

Chirton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Chirton, Devizes, SN10 3QS

Inspection dates

23–24 October 2012

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This very small village school creates an atmosphere where families are well supported. Consequently, pupils feel safe and their behaviour is exemplary.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and, as a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the new headteacher. They praise the quality of education provided for their children.
- The headteacher has high aspirations for the school. She leads a dedicated team and ensures that every member of staff contributes to the raising of standards.
- Since the last inspection governors have become sharply focused on planning for the future. They worked hard to prevent the school closing. They are now planning to enlarge the provision by joining forces with another school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding because for a small number of pupils, including those who are supported by additional government money, the work set by teachers is not always challenging enough to speed up their progress.
- The school does not give pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in different subjects or to make connections across subjects.
- The school does not use its grounds enough to help children to learn.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons, involving three different teachers. She also observed four lessons with the headteacher and watched her giving feedback. The inspector looked at pupils' behaviour during morning playtimes and lunchtimes and around the school.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils and the inspector spoke to many others during lessons. At the time of the inspection, the Chair of the Governing Body was out of the country, so the inspector held meetings with the vice chair and four other governors. Meetings were held with school staff, the headteacher and subject leaders.
- A representative from the local authority met with the inspector and so did a group of parents and carers. The inspector also spoke to parents and carers collecting their children after school.
- There were 15 responses out of a possible 19 to the online, Parent View survey and the inspector took account of these in planning and undertaking the inspection. She also noted the questionnaire responses from six members of staff.
- The inspector looked carefully at pupils' past and present work and at a number of documents. The latter included lesson plans and the school's own records of pupils' progress as well as records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. The inspector also looked at how the school monitors the work of teachers and pupils and sets targets for them.

Inspection team

Jane Neech, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Chirton is an exceptionally small school; there are currently 19 pupils. The number on roll dropped by half in the last year and the school has faced the possibility of closure. The proportion of pupils leaving the school at times other than normal is above average.
- Pupils are taught in two classes. Those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Year 3 are taught in one class. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught in the second class. There are currently no Year 2 or Year 4 pupils in the school. Pupils in Year 3 move to the second class for some lessons, for example science, where they move as a group, and mathematics, where they move depending on ability.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional government funding is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who need extra help or who are at risk of not doing as well as they might is below average. These are very small groups, or single pupils, whose needs relate mainly to communication and learning difficulties.
- Privately funded, pre-school facilities operate within the school grounds. They are managed independently and were not part of this inspection.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and assessment so that those pupils supported by additional funding through the pupil premium do as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Provide pupils, including the youngest, with more opportunities to:
 - engage in exciting learning activities in the school grounds
 - use the neighbourhood surrounding the school for learning
 - develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in all subjects
 - make connections between subjects through topics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils start Chirton Primary School with the skills, knowledge and experience found nationally for their age. The few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage quickly become confident and so make good progress during their first year at school.
- Pupils make good progress in both classes, where different work is mostly set for them. For example, in a mathematics lesson in the class for younger children, pupils created repeating patterns with shapes, while Year 3 pupils completed work relating to counting or fractions, depending on their ability.
- All pupils who took the most recent national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 met or exceeded expected levels. Pupils who need extra help also make good progress and one or two individual pupils have made exceptional progress since Year 2.
- Until this year, those pupils supported by additional funding through the pupil premium have not been given sufficient, focused attention, and as a result some have been slow to catch up. The school is now planning how to target this funding more carefully.
- The school knows how well pupils are doing and the headteacher and her colleagues quickly identify any pupil who is not making acceptable progress. Parents and carers say that talking daily with teachers about things like reading, helps them support their children at home.
- Pupils read well because adults listen to pupils read every day and reading skills are taught regularly in small-group sessions. Parents and carers are encouraged to comment on their children's reading at home and this partnership means that everyone enjoys reading. Teachers use the work of certain authors effectively to inspire pupils to write. For example, they read aloud passages which show how soldiers felt in the trenches in the First World War.
- Pupils communicate confidently to one another and to the class. Parents and carers and children say that because the two classes are so small there is 'no hiding place' and so everyone is keen to contribute.
- Parents and carers are full of praise for the way the school teaches their children to understand social and moral values and for how well prepared their children are for secondary education.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The school is building on the strengths in teaching noted in the monitoring visit following the previous inspection. Teachers plan well-ordered lessons with a good balance between teacher-led activities and those chosen by pupils. When teachers or teaching assistants work with small groups, the challenge for pupils is demanding because adults continually probe pupils' understanding. This was clearly seen when pupils were converting improper fractions to proper fractions in a Years 5 and 6 mathematics lesson.
- Teachers mark the pupils' work conscientiously. Comments are positive and give pupils advice about improving their work and there are many examples of pupils responding to teachers' marking. When marking takes the form of a discussion with a pupil, this is recorded and there are links to pupils' targets which are displayed in their English and mathematics books.
- Teachers use assessment well during lessons. Learning objectives for each pupil are displayed and discussed at the start of the lesson. Teachers regularly talk to pupils about how well they are doing and remind them about achieving their targets. Pupils assess how well they have done at the end of lessons.
- In lessons, teachers make sure that pupils are confident about trying something new and do not worry about making mistakes. Relationships are exceptionally positive, often respectfully humorous, and everyone enjoys learning. Older pupils particularly, often volunteer to show one another how to find the answer to a problem, such as finding out about the relationship between

the bones and muscles in your arm in a practical science lesson.

- Pupils who need extra help work with an adult outside lessons. The school knows that the support and challenge for these pupils in lessons need to be better.
- A growing number of clubs outside lessons are helping pupils to learn. Wednesday afternoon activities, such as cooking and design and technology, are popular with pupils, especially making the cakes to take home for tea! In these sessions older pupils work with younger pupils, which also provides the opportunity to foster pupils' social and emotional skills.
- The headteacher is keen to expand what the school offers pupils. The school recognises that there are not enough opportunities for pupils to make connections between subjects through topics and for children in the Reception Year to use the school grounds and the local area.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Nearly everyone thinks that pupils' behaviour is excellent. The inspector agreed. She found that behaviour in lessons and at playtimes and lunchtimes was consistently exemplary. A typical feature is the way older pupils look after younger ones, as when arranging playtime games and guiding younger pupils across the road to the school hall for lunch and cooking activities.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including internet and homophobic bullying, reporting that everyone 'gets on' well and that there were no incidents of bullying or lessons disrupted by poor behaviour. As one pupil aptly put it, because there are so few pupils you 'stick with your friend'.
- Adults model excellent relationships and, because of the regular contact they have before and after school, pupils see how well their parents and carers get along with teachers and teaching assistants. Parents and carers appreciate how visible and approachable the headteacher is and consequently they trust the way the school looks after their children. Parents and carers new to the school reported how supportive the school community is and that their children make friends quickly.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through all the school does and with the active support of the church. Pupils learn musical instruments, take part in sports with other schools, enjoy services and special events in the local church and have a good understanding of Christianity in its widest sense. They talk knowledgeably about other religions and the importance of tolerance and kindness in growing up in modern Britain.
- Attendance is well above average and pupils are routinely punctual. The very few absences that occur are followed up quickly by the school office. Parents and carers report that their children enjoy school and are always keen to come.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has injected energy and drive into the school and has quickly shown a clear determination to build on the school's successes since the last inspection. The school community has confidence in the way she is developing the quality of the provision.
 - The headteacher has raised expectations by setting and monitoring targets for teachers and there are robust plans in place for the management of teachers' performance. The headteacher has used information from lesson observations, scrutiny of the work in pupils' books and teachers' planning to support teachers' professional development. Staff have welcomed this approach and some individuals are taking on extra responsibility as a result.
 - The headteacher regularly holds meetings with teachers to assess how well pupils are doing. The focus on pupils' progress is evident in teachers' planning where activities are set against National Curriculum levels and matched to individual pupils' targets.
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- Subject leaders report that, since the previous inspection, they have developed better leadership skills. For example, the subject leader for mathematics has an effective overview of strengths and weaknesses in her subject. She uses assessment data well to help teachers plan for individual pupils' progress in mathematics, and so some pupils who need extra help have exceeded their targets. Helped by guidance from external consultants, she has become better at observing teaching and learning and has been able to contribute to improvements in teaching.
 - The headteacher has prudently planned this year's spending of the additional funding provided through the pupil premium to match the needs of those pupils eligible for support to allow them to do as well as their peers. The extra money is being spent on resources related to dyslexia, reading books written to develop pupils' skills in sounding out letters to build words, and teaching-assistant time for one or two older pupils in mathematics.
 - Parents and carers compliment the school on the information they receive about their children's progress. They are particularly impressed with how well their children read. The school has plans to involve parents and carers further through 'stay and play' sessions and by allowing them to learn alongside pupils.
 - The local authority has been quick to support the school in recent months since the decision not to close was made. The headteacher is receiving support from the School Improvement Partner and another headteacher and leader in education. Despite her short time in post, the new headteacher has already increased links with the local pre-school and other local schools.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has stepped up to the mark during the period of uncertainty about the school's future. Governors reported that the threat of closure had been a 'wake-up call'. They have put together a strategic action plan containing short-, medium- and long-term goals with clear criteria for success and regular review points. Since the last inspection, governors have developed a much sharper understanding of performance data and national expectations. They use the information they receive from the headteacher to measure the academic performance of pupils and to check whether teaching is maintaining and improving on pupils' good progress.
 - The governing body sets targets for the headteacher and checks how well these are being met. Governors have also carried out an audit of their own skills and they ensure that their training matches the needs of the school. Recent training for safeguarding and child protection has led to a review of policies with the headteacher. In this way, the governing body ensures that all the relevant policies are up to date and meet requirements.
 - Governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities and exercise these with energy and enthusiasm. They hold the headteacher to account and ensure efficient financial management. For example, during a period of uncertainty about the school's future, they decided to hold over a small amount of additional government funding from last year to this, so that money could be put towards helping those pupils most in need.
 - The governing body works well with parents and carers, the church and the local community. Governors are passionate about the future viability of the school and are working tirelessly and strategically to secure a strong partnership with another school through federation.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 402391 |
| Local authority | Wiltshire |
| Inspection number | 402391 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 19 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Nicky Wragg |
| Headteacher | Sue Chivers |
| Date of previous school inspection | 28–29 April 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01380 840684 |
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