerate the development of pupils' early reading skills by:
 - ensuring that phonics tasks and materials are well-matched to pupils' skills and capabilities
 - ensuring that each lesson focuses more sharply on the next stages in learning for all pupils.
- Improve behaviour in lessons and around the school by:
 - involving staff, pupils, the governing body, parents and carers in reviewing the behaviour policy so there is a shared and common understanding of principles and procedures
 - setting clear and consistent expectations in classrooms for pupils' behaviour
 - providing training and guidance for all staff in the implementation of procedures for behaviour management.
- Build the school's leadership capacity and impact by:
 - sharpening the accuracy of school self-evaluation
 - ensuring that planning to tackle key priorities is based on challenging targets for improving the pupils' achievement
 - developing the role played by the governing body in holding the school to account.

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Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils do not make sufficient progress from their starting points, particularly in mathematics and in reading. Although there has been a slight improvement in the last two years, a smaller proportion of pupils than average reach the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Relatively few pupils exceed this level. This means that a significant proportion of the pupils do not make enough progress or develop the skills for success at secondary school. Many additional activities, particularly in literacy, take place to support the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. During these sessions, pupils make satisfactory progress. However, for the most part, these pupils are taught alongside other pupils and weaknesses in class teaching result in their progress being inadequate. The quality of learning varies considerably across the school. At its best, for example, during a lively Year 3 English lesson where pupils improved the structure of their sentences when writing about a recent trip, pupils learned new skills quickly. However, this is not typical of all classes and more often new skills are only learned at a slow pace and pupils are not enthused by their work. The view of parents and carers that their children are making good progress is not borne out by inspection findings.

Children enter and leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress but with considerable differences in learning between the three classes. The slow progress in the development of early reading skills and letter sounds starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage and continues across Key Stage 1. Consequently, attainment in reading is low by the end of Year 2. Pupils' progress accelerates at Key Stage 2 because some effective reading sessions develop an interest in books and the work of particular authors. However, overall attainment remains low by the end of Year 6 because the teaching is not always challenging enough for all pupils.

The pupils' development of mathematical skills is slow. This was evident when many Year 4 and 5 pupils were unsure how to write a simple fraction when shown slices of a pizza and could not recall the terms 'numerator' and 'denominator'. Pupils have few planned opportunities to apply and so develop their skills across other subjects. This inadequate progress means that pupils are, in general, a year behind the national average in mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Pupils are starting to make more rapid progress in writing and this was reflected in last year's national test results. However, the pace and challenge being offered in lessons across the school varies and some pupils still underachieve in English and attainment remains low. The attainment of boys in writing is lower than that of girls in some classes, but where teachers are making contexts more interesting boys are becoming more engaged in their writing.

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Quality of teaching

The impact of the teaching on pupils' learning and achievement over time is inadequate. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are largely of the view that teaching is good. Inspection findings do not support this view; despite some good teaching, particularly in English lessons, too much that is only satisfactory or inadequate is not helping pupils across the school to make enough progress in their learning. Inadequate teaching was also observed in parts of the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in the teaching of early language and communication skills, and phonics. Teaching in mathematics is one area of inconsistency in spite of the school's action to improve pupils' progress and teachers' performance. Expectations of the pupils are too low. Teachers are not always explicit about the quantity of work they expect from pupils and so lessons move forward at a pedestrian pace. There are some lively and interesting activities to start lessons, but the impetus these bring is not followed through, particularly when teachers talk too much and lose the pupils' interest. This can lead to pupils' behaviour deteriorating.

When used effectively, assessments of pupils' progress help teachers to plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before so that in some lessons they are being challenged and their learning extended. However, this does not occur enough and both direct teaching and the work set for pupils are often not planned carefully enough to enable all groups of pupils to take the next steps in their learning. Phonics teaching in particular is not matched carefully to the pupils' different stages of development. Often those who are weakest in their understanding of the sounds that letters make flounder, because teachers expect them to go too far beyond the skills they have mastered.

The planned curriculum does not take sufficient account of pupils' starting points or capabilities. The more able pupils are not consistently challenged. The more effective teachers promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They encourage the pupils to use their imaginations and be creative in their writing, while also developing their collaborative skills when working on tasks or discussing their ideas with others.

Action taken since the last inspection to improve the quality of the feedback given to pupils and to help them raise the standard of their work has been inconsistent. Teachers' marking of pupils' written work in English has improved, but this is not the case in mathematics. Few pupils understand the targets they are aiming for and marking does not consistently engage all pupils in improving the quality of their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspection findings agree with the concerns of a significant number of parents and carers about pupils' behaviour in school and particularly the disruptive effect this has on learning. A majority of their children agree that behaviour is not consistently good in lessons. Observations during the inspection confirm these views. Many pupils try

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hard in lessons and are active and engaged learners when the teaching catches their imaginations and holds their attention. In such lessons pupils happily discuss their ideas or work together. However, too often pupils' shouting-out of answers is accepted by some teachers and the thoughts of less forceful pupils are not heard. Instances were observed during the inspection of pupils not co-operating with adults quickly and in some instances being openly defiant when asked to do something straightforward, such as sitting in a particular place and working with specific pupils. Parents and carers are in very strong agreement that the school keeps their children safe but rightly have some concerns about how effectively the school deals with bullying. While the site is safe and high profile supervision can lead to pleasant playtimes, incidents occur that regularly unsettle this atmosphere. School records show that a high number of incidents of aggressive behaviour, verbal abuse and even fighting take place on almost a daily basis. The school has not identified these incidents as bullying, but the same offenders' names often appear regularly showing they are not being helped sufficiently to modify their behaviour. While in discussion with inspectors, pupils did not identify this as bullying although they recognise it makes for a less than harmonious environment. Pupils have a limited awareness of different types of bullying and how to guard against it.

Leadership and management

School leaders have had only limited success in improving the quality of teaching. The school has suffered from quite high teacher turnover in recent years, including in subject leadership positions. Regular observations of teaching enable senior leaders to have a clear picture of individual strengths and areas for development and to identify where action is needed to improve teachers' performance. There are examples where the coaching of teachers and the provision of opportunities to observe and work alongside others have led to better teaching. However, this has not led to sustained improvements in all classes because evaluations of the quality of teaching have not taken sufficient account of its impact on pupils' learning and progress. Information derived from monitoring has not helped to equip teachers with the skills necessary to manage pupils' behaviour more constructively.

The governing body is aware of the improvements that are needed, but has not been successful in challenging school leaders to raise pupils' achievement. Self-evaluation is not sufficiently accurate and targets for improvement are not challenging enough to form a secure basis from which to plan for the school's rapid improvement. The actions and impact of leaders and managers since the previous inspection do not demonstrate adequate capacity to improve further.

The curriculum does not provide pupils with an adequate preparation for secondary school. It does not take sufficient account of the needs of the more able or plan for the cross-curricular development of mathematical skills. The curriculum does, however, promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development suitably through art and dance. Pupils' experiences are supplemented by trips and many other activities including links with schools abroad that extend their horizons.

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There is a sharp focus on trying to break down barriers to learning for individual pupils. However, because of inconsistencies in teaching the benefits of additional activities are largely lost. This means that, while the school makes positive efforts to counter discrimination, it does not promote equality of opportunity consistently given that too many pupils underachieve. The school has limited success engaging with parents and carers, although those who access the before-school club greatly value the service provided. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and reflect the confidence of parents and carers that the school takes great care of their children.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



21 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cherry Tree Primary School, Basildon, SS16 4AG

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently and particularly to the Year 6 pupils who showed us around. Thank you also for sharing your views with us and returning the questionnaires.

We recognise that Cherry Tree does some things well, but there are weaknesses in important areas that mean the school is not as good as it should be. For this reason, we have decided that the school requires 'special measures'. This means it needs help to improve.

We noted the good behaviour and positive attitudes of many of you, but also saw that there is some unacceptable behaviour in lessons and at other times. Some of the teaching does not help you to make the progress of which you are capable, particularly in mathematics. Too many of you leave Year 6 not having reached the level needed to be successful at secondary school. The main things we have asked the school to do to improve are to:

- help you to learn better in mathematics by improving teaching
- help children in Reception and at Key Stage 1 to make better progress in their phonics and reading
- improve behaviour in lessons and around the school
- sharpen the way teachers and governors plan to take the school forward and particularly to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Staff will be helped to carry out these improvements during the coming months. Inspectors will visit regularly to check the progress they are making. All of you can play your part in helping the school to improve by working hard and behaving well.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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