

Christ Church CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104220
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	286882
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2007
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Myers
Headteacher	Ann Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001
School address	Harden Road Leamore Walsall WS3 1EN
Telephone number	01922 710080
Fax number	01922 710080

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an urban area of Walsall. There are relatively few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and even fewer who do not speak English as their first language. A very high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average, while the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average. However, the proportions vary between year groups. In Years 5 and 6, for example, the proportions are well above average. The school has suffered disruptions to staffing over the past eighteen months, as a result of long-term illness.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides an oasis of calm within an urban area of Walsall. Pupils are keen to come to school, because they, and their parents, know that they are getting a good education. Children join the nursery with skills that are very low for their age. By the time they leave school in Year 6, although standards are below average, pupils have achieved well. Progress is good in all respects in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Good progress continues further up the school in mathematics and science, but is slower in reading and writing. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write in different styles in some years. Until now, the library has not had enough fiction books that interest pupils, so, despite being taught well enough, they do not read sufficiently to develop their skills. Good teaching is the main reason for pupils' good progress. Teachers expect a lot from their pupils, both in terms of the difficulty of the work they are given and the amount they are expected to cover in a lesson. The pupils respond by working hard and always trying their best.

The good curriculum not only supports academic achievement, but also improves pupils' personal development to a good level by broadening their horizons and stressing the importance of getting on with one another. As a result, pupils behave well and grow in maturity. Their attendance is improving each year and is now slightly above average, which is much better than it was only three years ago. Parents are rightly very confident that the school is providing good care, guidance and support, so pupils feel safe and know they have someone to turn to. Pupils with social difficulties are very well supported, and often make even better progress than their peers. The school has good systems for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school, so any who are falling behind are quickly spotted and supported to make up lost ground. The system for checking on pupils' progress in reading is not fully effective because it relies on noting which book a pupil takes home, rather than finding out how well they have read and understood it.

The school has a good record of improvement, brought about by good leadership and management at all levels, including governors and middle managers. Standards are rising rapidly in Year 2, and this is starting to bear fruit in Years 3 to 6. The headteacher and deputy are particularly effective at taking swift action to deal with any weaknesses that become apparent from their comprehensive analysis of data and from the rigorous checks made on teaching.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards of writing by ensuring that all pupils in Years 3 to 6 receive sufficient opportunities to write in different styles.
- Improve standards of reading by making the new books available to pupils as quickly as possible, and ensuring that pupils actually read them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress in developing the skills they will need in later life. Children join the Foundation Stage with standards that are very low for their age. They settle quickly and are soon forging ahead in all aspects of their development. The key to this improvement is their particularly good progress in developing speaking skills, which allows children to communicate their ideas and ask questions so they learn more quickly in other areas. Standards rise to below average levels by the time they enter Year 1. Good progress continues,

especially in reading, writing and mathematics, so standards are now slightly above average by the end of Year 2. This is maintaining the strong trend of improvement that has been established in recent years.

Progress in Years 3 to 6 has been satisfactory in the past two years, but not as good as seen previously because of disruptions to staffing. These issues have now been resolved. Standards at the end of Year 6 are currently below average, partly because so many pupils have learning difficulties. Nevertheless, these, and the much higher standards predicted for next year, represent good progress in mathematics and science, and satisfactory progress in reading and writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils possess a strong sense of fairness, tolerance and understanding, especially with regard to the diversity of backgrounds, beliefs and cultures within British society. They behave well in and out of lessons, respond quickly to requests and have positive attitudes to their work. Attendance has improved, because pupils like coming to school. They get on well with each other and with the adults in the school. They feel safe in school and know what to do to keep free from harm. Pupils know how to live a healthy lifestyle, but several are not as fit as they could be because they do not always put this knowledge into practice, especially those who bring a packed lunch to school. Pupils can be seen discarding healthier options from their lunches, for example, leaving the jam sandwich, a chocolate biscuit and a packet of crisps for their lunch. The school council are very aware of this and have devised a plan to offer incentives to pupils to bring a healthy and balanced selection of food. The contribution the pupils make to the community is significant. The school council is an outstanding example of how pupils can develop a businesslike approach, by interviewing candidates for jobs, for example.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The most noticeable feature of lessons is the cracking pace at which they are conducted. Teachers expect a lot of their pupils, both in terms of the difficulty of the tasks and the amount of time they are given to complete them. Teachers have different, but equally effective, ways of maintaining pace. Music is played in some classes, or time limits given and then counted down in others, so pupils know they must be finished when the music stops or the teacher calls time. Lessons start with an introduction by the teacher, but then very quickly move into group activities that are invariably well matched to the needs of the pupils. This aspect is very effective for pupils with learning difficulties, as they have individual targets for each lesson. Sometimes, however, help is given too quickly to pupils, when they would benefit from being given more time to think. Standards of discipline are high, so if a pupil starts to drift off task, a raised eyebrow is all that is needed to restore concentration.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The strong emphasis on developing speaking skills in the Foundation Stage helps to ensure that pupils make good progress and provides a firm basis for the future. This good start is developed through the rest of the school, where there are lots of opportunities for pupils to

extend their vocabulary. Writing skills are not developed as well in Years 3 to 6 as in the younger classes. This is because some classes are not given enough opportunities to write in different styles. Personal, social and health education is good, with a balanced selection of topics that promote tolerance, help pupils to manage their own behaviour and develop awareness of health issues. Daily acts of worship are uplifting and enlightening experiences for pupils. The curriculum is also well enriched with a good range and variety of activities, trips and visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The work of the staff, ably supported by the learning mentor, ensures that procedures for keeping the pupils safe and attending school regularly are very good. The pupils are aware of the systems to share their concerns, for instance using the 'Action Station' box, and they know they can speak with adults in school to discuss their worries. They also say incidents of bullying are rare and that there are effective arrangements for dealing with any which occur. Careful assessments are carried out to track the pupils' progress and pupils know what to do to improve. However, the systems for checking progress in reading rely on noting which books are taken home, rather than those read and understood, so teachers are not able to give accurate advice as to which book a pupil should read next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good systems used for checking on the school's performance, including efficient analysis of data, ensure that managers at all levels, including governors, have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The relative weaknesses in reading and writing are already being tackled, as managers strive to drive up standards. New books, for example, have already been delivered to the school in order to meet pupils' wishes for more 'action and scary' books. More reluctant readers, however, will still not have access to the comic strip type albums that they find more encouraging. The headteacher and deputy set the standard for the school with their high expectations of what can be achieved. Staff readily respond to the responsibility they are given. Middle managers are particularly effective in identifying where small improvements in teaching can be made, although checks are not always made to ensure that improvements have actually been carried through. Nevertheless, initiatives to address any weaknesses are always implemented quickly, so, for example, the disruption caused by staffing difficulties has been minimised.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Christ Church C of E School, Walsall, WS3 1EN

Thank you very much for helping us when we came to visit your school. You made our job much easier by being so honest when you told us about your life at school. We were most impressed by your good behaviour and the way you show respect for other people, whatever their background, race or religion. The school council are brilliant. They run their projects just like a proper business would and really help make things better in the school. They are worried that some of you are eating very unhealthy foods for your lunch, so we want you to ask your parents to follow the advice the school council has provided in their newsletter and give you healthier things to eat. You then have to do your bit, by actually eating it!

You told us that you really like coming to school and we can see why. You go to a good school where the teachers make sure you learn quickly, not just about different subjects but also about how to get on with one another and how to behave when not in school. You are doing particularly well in mathematics and science, but some of the older ones could do even better in reading and writing. So, we have asked the teachers to make sure you get plenty of opportunity to practise writing in different ways. We have also passed on your messages about how you would like more 'scary and action' books in the library. New books will be on the shelves soon, so now you have to do your bit by taking them home and reading them. Your teachers make sure you get through a lot of work in lessons, and we were impressed by how hard you worked. The teachers take good care of you and make sure you stay safe at school. They quickly sort out any problems you may have.

The school has been getting better and better, because the people who run it keep a careful eye on how well you are doing. If someone isn't learning things as quickly as they should, the headteacher and others very quickly do something about it.

With all best wishes for your future.

David Driscoll Lead Inspector