



Chambersbury Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117214
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290755
Inspection dates 9–10 January 2007
Reporting inspector John Paull

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hill Common
School category	Community		Bennetts End, Bennetts End
Age range of pupils	3–11		Hertfordshire HP3 8JH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01442 256435
Number on roll (school)	179	Fax number	01442 242463
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Bernard Gronert
		Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Conlon (Interim)
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chambersbury Primary School is a little smaller than average size. Its pupils are nearly all of white British heritage, although small numbers from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds are also present. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is around average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is higher than usual, as the school hosts a primary support base (PSB).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

While the school is improving, it does not provide an adequate education. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement.

As children enter the school, many demonstrate knowledge and skills below those normally expected. They make a good start in the Nursery and Reception. Provision at this stage has improved well since the last inspection, especially in terms of resources and what is available outdoors. By the end of Reception, progress is such that many children are now close to normally expected goals. This represents good achievement in relation to starting points. However, this start is not sustained. Over the past few years, frequent staff changes, including at senior levels, have resulted in lack of consistency in how policies are managed and in the management and analysis of pupils' learning. This caused inadequacies in teaching and gaps in pupils' knowledge have resulted. Inadequate achievement is the result. The acting headteacher and senior leaders, with the support of the local authority, have now taken good, decisive action to improve this picture. The quality of teaching is now satisfactory and assessment records show clearly that pupils' rates of progress are picking up. Senior staff accept that more needs to be done to increase the incidence of good teaching, so pupils' underachievement can be rectified quickly. They see the main task as raising expectations of what pupils are able to understand and do. Inspectors agree with this analysis. A good start has been made in ensuring that many more pupils are set targets and work at levels normally expected for their age. Systems now being introduced are of high quality, but have simply not had time to take full effect. The legacy is seen in erratic standards that are often low in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science). In 2006, for example, in English, Year 6 national test results improved considerably from well below average to average. In mathematics, however, they went the other way to a well below average level from close to average; results were below average in science. Results at the end of Year 2 are also erratic: close to average in 2004, followed by a sharp fall in 2005 to well below average and then, although still below average, a small rise in 2006.

The curriculum is satisfactory and adequate care, guidance and support for pupils contribute to their satisfactory personal development, which includes spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Social and moral development is strong, contributing much to preparing pupils for life beyond school. While key skills in literacy and numeracy are not yet as strong as they might be, they are now progressing satisfactorily. Despite below average attendance, nearly all pupils say that their school is happy and secure. They know key facts about keeping safe and healthy. Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. Weaknesses are understood and measures are being taken to eradicate them. The capacity to continue with improvements is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

To improve standards and achievement:

- Raise teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and their use of information about progress, so the frequency of good teaching increases.
- Ensure that the recently introduced age-related targets for pupils' learning are fully consolidated and become the school's routine practice as soon as possible.
- At all levels of management, ensure consistency of approach in the application of all policies and practices.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards rise and fall too erratically from year to year. This means that pupils' achievement is inadequate. Records indicate that progress has occurred inconsistently across subjects, genders and age groups. It is also the case amongst pupils from minority backgrounds - some do better and others not as well. Nevertheless, progress in the nursery and reception classes is often good and many children are close to expected goals towards the end of Reception. Weaknesses in the use of information about what pupils know and understand have led to gaps in their learning and have been a direct cause of these inconsistent standards. Frequent staff changes, including in senior management, mean that teaching has not been securely based on pupils' previously acquired skills and has at times been inadequate. However, new, strong procedures to ensure that pupils are taught at correct levels have been introduced successfully. Challenging targets have been set and indications are that satisfactory progress is now being achieved towards them. While this suggests that capacity to improve is satisfactory, it is too recent to have yet rectified the inadequacies. Standards remain below average and there is underachievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need who are attached to the PSB, make consistently satisfactory progress towards their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school and generally work hard in lessons. Their behaviour is satisfactory, although occasional incidents of poor behaviour and lack of concentration arise. When such situations occur, they are dealt with skilfully, often with the support of staff from the PSB. Pupils are fully aware of procedures to follow in the rare event of playground disputes. 'Playground monitors' are taking an increasingly active role in ensuring the playground is a safe and secure environment. Pupils are sensible in the building, walking safely and taking care at corners, so everyone is safe. Pupils are aware of healthy living and exercise. They have sound opportunities to contribute to life in the community, raising money for charities and presenting concerts for parents and friends. The school has placed considerable emphasis on moral and social development recently, and pupils

have a growing understanding of the importance of respect for others. Close links with the local church make a useful contribution to pupils' spiritual development, but this and their cultural awareness are not as strong as the former aspects. Attendance is below average but is improving. However, several pupils arrive after the formal start of the day. Pupils are gaining in many of the social skills that they will need as their future develops.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and are improving in response to improved assessment and targeting of pupils' needs. Good teaching is occurring in Years 1, 5 and 6. This is because pupils are told the criteria for achieving challenging targets and a bright, pacy approach engages them effectively. The presence of this good teaching adds to the capacity to improve, as it readily exemplifies good practice. Elsewhere, this good practice is not quite as apparent. Although pupils are told clearly about their targets, there is sometimes insufficient guidance about how to reach them. Most staff question pupils effectively and encourage them appropriately. While teaching is satisfactory overall, it is not good enough in the context of pupils' underachievement. This is because not enough good teaching occurs for progress to be fast enough to catch up lost ground. The presence of the PSB has meant that much good advice is on hand to ensure effective management of pupils. Strategies to ensure that they listen and concentrate are often good. Teaching assistants also carry out their roles effectively and are valued by the teaching staff. Good teaching and provision in the Nursery and Reception ensure that young children begin school effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school rightly places great emphasis on supporting pupils' learning in English and mathematics. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well-planned and provides pupils with a good start to their education. What is taught satisfactorily promotes pupils' personal development, and visits to places of interest and visitors to the school enhance learning. Residential trips for the older pupils help to broaden their horizons and contribute to their confidence and readiness to grow up. Regularly attended extracurricular activities and the teaching of French to older pupils add further to what is taught. However, there is a lack of consistent subject management, and the emphasis on English and mathematics has resulted in some weaknesses in the balance between subjects. For example, information and communication technology is not used regularly enough to extend pupils' learning across the curriculum. Planning to link subjects more effectively is underway as a means to rectify this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect is satisfactory. Pupils feel well cared for and are confident about approaching staff with concerns. Secure arrangements for child protection and risk assessments are in place. Staff are aware of their responsibility to ensure high levels of health and safety. Owing to a recent high quality initiative, the school is beginning to make better use of data to track individual progress. Pupils' targets in English and mathematics are increasingly challenging. Many parents feel that the school consults them insufficiently about their views. Inspectors agree, as do the school's senior leaders and governors, and firm plans have been drawn up to address this matter. There is satisfactory provision of newsletters, progress reports and opportunities for parents to meet the staff to discuss their children's academic progress. Good deployment of teaching assistants and careful testing and tracking of pupils with learning difficulties and a statement of special need help them to make consistently satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. However, good leadership by the present acting headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has evaluated the school's weaknesses successfully. Action taken based on this self-evaluation has begun to improve the targeted levels at which pupils work. Consequently inadequate lessons have been eliminated, improving teaching and learning. While much remains to be done, a higher proportion of pupils are now making the progress that they should. Governors are very clear about what needs to be done to secure a better future. They have good ideas to ensure effectiveness in their own performance, as well as stability in the strategic matter of staffing. Although satisfactory value for money is not yet being achieved, difficulties with the budget have been tackled effectively and it is now set to break even after a period in deficit.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 January 2007

Dear Children

Chambersbury Primary School, Hill Common, Bennetts End, Hertfordshire, HP3 8JH

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when Mr Gilbert and I visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your work and interests. It was good to hear so many of you say that you like school.

While the school is already changing for the better, it is not yet doing enough to make sure that you all do as well as you should. We are asking the staff and governors to make further important improvements.

Some of the things that we like about your school:

- Resources and teaching in the Nursery and Reception are good and children make good progress there.
- You work well together in groups and co-operate well with your teachers, teaching assistants and other adults in school.
- Your teachers care about you, which helps you to feel safe at school.

Here are the things that we would like to see improved:

- Make sure that your work is always as hard as you are capable of doing, so the level that you achieve rises faster.
- Make sure that all the new ways your teachers are using to set your work and targets become normal as soon as possible.
- Make sure that when some of you have similar tasks to others, you are shown how to carry them out in similar ways, so things become more consistent.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy school and that you will help your headteacher, the staff and the school governors to improve your work further.

Yours sincerely

John William Paull

Lead inspector