

Christow Community School

Dry Lane, Christow, Exeter, EX6 7PE

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well from the time they join Reception through to the end of Year 6. Many pupils attain above the national average by the time they leave school.
- Children get off to a good start in Reception, where staff teach them well and they make good progress.
- Teaching is good. It ensures that all pupils, including the more able and the few disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress, beyond that usually expected for their age.
- Teachers mark pupils' books thoroughly and give pupils very good guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their lessons and the other activities which the school provides.
- Pupils feel very safe and well cared for. Attendance is above average.
- The executive headteacher is very well supported by the head of teaching and learning and members of the Local Area Board, which is part of the trust and has governance functions. Together, the leadership and board members have made this a strongly improving school.
- The leadership checks the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly and provides good opportunities for staff to improve their expertise further.
- The school benefits greatly from its close relationship with other schools in the trust. Staff support each other and pupils get additional benefits such as specialist sports coaching.
- Parents strongly support the school, recognising recent improvements and valuing the friendly environment in which their children learn well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers occasionally do not give pupils, including the more able ones, enough challenging opportunities to achieve their best in lessons.
- Writing in English books and lessons is of a higher quality than in other subjects. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to encourage pupils to write at length and in depth in subjects other than English.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons and also parts of lessons. He carried out four of the lesson observations jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspector reviewed pupils' work in their books.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other staff, four members of the Local Area Board and a parent.
- The inspector took into account 44 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and also five completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including information on pupils' attainment and progress, minutes from meetings of the Local Area Board of the trust, the school's evaluation of itself, documents relating to safeguarding and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

John Laver, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Christow Community School converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, also called Christow Community School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school is part of the Templer Academy School Trust, which comprises four schools. The Local Area Board supervises the running of the school and is accountable to the board of the Trust.
- This is a much smaller-than-average primary school in which almost all the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is much lower than in schools nationally. In some year groups there are no such pupils, and in others very few. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is close to average.
- Children in Reception attend full time and are often taught alongside pupils in Year 1 and Year 2. The Reception children join the school from the on-site, independently-run pre-school, which did not form part of the inspection. Pupils in Years 2 to 6 are taught in two other mixed-age classes.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum government expectations for pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been substantial changes in staffing at all levels during the past three years, including the appointments of the current executive headteacher and the head of teaching and learning who is responsible for the everyday running of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that more of the consistently good teaching becomes outstanding, by making sure that teachers always give tasks early in the lesson which challenge pupils to meet their full potential.
- Improve progress in writing further by giving pupils more opportunities to write at length and in depth in subjects outside their English lessons.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher, ably supported by the teacher in charge of teaching and learning, has made sure that the school has continued to improve during the past year. This has resulted in pupils making good progress.
- Teaching staff with responsibilities for subjects and other aspects of the school's performance share the leadership's determination to maintain the drive for excellence. All staff back the school's approach.
- Leaders understand accurately the school's strengths and areas where it can improve further. They check the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly and provide both teachers and teaching assistants with good opportunities to improve their expertise in areas such as mathematics. This professional development often takes place in conjunction with colleagues from other schools within the academy trust. As a result, there has been a steady rise in the attainment and progress of all year groups.
- The school organises its teaching effectively to engage pupils' interests as well as improving their skills and knowledge. Pupils say how much they enjoy doing topics such as about rainforests and circuses. Pupils enjoy the good range of after-school clubs and visits.
- Pupils benefit from links with other schools. For example, specialist teachers from schools within the academy trust teach some subjects such as French. The school is also supported by schools within the Trust in specialist sports coaching and professional development for staff. The additional sports funding is used well to supplement this training and increase provision.
- The leadership is rigorous in linking teachers' pay to their responsibilities and their success in helping pupils make good progress.
- The school is very successful in giving every child the chance to succeed and benefit from all aspects of school life, particularly as the leadership has significantly reduced previous variations in the rates of progress between different groups of pupils. Pupils state that there is no discrimination in the school. Parents also confirm that the school operates in a very friendly, caring and supportive environment.
- There is good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspector saw pupils being given the opportunity to reflect on various aspects of 'courage' during a school assembly. Pupils learn about other cultures and faiths, and conversations with older pupils showed that the school prepares them well for life in today's Britain.
- The leadership is not complacent about any aspect of the school's work. In recent months it has developed more effective methods of assessing pupils and tracking their progress, so that those who are in danger of underachieving get a good level of support, both inside and outside the classroom.
- The leadership ensures that the school meets all safeguarding requirements.

■ The governance of the school:

- Members of the Local Area Board fulfil the role of governors. They are experienced and knowledgeable supporters of the school who are very active in overseeing and ensuring continued improvement. Board members are linked to subjects and other areas of school life, for example hearing staff reports about progress and reviewing action plans for development. Members of the board know how well Christow pupils do in relation to other schools. They analyse both national and school data on progress, and understand the strengths and areas for development in teaching. They challenge the leadership to justify its actions, for example about the extent to which the school is improving attainment and progress in mathematics. Board members understand their role in overseeing and evaluating the impact of additional funding for sport and for potentially disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that the school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements and that both they and school staff get appropriate training in child protection issues. Board members are very proud of the way that the four schools within the trust support each other. For example, Christow has benefited from building initiatives and other projects, such as the development of a Forest School initiative which will benefit younger children in particular. Board members share the leadership's drive for excellence and they are ensuring that the school has stability, maintains its impressive progress and shows the capacity to improve further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say that they love the school, both for the lessons and the out-of-lesson activities such as clubs, including the French club which the inspector witnessed during the inspection.
- The leadership has successfully improved attendance, so that it is now above average.
- Pupils work very well together. They enjoy discussing ideas and like responsibility. Members of the school council told the inspector about how their council, which is chaired by Year 6 pupils, has helped to raise funds and improve the school environment. Pupils also welcome other opportunities to take responsibility and help other pupils.
- Whilst pupils are mostly very attentive and engaged in lessons, occasionally a few pupils lose their focus and work with less pace, which is why behaviour is not outstanding. However, parents report that behaviour has improved a lot in recent months, and they regard the school as offering a very reassuring, welcoming environment.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils understand that bullying can take various forms, but do not regard any of them as significant issues for them. They say that there is occasionally over-exuberant behaviour in the playground, but that it is not malicious. School records confirm that there are few untoward incidents and, for example, none involving racist or homophobic abuse.
- Staff work hard to support the few disadvantaged pupils in the school, which is a major reason for their good progress.
- Staff are trained well to ensure pupils' safety. The school gives parents useful information, for example about how to promote e-safety.
- Attendance procedures are thorough and also ensure pupils' security.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. Staff are very conscientious, for example in the thoroughness with which they mark pupils' work and use pupils' targets in their teaching. This use of checks on learning to show pupils how to improve their work is one of the particular strengths of the school. Older pupils told the inspector how much they value it.
- Good resources help to make lessons interesting for pupils. The inspector saw this, for example, when older pupils were making costumes for a French culture day, which successfully combined aspects of art and design technology. Pupils were fully absorbed in the tasks.
- Improvements in the teaching of particular subjects have helped to raise attainment and progress, for example in mathematics, for all groups of pupils.
- Teaching assistants play an important part in supporting teaching staff. The inspector saw some of them teaching small groups effectively, for example in phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make) sessions.
- There is a good range of books, which pupils enjoy frequently in lessons and which contribute to high reading standards.
- Staff report that they get good opportunities to develop their expertise in areas in which they were once less confident.
- Although there are a variety of activities in lessons, occasionally teachers do not move on to more challenging activities early enough in lessons. The inspector saw some pupils spending a lot of time working on similar exercises in mathematics. In these cases, pupils work hard but do not always achieve as fully as they might. The school confirms this as an area to keep working on, although the leadership's records of its own checking of teaching match other evidence, such as pupils' work, which confirm that teaching is regularly good and occasionally outstanding in its impact.

The achievement of pupils is good

- With such small numbers in each year group, levels of pupils' skill and knowledge can often vary from year to year and class to class. However, when they join the school, most children have levels of skill and knowledge at least typical for their age and often above what might be expected.

- Attainment in Key Stage 1 is above average and increasingly so in Key Stage 2, so that pupils leave Year 6 well prepared for the next stage of their education. Standards in speaking and reading are particularly high. Many pupils read accurately and fluently, with good understanding. They talk confidently about their reading habits. More able pupils achieve well.
- Pupils achieve well in their phonics checks. Assessments and national test results at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have, in the past, shown a small number of pupils underachieving. Scrutiny of pupils' work, observations of lessons, discussions with pupils and staff and analysis of the school's own data all show that attainment and progress have improved in all areas. Most pupils are now on track to meet targets, which are appropriately challenging, including more able pupils. This is the result of the leadership's drive to raise the quality of teaching and learning, based on accurate assessment.
- The school has significantly reduced, although not yet completely eradicated, previous differences in the rates of progress between different groups of pupils, for example between boys and girls.
- The few pupils with special educational needs achieve well. High levels of skilled support for these pupils have reduced some of the previous underachievement.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding and none in several year groups. The school has funded extra support for these pupils and they achieve at a similar rate to other pupils. It is not possible to quantify any differences.
- In some year groups, there are still some variations in the rate of progress between different pupils, although nearly all pupils achieve at least the expected rate of progress and many make progress at a much faster rate. Progress in writing is good, but overall not as impressive as in mathematics and reading. This is partly because, although pupils write in a good range of genres in their literacy work, they do not get the same opportunities to write to the same depth in other subjects, including in their topic work.

The early years provision

is good

- Children get off to a good start in their education in Reception. The few children in Reception get on well with the pupils in Years 1 and 2 with whom they are taught for some of the time.
- There is good leadership of early years. It ensures that children in Reception are taught well and make good progress in all areas of skill and knowledge. They are confident and enthusiastic learners, as the inspector saw in a lively phonics session.
- By the time they leave Reception, children's achievement in communication, language and literacy skills is above what is typical for their age. Children also make very good progress in developing knowledge and a range of personal and social skills, such as the ability to play and work together constructively.
- There are regular and much valued links between Reception and the on-site pre-school from which the Reception children originally came. At the playschool leader's invitation, the inspector accompanied the children on one of their regular visits to the pre-school and saw how well they settle into routines on both sites. Both the Reception class and the pre-school share facilities effectively.
- There is very thorough assessment of children in Reception. Their learning books give a very good indication of their development in skills like writing.
- There are good indoor resources for learning, complemented by improving outdoor ones. The children are very adept at making good use of the resources, whether working with staff or by themselves, when they collaborate well.
- Children in Reception behave very well. They understand the daily routines and what staff expect of them. The early years leader organises the learning well, sometimes alongside Key Stage 1 pupils.
- Parents value the early years provision highly. For example, they appreciate seeing their children's work. The school also welcomes parents into the classroom.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

Unique reference number	138733
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	449207

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The Templer Academic School Trust
Chair	James Clark
Headteacher	Matthew Shanks
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01647252542
Email address	Christow@tast.com

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