

Chalkwell Hall Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114719
Local Authority	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LA
Inspection number	311675
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lesley Barry
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	London Road Leigh-on-sea Essex SS9 3NL
Telephone number	01702 478533
Fax number	01702 471420

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, together with one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Chalkwell Hall Infant School is a large school serving the Leigh-on-Sea area of Southend-on-Sea. It is consistently over subscribed. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The number of pupils taking free school meals is low. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is also low and the number of pupils with statements of special educational need is now below average. A lower than average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The school has the National Healthy Schools Award 2006 and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

As one parent states, Chalkwell Hall Infant School is a 'fantastic school.' Parents know their children go to an outstanding school. All pupils make very good progress from the moment they start school and leave with standards that are significantly above average overall. This is because of the outstanding attention paid to keeping track of pupils' progress and teachers' thorough understanding of how to help pupils make steps in their learning.

Standards in writing having fallen for two years, rose in 2007, although fewer pupils attained the higher levels than those nationally. The level of aspiration amongst staff is exceptional, they all share a passion to improve provision for the pupils. They know writing is a key area for improvement and initiatives introduced have helped pupils reach better standards in writing. There is a strong focus on developing writing throughout the curriculum, using interesting and varied approaches.

Teaching is consistently good and has a number of outstanding features. In the words of parents, the teaching 'takes on board children's needs'. The strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is a key strength of the school. All staff are committed and conscientious. Pupils are interested and very enthusiastic about their learning. Another parent states 'he is keen and positive about his learning - what more can a parent ask for?' Pupils are eager to take responsibility for achieving their targets, but despite so much enthusiasm, the school does not give enough attention to ensuring the consistent use of strategies to actively engage pupils in learning at all times. Key skills in learning are developed throughout the outstanding curriculum, by weaving together curriculum areas. It is enhanced through a range of exciting activities, for example, fun days such as Red Nose day when everyone dressed up as clowns and all the children participated in circus skills. Pupils' personal development and well being is outstanding. They show an outstanding awareness of how to be healthy and stay safe and are developing the skills they need for taking responsibility, and for their future well-being. Statements made in the prospectus are born out in practice: 'We encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards learning, playing, behaviour and relationships through high expectations, positive reinforcement and an understanding of their individual needs.'

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and supported in their learning. 'This is a lovely and caring school. Mrs Palmer (and the teachers) are doing a wonderful job.' Her vision is clear; to constantly seek ways to enable all pupils to make the best possible progress. This vision is reflected by the Senior Leadership Team and echoed throughout the staff team. The quality of leadership and management, including governance are outstanding. There is true equality of opportunity. Every initiative the school embraces is evaluated on the basis of whether it will have a significant impact on achievement and standards. The school has outstanding capacity to improve, and gives outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Although their pupils have only been in Foundation Stage for just over a month, parents' comments are overwhelmingly positive. Provision is outstanding and pupils make very good progress. Recent improvements have led to a wonderful learning environment, richly resourced and set out so that pupils can readily access the very carefully planned learning opportunities. There is outstanding leadership from the Foundation Stage Leader. Teachers and early years

support staff work as a highly effective team, ensuring pupils feel safe and all their needs are fully met. The curriculum has the right level of challenge, is stimulating, and all pupils are encouraged to be responsible and independent learners. Teaching is good overall and relationships between all adults and pupils are positive and productive at all times. Assessment is accurate and rigorous and makes use of the very latest technology to capture the exact moment when a pupil achieves one of their learning targets. There are very good links with parents who are well informed about their child's progress. A parent's comment sums up the impact of Foundation Stage provision perfectly - 'He comes home every evening happy, bubbly and full of everything he has done during the day - the school and his teacher must be doing a fantastic job.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring the consistent use of strategies to actively engage pupils in learning at all times.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter school with standards in line with national expectations and make very good progress. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards have been significantly high overall for the last four years. Standards fell slightly in 2007 due to an unusually high proportion of pupils with significant learning difficulties. Despite this, standards in writing improved slightly, although a lower than average number of pupils achieved the higher levels. Due to action taken to improve writing, standards reached by current pupils have improved significantly. A new approach to teaching letter sounds, not only to break down words for reading, but also to build up words for writing has had great impact. Achievement is very good. All pupils are supported in making progress towards highly challenging targets. There are no significant differences in the achievement of any of the different groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and minority ethnic pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have excellent attitudes, always give their best and take pride in their achievements. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because it is embedded in the life of the school. They grow in self-awareness, think in moral terms and reflect upon their feelings and actions. Behaviour is outstanding because all staff are consistent and pupils clearly understand what is expected and adhere to it. They are invariably courteous and polite to everyone. They are very respectful and supportive of one another, sharing and celebrating each other's achievements. Pupils have an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles. Their remarkable understanding of personal safety means they look after themselves and one another very well. They raise funds for charities and contribute extremely well to their school. As school councillors they take a real and active part, whether talking to governors about school meals or interviewing prospective deputy head teachers. All pupils are building excellent foundations for later life and learning the skills they need for their future well-being.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and punctuality is very good. The school does all it can to encourage good attendance, but holidays taken in term-time are relatively high. Consequently, attendance is only satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching throughout the school is good, with many outstanding features. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are very keen to learn new things. The very good relationships with teachers and support staff contribute to pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage lessons well. However, they do not yet make sufficient use of strategies to make lesson introductions as interactive as they could be. Groupings are used to ensure that carefully planned, differentiated tasks are given appropriate adult support thus ensuring that pupils make good progress during lessons. Assessment procedures are very good, pupils know their learning targets and these are reviewed twice a term. Written marking makes reference to what is good and what pupils need to do to improve their work but these comments are not used as well as they could be to ensure the suggested improvements are made. The school is aware of this and also knows it does not give sufficient opportunity for pupils to share responsibility in evaluating their own progress in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum, which has a strong thematic approach, fully meets statutory requirements. Planning is very thorough and supported by effective collaboration within year group teams and knowledgeable subject leaders. Provision for information and communication technology is excellent both in the number of computers available and in the way interactive whiteboards are used to enhance learning opportunities. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of all pupils including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and makes good provision for the most able pupils. Displays are attractive, stimulating and provide a useful learning resource as well as celebrating pupils' very good work. The school has a good range of after school clubs, which are very popular. The gardening club is over-subscribed and has a waiting list. The school is working towards Eco School status and the separate Eco School's Council has developed some excellent ways to ensure the school is contributing to sustainable development such as a butterfly garden and 'green' paper recycling bins in every classroom. Enrichment activities are outstanding and include a Multicultural Week, visits out and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has a very strong ethos of care and support. Every pupil is valued and respect for one another is at the heart of everything the school does. New pupils settle quickly and easily. Safeguarding procedures meet all current requirements. Pastoral support is outstanding. All pupils' needs are identified quickly and accurately and the school strives to meet the needs of every pupil. This is at the heart of the positive climate for learning which contributes to outstanding personal development. Pupils know what to do if they feel bullied and are confident any issues will be resolved. Procedures for monitoring academic progress are outstanding. Personal targets are having a real impact. However, as the school is aware, while marking at its most effective helps pupils improve, this is not the case in all lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The high expectations of the headteacher and the newly appointed deputy, are mirrored throughout the staff team. There is no complacency. Everyone expects the very best of themselves and of each other and are truly empowered to take responsibility. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and grounded in respect. The clearly defined vision is based on a very good understanding of all aspects of pupils' development and learning. The school aims to achieve excellent outcomes, independent life long learning and an understanding of, and respect for, difference. These values underpin all its work. Monitoring of progress is meticulous, and analysis of the outcomes is searching. The resulting improvement plan is strategic, well thought out and well staged. Self-evaluation processes are very effective. Professional development is very good, is closely linked to the key improvement priorities and is effective in improving provision.

Governors are extremely committed and are actively involved in evaluating provision. They are both highly challenging and supportive, and have a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. Partnerships are strong. Parents are extremely supportive and are highly involved with pupils' learning. However, although a few comment that communication has improved, some parents say that they are given too short notice of the timings of events at the school. The school has forged very good links with pre-school providers and the junior school. All partners are actively working to improve the already effective transition arrangements.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	3
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	1

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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chalkwell Hall Infant School, London Road, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3NL

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your school and meeting you all. Thank you for welcoming us and for talking to us. We think your school is outstanding, and we know that your parents agree with us! Lots of your parents say it is a 'fantastic' school! We know you really enjoy school and think your lessons are interesting and fun. We were very impressed by the way you all work together and the respect you all show each other. We felt that you show an excellent attitude to school, that you always give your best and take pride in your achievements.

The adults at your school are a really good team. They look after you extremely well, and importantly, want you to do as well as you can in your learning in every way possible. The only thing we think they need to do is to make sure that you all have the chance to discuss questions when you are all working together, and to discuss how good your work is with each other when it is finished.

With best wishes

Heather Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector