

INSPECTION REPORT

CHARFORD FIRST SCHOOL

Bromsgrove

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 115569

Headteacher: Mrs J Bottrill

Reporting inspector: Mr D Clegg
4341

Dates of inspection: 12 – 13 November 2002

Inspection number: 247658

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Charford Road Charford Bromsgrove
Postcode:	B60 3NH
Telephone number:	01527 873778
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T O'Reilly
Date of previous inspection:	16 th February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a much larger than average first school with 348 full time pupils aged five to nine. There are slightly more boys than girls resulting in some year groups being rather imbalanced. Pupils are organised into 14 classes, each with a single age group. There is also a 39 place nursery class (78 pupils attend, each for either morning or afternoon sessions). The nursery serves a much wider area than the school. The great majority of pupils are White British, there is a small number of mixed White/Black Caribbean and Asian or Asian British pupils. Four pupils have English as an additional language although virtually all pupils are fluent in English.

About 19 per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is about average. There are about 13 per cent of pupils receiving extra help for special educational needs. Five of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are two pupils with special education needs in the nursery. The main difficulties of pupils are moderate learning, speech and communication difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Two pupils have physical difficulties.

The school is involved in various initiatives such as the Family Literacy project for parents of children in reception classes. There is also a specific class – the LINC group - that provides nine pupils with some specialist support each day.

The school serves a mixed area. The majority of pupils have some pre-school experience, including nursery. When children start school they are attaining standards broadly in line with the levels expected.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This continues to be a good school. The standards are generally above average for the oldest pupils and most pupils achieve well. The quality of teaching is good and the school provides a good range of learning opportunities. The school continues to be well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides good quality teaching and learning
- Provides good quality leadership and management
- Ensures that pupils have very good attitudes and makes good provision for their personal development
- Works in close partnership with parents
- Ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress

What could be improved

- The standards of literacy attained by the younger children
- The use of information about how well children in the early years are doing to set targets for learning

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in February 1998 it has successfully maintained the strengths identified at the time. Improvement has been good. Standards have generally been maintained in line with the national average or above; overall, during the last three years, attainment is above average. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Teaching quality has been maintained and the school continues to be well led and managed.

The school has very successfully addressed the issues from the last inspection. All lessons are now well planned and all teachers clearly identify exactly what pupils will be learning each term. There are good systems in place to make sure teachers know how well pupils are doing and what they need to learn next.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	C	B	D	D
Writing	B	B	D	D
Mathematics	B	B	B	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The trend in standards over the past three years has been at or above the national average. The most recent dip in results in reading and writing are due, partly, to the particular group of pupils. Mathematics standards are consistently above average. Unusually, in 2002, boys performed better than girls.

The oldest pupils achieve well and generally reach standards above those expected for nine-year-olds.

Throughout the school higher attaining pupils do well and are challenged. High proportions of pupils achieve above average standards in national tests. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well against their targets.

Children in the nursery and reception make sound progress, although they achieve better in mathematics than in English. Some children do not achieve as well as they could in reading and writing.

Throughout the school, the standards achieved in art and history are above those expected for children of this age group.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. This is a strong feature of the school. Pupils enjoy school, work hard and maintain good levels of concentration.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good and often very good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Throughout the school pupils are independent and self-reliant. The oldest pupils are mature and well prepared for the next stage of learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is in line with the national average.

Even the very youngest children have a sense of independence and maintain a good level of concentration when they work. They become engrossed in what they are doing and even those children who have only been at school for a few weeks cannot wait to get started at the beginning of each

session.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The overall quality of teaching is good; it varies between very good and satisfactory. No teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers work very hard to ensure that pupils are given work that meets their needs. Lessons are well planned and prepared and good use is made of the teaching assistants. The latter give some very good support to pupils with special educational needs.

The atmosphere in lessons is purposeful and determined. Teachers and their assistants establish effective working relationships that are very conducive to learning. Teachers are confident about giving clear instructions that are often backed up with good demonstrations that help pupils to understand what they have to do. Sharp questions assess pupils' understanding and indicate to teachers what to teach next.

Literacy and numeracy teaching are generally good but overall teaching is stronger and more consistent in numeracy. Although teaching in the nursery and reception year is good, occasionally there is not enough concentration on making sure that the younger children develop their reading and writing skills. Not enough use is made of strategies for teaching the younger children about some of the most commonly used words.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a broad and well-balanced curriculum meeting all statutory requirements. This is supplemented by a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for all aspects of special educational needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils are well supported and achieve in line with their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	A good feature of the school, particularly strong on moral and social development which are very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a good feature of the school. Teachers know pupils well and provide a good level of care and support.

The school is particularly successful in involving pupils in decision-making and giving them some responsibility for how the school operates. Assemblies make a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school benefits from good leadership and management. The head teacher has a clear sense of purpose and direction. Key members of staff also contribute to the successful management of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is supportive and effective. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good use is made of the information about how well seven to nine year olds are doing but not enough use is always made of the information on the younger pupils.
The strategic use of resources	This is good, grants are used for their specific purposes and teaching assistants are particularly well deployed.

The governing body are fully aware of the need to ensure best value and they do all that they can to make sure resources are allocated and deployed sensibly and effectively. The current budget carry forward has been earmarked for upgrading parts of the original building, the maintenance of single age classes and further improvements to the provision for information and communication technology.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good quality teaching • Their children enjoy school • The school is very approachable • The school expects pupils to work hard • The school is well led and managed • The school helps their children to mature 	There were no significant areas of concern raised by parents.

The parents are fully justified in the high degree of confidence they have in the school. Their perceptions are very much in line with the judgements reached by the inspection team.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Provides good quality teaching and learning

Good quality teaching is a key strength of the school. Lessons are lively and interesting and teachers, and their assistants, work very hard to give all pupils the support and guidance they need. Teachers are skilled, professional and very committed to making sure that pupils do well. There are a number of features that lift lessons from the ordinary to the good level, including the following:

- **Lessons are well planned and prepared.** Teachers are very aware of the different needs of pupils and make sure they plan work at a range of levels. Worksheets are often adapted for different pupils and tasks have different levels of difficulty. Lessons move on at a good pace because the teachers are well prepared. Equipment is readily available and teachers are very clear about how their lessons should proceed.
- **Teachers use a good range of resources very well.** The school is well equipped with basic materials that teachers use very effectively. For instance a Year 3 numeracy lesson successfully used computers. Whilst most pupils worked through a mathematics program on the computers, the teacher was able to spend valuable time teaching a group of pupils who needed more guidance about solving multiplication sums.
- **Teaching assistants make a good contribution to lessons.** One of the school's most valuable resources is the team of well-trained and organised teaching assistants. They make a real impact on lessons, as they work with particular groups of pupils or individuals, talking with them, helping them and enabling them to get as much as they can out of the lessons.
- **Classroom relationships are positive and create a good climate for learning.** In lessons throughout the school, teachers, assistants and children get on well together. Adults are positive with pupils and are quick to praise and encourage them to do their best. In lessons, the atmosphere is purposeful. Pupils are well managed, they know what is expected of them and they match those expectations through hard work. In the great majority of lessons there is humour, harmony and genuine enjoyment in learning.
- **Teachers give clear instructions and ask sharp questions.** Because lessons are well planned, teachers are very clear about what pupils need to learn. They teach new ideas by giving clear explanations, illustrating what they are saying through examples and asking sharp questions that make pupils think about what has been said.

Provides good quality leadership and management

The school is led and managed in a very professional and, in some respects, a dynamic manner. There are a number of factors that ensure the continued success of the school but the key ones include the following:

- **The head teacher gives the school a clear sense of purpose and direction.** Her enthusiasm and commitment are infectious and set the tone for the school. Consequently, the school is forward thinking, adventurous and willing to try new ideas. Examples include working with the Local Education Authority (LEA) to establish the LINC group and projects involving parents in their children's education (see below). She has a

good grasp of the school's strengths and recognises aspects that need further development. Morale is high and all teachers are keen to seek constant improvement.

- **Key members of staff play a full part in managing and leading the school.** Teamwork is a key feature of how the school is managed and led. Teams are well led and work well together. The senior management team share collective responsibility for how the school is doing. Senior staff are key to introducing improvements. Year group teams are effective and ensure a consistent approach to teaching and learning across the classes within each year group. Teachers with specific responsibilities are effective, although several are new in post and their work is still evolving.
- **The governing body is well organised, very supportive and makes a good contribution to the management of the school.** This is another effective team. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously, are very committed to the school and are well informed about how well the school is doing. Individual governors have specific responsibilities, including special needs, literacy and numeracy. A 'visiting' governor is appointed on a regular basis charged with the task of reporting to the full governing body following a visit to the school. There are also several governors who help in the school on a regular basis.

Ensures that pupils have very good attitudes and makes good provision for their personal development

Pupils' personal development is given a high profile and is regarded as an important aspect of school life. The school takes a great deal of time and effort to ensure that pupils begin to develop a range of personal skills that will help them to grow up confident and capable. Throughout the school pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard - no more apparent than in the nursery, where children rush 'to get started' within minutes of arriving. The school has put in place effective strategies to help pupils to understand how to behave, get on with others, take responsibility and develop a degree of independence.

- **The school has a good system for managing behaviour.** There are 'five rules' for behaviour in classrooms, playground and around the school respectively. These are consistently reinforced by holding up one hand to remind pupils of the 'five rules'. In each classroom the rules are displayed to remind pupils of the expectations. The use of 'zone boards' to indicate good or inappropriate behaviour is easily understood by pupils and they take it very seriously. They are particularly pleased that at the start of every day all pupils start on green with a clean slate!
- **Lessons encourage pupils to work together and develop independence.** Even the youngest children learn to work together and to be independent in some of their work. In a reception lesson about mathematics, individual children confidently went around the classroom following a 'number trail' counting the items they found and recording the results on their clipboards! For example a Year 4 literacy lesson involved pupils getting to grips with a new board game and writing a set of instructions to explain to others how to play. They played the games very sensibly and then helped each other to identify the key instructions needed to play the game properly.
- **Pupils are encouraged to get involved in how the school operates.** Those children elected by their classmates to the school council enjoy the chance to make decisions about, for instance, what equipment might be helpful in the playground. The pupils' eco-committee is helping everyone to be more aware of environmental issues around the

school. Older pupils are given jobs around the school, helping to get equipment out in the playground and occasionally helping with younger children at lunchtimes.

Works in close partnership with parents

Parents have a great deal of confidence in the school and are actively encouraged to get involved in their children's education. Along with there being a very successful Parents' and Friends' Association, the school takes some key steps to build and sustain an effective partnership including:

- ***Providing parents with good information.*** The school is very keen to make sure that parents know about, and understand, the work of the school. Parents receive regular newsletters informing them of events and indicating what their children will be learning and how parents might help them. Annual reports are well written and accurate and involve parents in understanding their children's learning targets. There are termly consultation evenings. Parents are involved rapidly if there are any problems; those parents whose children have special educational needs, are fully involved in the reviews of their progress. In the entrance to the school there is a useful 'Dear Mum and Dad' folder that contains up-to-date information about all aspects of school life.
- ***Involving parents in their children's education.*** Several initiatives seek to encourage parents to work with their children. The Family Literacy Project, organised in conjunction with the local college, invites parents with reception aged children to come and find out more about how they can help their children at home. This project is extended for parents with older pupils in the SHARE initiative that brings teachers and parents together to share ideas about how they can support school work at home.

Ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress

The good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties is a result of several factors that all contribute to ensuring that the school provides well for these pupils. They include the following:

- ***Pupils with special educational needs are well taught.*** Because lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils and resources are carefully deployed, pupils with specific difficulties are given work that is carefully matched to their needs. Teaching assistants who work with individual pupils have a good grasp of their learning targets and know how to help them achieve them.
- ***There are careful records maintained about how well pupils are doing.*** All pupils with special educational needs have clear targets that indicate the next steps in their learning. All the key people who will be helping the pupil are made aware of the targets, this includes parents and teaching assistants as well as the class teacher. Targets are carefully worded to make sure that teachers and parents can judge the progress children have made and plan the next set of targets that build on what has been achieved.
- ***Special educational needs provision is well managed.*** The co-ordinator for special educational needs (SENCO) is well qualified and very knowledgeable about the range of potential learning difficulties that pupils may experience. She makes sure that teachers and teaching assistants have easy access to helpful resources matched to the needs of

each pupil. She maintains regular contact with the teaching assistants and offers useful guidance about strategies they might try in lessons to help individual pupils.

- ***The LINC group provides very good opportunities.*** This is a valuable resource that is successfully helping a small group of pupils to gain a range of basic skills that will help them to fully benefit from what the school offers. These pupils are well taught in a caring and supportive environment. The project is carefully monitored to ensure that pupils are making the progress they should. The good level of support is successful in helping pupils' learning of basic skills and developing a good range of social skills to help them to get on with other pupils and build helpful relationships.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The standards of literacy for younger children

Too many of the younger children are still at a very early stage of learning some key literacy skills. Despite the good record of above average standards the school recognises that too many of the younger children have not made as much progress as they could have in learning some key literacy skills. Not enough children in reception classes and Year 1 are able to read and spell the expected list of frequently used words.

Writing skills are not as well developed as they might be. Too many of the younger children are still at the stage of writing lines of letters rather than separate words. The school is already taking steps to ensure that all children are given the right balance of experiences to help them begin working on the National Curriculum with better developed skills.

The use of information about how well children in the early years are doing.

The school has some good information about how well children and pupils are doing at all stages of their time at school. This starts with the assessments of children when they enter school either at nursery or reception, and continues with the end of year assessments in Years 1, 2, 3 and 4. There is also some good information from the LEA that helps the school to organise and manage the information. This is helping the school to use the information it has on seven to nine year olds well by setting clear targets and monitoring pupils' progress to make sure that they meet them.

Some of the information on the younger children is not used carefully enough. Not enough monitoring is done to ensure that children are on track to achieve their targets. However, the school, with advice from the LEA, is putting in place systems that will help to manage and use the information more easily.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to sustain the good features of the school and improve further, the governing body, working closely with the head teacher and key members of staff should:

(1) Improve the standards of literacy for younger pupils by:

- giving more emphasis to learning how to read, write and spell the most commonly used words;
- providing more opportunities to develop writing skills.

(2) Make better use of information about how well children in the early years are doing by:

- having clear targets for individual children based on what they already understand and know;
- analysing assessment information to ensure that all children are making enough progress.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	10	6	0	0	0
Percentage	0	16	53	32	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	39	348
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	-	60

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	75

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	42	36	78

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	40	37	41
	Girls	27	28	30
	Total	67	65	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (86)	83 (87)	91 (92)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	39	41	40
	Girls	27	29	28
	Total	66	70	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (86)	90 (90)	87 (87)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
333	2	
2		
1		
5		
4		
1		
1		

Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

1

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.8
Average class size	24.8

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	274.25

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	39
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9.9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	884,766
Total expenditure	850,990
Expenditure per pupil	2,154
Balance brought forward from previous year	92,873
Balance carried forward to next year	126,649

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	450
Number of questionnaires returned	218

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	36	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	42	2	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	49	2	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	48	8	0	14
The teaching is good.	56	39	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	44	11	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	30	1	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	35	2	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	37	51	8	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	56	37	1	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	38	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	36	9	0	16