



Bromsgrove, Charford First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116659
Local Authority Worcestershire
Inspection number 290581
Inspection dates 27–28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Stephen Lake

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Charford Road
School category	Community		Charford
Age range of pupils	3–9		Bromsgrove B60 3NH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 873778
Number on roll (school)	389	Fax number	01527 878984
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Terry O'Reilly
		Headteacher	Jenny Bottrill
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2002		

Age group 3–9	Inspection dates 27–28 February 2007	Inspection number 290581
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is above average in size. It draws pupils from a large area of Bromsgrove, with the Nursery serving half of the town. About a fifth of children entering Reception have not attended the school's Nursery. It is also the case that not all children from the Nursery go into Reception. In most years, attainment on entry to both the Nursery and Reception Years is below the level expected, although in some years it has been well below. More pupils than usual have learning difficulties or disabilities, some of which are complex. Fewer pupils than average have English as an additional language and a few are at an early stage of learning English. The school holds the Artsmark Gold award and has Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Charford First School is a good school with some significant strengths because of the good leadership and management. Senior and middle managers, with good support from the governors, work together well to drive the school forward. The robust systems for checking on the effectiveness of the school enable areas for improvement to be identified and effective action to be taken. This is why standards are rising steadily throughout the school after several years of significant variation.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. A parent summed this up saying, 'The school provides a happy, safe and caring environment'. Pastoral care is outstanding. All adults in the school know the pupils really well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive very well-targeted support that enables them to take a full part in lessons and learn well. Pupils are nurtured and encouraged to care for each other. As a result, pupils feel secure, know how to stay safe and behave well.

Teaching is good and improving as a result of the professional development provided for teachers. Despite this, there is still some inconsistency in the way teachers use information on pupils' progress to challenge them fully in lessons and set them targets that really push them to succeed. The good provision in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception Year) ensures children make good progress and enter Year 1 ready to learn, although standards in the current year remain below those normally found. Pupils achieve well and leave the school at the end of Year 4 with standards that are in line with national expectations.

The good curriculum, with outstanding provision for the arts, provides a rich and varied experience, which is why pupils enjoy school so much. Strong links with other schools enable pupils with complex learning needs to have full access to the curriculum. The wide range of activities that enriches the curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils know how to stay healthy through sport and the very good guidance that they receive on eating healthily. Activities such as the Eco-school project, which helps pupils to care for the environment, make pupils aware how what they do impacts upon others. These activities and the excellent contribution that pupils make to the community, for example, through the School Council, help pupils develop skills that contribute well to their future economic well-being.

The strong leadership of the headteacher and the senior management team empowers staff and enables all teachers to contribute to school development. This shared responsibility is instrumental in the improvements taking place. Nevertheless, the school recognises that in order to continue improving at a good rate, the information on each individual pupil's progress must be used more effectively to judge the progress of the whole school year by year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of assessment to really challenge all pupils in lessons and give them targets that push them to do as well as they can.

- Develop more effective systems for using information on individual pupils' progress to judge the performance of the whole school year by year.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry is below expectations overall. Unusually for such a large school, children's attainment on entry to the school varies significantly from year to year and at times has been well below average. This was the case for the children now in Year 1. As a result, even though children make good progress in relation to their starting points, attainment is still below average. Children in both the Nursery and Reception Year achieve well because teachers have a good understanding of how young children learn. Nevertheless, children enter Year 1 with skills below the levels normally found.

The variation in attainment on entry has caused standards at the end of Year 2 to vary from year to year. The school has identified other factors that have also contributed to standards varying as pupils move up through the school. Strategies to ensure teaching meets the differing needs of pupils more closely are already having an impact. Although it is too early to see the full effect of all strategies, pupils are making good progress in Years 1 to 4 now. The standards attained in Year 2 are average and have improved recently. Standards at the end of Year 4 are broadly in line with national expectations and improving. Standards in mathematics, which have been weaker in the past, have improved significantly. All groups of pupils are achieving equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about exciting lessons and playing with their friends. However, despite pupils' evident enjoyment of school and the best efforts of the school to promote good attendance, a few do not attend as well as they should. In addition, some parents still take holidays in term time. These factors hold attendance down to average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A caring and supportive school climate, with clear classroom and playground rules, helps pupils to develop their own moral code and strong social awareness. The vast majority of pupils behave well. At break times they know that they can use the 'friendship bench' if they feel sad or unhappy. Pupils say that bullying is rare, know what to do if someone is hurt and understand how to stay safe around the school. During assemblies and through the arts, pupils develop a good spiritual awareness by learning how to explore and to understand their own feelings. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures.

Older pupils are involved in a range of local and charitable events and make an outstanding contribution to the community. The School Council makes a significant contribution to many aspects of the school. Recent initiatives include the introduction of a new daily menu board in the hall to help pupils to make healthy choices at lunchtime. The skills gained through the opportunities for taking responsibility, together

with their good progress in literacy and numeracy, prepare pupils well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching promotes effective learning throughout the school. Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers, especially supporting pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Most lessons are well structured and activities usually build well on pupils' past learning, but sometimes information from assessment is not used well enough to really challenge pupils to do the best they possibly can. Resources, such as the interactive whiteboards, are used well by many teachers to extend pupils' experiences and motivation to learn. Many strategies are used effectively to get pupils to think for themselves, such as the use of 'talking partners', when pupils share ideas in pairs. However, such approaches are not yet consistently employed to support progress in all classes.

In the Foundation Stage teaching successfully develops children's interest and motivation to learn. This positive picture is evident and sustained in the teaching of reading and writing throughout the school. Teaching of mathematics has not been as strong as the teaching of reading and writing but is rapidly improving as teachers match activities more closely to pupils' needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a wide range of activities that stimulate children's interest and desire to learn. Adult-led tasks are well planned and there are many opportunities for children to learn through independent activities. In Years 1 to 4 a strong feature is the way the curriculum is adapted to meet the social and emotional needs of pupils. This is particularly evident in the excellent provision for the arts. Particularly good opportunities help pupils to express themselves through painting and work is celebrated in many high quality displays of pupils' work. The strong focus in learning opportunities on pupils' personal development helps them, for example, to develop their understanding of how to stay safe and to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because work is adapted to support their needs. However, activities are not always as well adapted for the younger children at an early stage of learning English. Some pupils don't make as much progress as they could because the curriculum is not matched closely enough to their needs by providing them with really challenging activities. Pupils are eager to join clubs such as French and computer club, which add significantly to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is strongly committed to meeting the needs of all pupils. The way in which the school cares for all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and disabilities, is outstanding. Robust procedures are in place to ensure the safety of pupils. The very good guidance that pupils receive ensures that they know how to stay safe.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and contribute significantly to the warm, family atmosphere commented on by so many parents. The support given to some of the youngest children, who find settling into school difficult, is a considerable strength. Pupils' social and emotional development is carefully monitored so that their individual needs can be met.

Recent improvements in monitoring academic progress are enabling teachers to plan work which meets the needs of pupils more effectively. This is responsible for the recent improvements in achievement and standards. Just occasionally, however, information on pupils' progress and marking is not used fully to involve them in understanding how to improve their work performance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management at all levels are good and all staff play an important part in the process of on-going development of the school. The strong leadership of the headteacher guides an effective senior management team who have clear roles and responsibilities. Senior staff have well-established and effective systems for checking on the work of the school and monitoring the quality of teaching. The clear focus on raising standards has resulted in pupils making good progress. Rigorous analysis of data identifies targets for school improvement. Although data is used well to monitor the performance of pupils, it is not used fully to monitor overall effectiveness of the school from year to year. The school has recognised this as the next stage of development of its already good self-evaluation.

Governors provide good support and have been proactive in developing many aspects of the school's provision. They have, for example, been instrumental in establishing a room with equipment to provide a calming environment for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has established a successful partnership with parents and regularly seeks their views. There have been many positive developments since the previous inspection, such as the rising standards in mathematics. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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.

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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to your school. We really enjoyed talking with you.

We think that Charford First School is a good school. You are learning well because the school is well led and managed. You make good progress during your time in school and reach standards similar to those attained by most pupils across the country.

These are some of the good things that we found:

- your personal development is good and the older pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community
- your behaviour is good and you take care of each other well
- the school looks after you really well and the care for those of you who need extra help in any way is excellent
- you learn well because the teaching is good. Your teachers are always trying to find better ways of helping you learn
- you told us that you have a lot of exciting things to do and that is why you really enjoy school. We agree that your curriculum is good and we think that what you do in the arts is excellent. We can see why you have ArtsMark Gold.

We have asked your teachers and the governors to do some things to help the school to be even better.

- We have asked them to make sure that they use information on how well you are learning to really challenge you in lessons and to set you targets that get you to do your very best. You can help by telling your teachers if you find your work easy.
- We have also asked them to get better at using the information they have on your progress to judge how well your school is doing compared to other schools.

Thank you again for your help.