

Christ Church CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105707
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308925
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Dearden
Headteacher	Mr S. Rigby
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Crawley Way off Denton Lane Chadderton Oldham Lancashire OL9 9ED
Telephone number	0161 6240907
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This slightly above average sized school serves a mixed area of private and rented housing and its pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is below average as is the number new to learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below that usually found but is increasing. Christ Church was one of the first schools in the local authority to achieve Eco School Green Flag status and is also an Investor in People. It also holds the Healthy School, ActiveMark and Silver Artsmark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of Christ Church and comment, 'It continues to influence and develop our sons' and daughters' academic and social skills to a level where they grow in confidence, enthusiasm and self-esteem.' Indeed, this is a good school, in which the care, guidance and support provided for pupils is outstanding and in which their personal development is excellent as a result. It has improved well since the previous inspection, provides good value for money and has good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils love their school and their attendance is consistently above average. Their behaviour is impeccable and they get on very well with their peers and with the adults who work with them. Mutual respect abounds and older pupils are delighted to support younger ones. The school council enjoys a high reputation among its constituents and keeps senior leaders informed of their views. Pupils' work to care for their surroundings is a byword in school and beyond and the Eco Warriors ensure that pupils are fully aware of the importance of preserving the environment. They are courteous and respectful to visitors and take great pride in showing them their work. They have a keen understanding of the importance of healthy eating and of keeping fit. They are also concerned to make sure that their peers remain emotionally secure and the 'friendship bench' ensures that no-one is left out at play and lunch-times.

Pupils make good progress in their studies and standards have improved markedly over the past three years. The school's emphasis on developing pupils' skills in writing has borne fruit and the Key Stage 2 results in 2007 were the best for some time and are now broadly average. Reading is improving too and this is having a positive effect on pupils' progress across the curriculum. The school is rightly proud of pupils' standards in information and communication technology (ICT): pupils use laptop computers with confidence and older pupils in particular can explain the key points of quite complex programs. The school is addressing some weaknesses in science as, although standards have risen, pupils' progress in this subject is not as good as in English and mathematics.

The curriculum is being developed into four integrated areas of learning, to enable pupils to see the links between different subjects and to facilitate the transfer of skills from one to another. It is already having an impact on breaking down barriers between subjects, but there are not enough opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to take more ownership of their own learning and progress.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding and lie at the very heart of everything the school tries to do. Teachers and teaching assistants treat their pupils with dignity. They do their utmost to ensure that each individual is included in all activities and can, therefore, take full advantage of everything the school has to offer. The monitoring of pupils' academic and personal progress is of such high quality that staff are quickly aware of when things may be going wrong and intervene most effectively to put them right.

Leaders and managers at all levels share the same vision for how the school should develop. The headteacher gives clear educational direction and, supported by a strong senior leadership team, is fully aware of performance in all areas of school life. All staff believe that children and young people come first. In the words of parents, 'Christ Church is a happy place to be and our children feel fully involved and valued.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for children in the Reception year. Children are taught alongside Year 1 pupils in mixed-age classes and the organisation of teaching groups ensures that the needs of each individual are met well. Sharing the day with older pupils brings benefits to Reception children, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. As a result, their behaviour is very good and they learn quickly how to get on with others.

Children enter Reception with a variety of nursery and other pre-school experiences and their levels of knowledge, skills and understanding are below age-typical expectations at that point. Their skills in speech and language are particularly weak. The well led Foundation Stage and Year 1 team nurtures their confidence and self-esteem, enabling the children to develop positive attitudes to learning. Good teaching ensures good progress and their communication skills in particular improve at a faster rate than often seen. Space is at a premium in the outdoor area but the quality of learning experiences is good, despite this limitation. This is because of creative approaches to curriculum planning and the provision of so many activities to give children opportunities to learn through investigation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the strategies already in place to improve achievement in science.
- Provide sufficient opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school and join the mixed Reception/Year 1 class with below average skill levels for their age. In speech and language they are well below average. They make good progress across the school and reach broadly average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. Their attainment in ICT is above average and pupils in the current Year 5/6 class use quite complex computer programs with consummate skill.

Following a dip in results in Key Stage 1 two years ago, the school took decisive action to improve standards in literacy. This action had an immediate effect and the 2007 results in reading and writing matched the national average. There is a similar picture in Key Stage 2 and standards have risen markedly since 2005. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science match national expectations but achievement in science lags behind that in the other two subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because of the comprehensive support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants, often on a one-to-one basis.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent and they relate very well to each other. Older pupils readily take on responsibilities around the school and ensure that play-times are happy and friendly occasions for all. The school council influences decision-making and gives expression to pupils' views. Pupils have a clear moral perspective and understanding of right and wrong:

their work for a range of charities demonstrates an enviable generosity of spirit. Assemblies, and the personal, social, health and careers education curriculum, promote their spiritual development very well and they have many opportunities to reflect on issues which affect their daily lives. They have a good awareness of world faiths and an emergent understanding of cultures other than their own. They play no small part in promoting community cohesion through the school's work in the 'Unity in the Community' initiative. In addition, the Eco Warriors play a vital role in raising awareness of environmental issues, including the importance of recycling. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay safe from common hazards. They are encouraged to eat and drink healthily and they keep fit by taking part in a wide variety of sports and games, often in conjunction with the local high school. Their good progress in English, mathematics and ICT in particular equip them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Effective use of ICT by both pupils and teachers, challenging questions to make pupils think and warm relationships are strong features of most lessons. Pupils are generally engrossed in their work, rise willingly to the high expectations their teachers have of them and are often quite desperate to answer questions in class. In an impressive Year 4/5 literacy lesson, for example, pupils wrote introductory paragraphs to their short stories with a confidence which belied their years. In response to their teacher's opening phrases, 'There was something behind me . It was coming closer.' they produced suspense-laden sentences such as, 'My heart was beating faster. I froze and stopped dead in my tracks.' Pupils are pleased to use each other as a resource for learning and enjoy working with their talk partners. The school recognises, however, that in a significant minority of lessons, teachers talk too much and direct learning too closely. In these lessons, pupils lose concentration and are sometimes not fully on task.

Marking is a strength of the school. It is regular, detailed, invariably informative and gives pupils timely and accurate advice on how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has a profound impact on pupils' personal development, confidence and self-esteem. Provision for and pupils' use of ICT to promote learning is very impressive indeed across all elements of the curriculum, and pupils are confident with new technology as a result. There is an appropriate emphasis on core skills and the recently introduced four integrated areas of learning are already having a secure impact on skills development: pupils are now beginning to see the links between different subjects. There remain, however, too few opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning and they rely too much on their teachers. French has been introduced since the previous inspection and there is also specialist tuition in a range of musical instruments. Both these aspects enhance the curriculum.

Pupils speak highly of the wide variety of extra-curricular and enrichment activities open to them. The school has an enviable reputation in chess, has strong sporting links with a local high school and dance and music are developing rapidly. The residential weeks for Years 5 and 6 are very well regarded in the school community and beyond and pupils' team building skills are enhanced by the trips to Edinburgh and the Isle of Wight.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

In the words of parents, 'Pastoral support is strong at Christ Church. Staff are professional and make pupils feel happy, safe and confident.' Pupils agree and add that the adults who work with them are approachable and that there is always someone to turn to if a problem arises. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also those identified as vulnerable receive outstanding support from the talented and committed team of teaching assistants. They make the same progress as their peers in both their personal and academic development as a result. The work of the learning mentor is similarly very effective. She quickly identifies pupils at risk of underperforming and works closely with parents and carers to keep these youngsters on track to succeed. Pupils identified as gifted or talented are also supported very well and are challenged to reach for the highest standards. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and fully meet national guidelines. Pupils themselves care for and support each other and there are many examples of older pupils helping their younger counterparts.

Issues for improvement at the time of the previous inspection, the assessment and monitoring of pupil achievement, are now excellent. The progress of individuals and cohorts is tracked closely and this leads to timely intervention if any possible underachievement is spotted. Pupils are fully aware of their targets and are pleased to show visitors how far they have come in reaching them!

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is described by parents as 'inspirational' and he provides strong and effective leadership. His vision for moving the school forward is shared wholeheartedly by staff at all levels of responsibility and he is ably supported by a talented deputy headteacher and an effective senior team. The effectiveness of leadership and management is evidenced in rising standards over recent years and in pupils' outstanding personal development. Performance and provision in all areas of school life are monitored and evaluated with rigour and middle leaders have a keen understanding of the strengths and areas for development of their specific areas of responsibility. As a result, school self-evaluation is accurate and honest and feeds in directly to the ongoing improvement agenda.

Assessment procedures and the tracking of pupils' progress have been thoroughly revised and reviewed and the personal and academic targets set for pupils are very well founded as a result. The school is well aware of what needs to be done to secure further improvement, particularly in terms of achievement in science.

The governing body is well informed, supportive of everything the school tries to do and holds the leadership rigorously to account.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you so much for your wonderful welcome and for your kindness when we visited Christ Church recently. You were very polite and friendly to us and we enjoyed visiting your lessons, watching you learn and also talking to you. We thought the pupils who led the assembly on Wednesday did a marvellous job and the choir sang beautifully! We would now like to tell you the really good things about your school.

You told us that Christ Church is a good school and you are right! You are very proud of it and show just how much you enjoy your time there by your good attendance. You behave excellently, look after each other really well and are very courteous to visitors. You have a very good reputation for your Eco School work and you have a lot to teach other children (and grown-ups!) about how important it is to respect the environment. You know why healthy eating and keeping fit are vital to our lives and you take part in a wide range of sporting activities. The school council plays a very important role, representing your views and making suggestions to your teachers about how your school can get even better.

You make good progress in your lessons because your teachers teach you well and because the teaching assistants work very hard to help those of you who sometimes find the work difficult. The support that all adults in school give to you is excellent and your parents are grateful for this high standard of care too. You have such a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities and the residential visits to Edinburgh and the Isle of Wight are very popular indeed and do a lot to develop your skills in team building.

As you know, nothing is ever perfect and we have asked your teachers to do a couple of things to help Christ Church go from strength to strength. We think they could do a little more to improve your standards in science and we have talked to them about giving you more opportunities in class to work things out for yourselves. You can help here too by continuing to work hard and do your best.