

Chipping Hill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114827
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	311722
Inspection date	21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Joy Richardson

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	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Fleet
Headteacher	Mrs Wendy Walker
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Church Street Witham Essex CM8 2JL
Telephone number	01376 512201
Fax number	01376 502415

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small infant school with four classes. It draws pupils from across the town of Witham. When pupils leave they transfer to a variety of junior and primary schools. Eighty-eight per cent of pupils are from White British backgrounds, and 12% are from minority ethnic groups. Three pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Consultation is to begin on the possibility of moving the school to a new site as a primary school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school gives children an outstanding education. It taps into their desire to learn and feeds their imagination and curiosity. As one parent said, 'Learning is so much fun that children don't even realise they are working.' The school is held in very high regard by staff, parents and governors as well as by pupils, and the family atmosphere is very strong.

The school's leadership and management are outstanding, making the school a place where children thrive and learn very successfully. The headteacher gives clear direction while valuing everyone's contribution in making the school as good as possible for pupils. The school's relationship with parents is exemplary. The school knows parents well and enlists their support, explaining what and how their children are learning. The school uses its resources very well and gives outstanding value for money.

Pupils achieve consistently high standards because of outstanding teaching that is both imaginative and thorough. Children make an excellent start in the Foundation Stage. By the time pupils leave, standards are exceptionally high in reading, and above the national average in mathematics and in writing. The school sets challenging targets and these are usually met or exceeded. This is because the school tracks pupils' progress very closely, quickly pinpointing any problems, exploring causes and working out the best action to take. Individual needs are identified early, and pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive excellent support. The school works very effectively to maintain and improve standards. For example, it is currently focusing on further improving writing skills to ensure that pupils do as well as they can.

The school is, in many ways, an inspiring place for children. The grounds invite pupils to explore the natural world, for example in the 'Secret Garden' and the 'Badger Bank' courtyard. The school does much to foster creativity and enquiry, as when pupils made 'rubbish monster' sock puppets to learn about recycling, or made homes for imaginary creatures.

The curriculum is good, and enriched by many special events and themed weeks. The school is now reviewing its regular curriculum to strengthen further the connections between areas of learning and to ensure that skills are practised for a purpose. It is working to embed the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum, and further training is planned to extend the skills of all staff.

The school provides excellent care and support. It listens to pupils, encouraging them to contribute their ideas, for example, through the school council. Pupils live up to their 'school promise' in trying 'to be thoughtful, caring and kind every day'. As a result, their behaviour is impeccable.

The school has improved since the previous inspection. The energy and enthusiasm of its leadership, the strength of its teamwork and the clarity of its vision indicate that it has an outstanding capacity to go on improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop curriculum planning to strengthen links between areas of learning, and extend the skills of all staff in using information and communication technology across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children enter school with attainment that is broadly typical for their age, although skills vary widely between individuals. They make rapid progress in Reception so that most achieve, and many exceed, the early learning goals set nationally for the end of the Foundation Stage. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, continue to make excellent progress through Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards are significantly above the national averages. Most pupils reach at least the level expected nationally, in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and many achieve beyond this, notably in reading. The school sets challenging targets that are generally met or exceeded because of timely interventions to remedy any weaknesses in learning. It plans carefully for improvement, as seen when a target in writing was not quite met this year. The high standards maintained in recent years reflect close attention to the progress of each pupil. The school has taken steps successfully to develop more accurate assessment in the Foundation Stage. It now has a very effective system for tracking pupils' progress termly through the school. It is quick to take action if progress slows, and to provide additional support or challenge when this is required.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a very high standard. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their own feelings and to consider those of others. They respond well to the guidance they receive about the school's high expectations with regard to work and play, and they behave extremely well. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and to the wider community. Members of the school council represent their classmates proudly and conscientiously. They influence the work of the school by sharing their ideas with the headteacher and with governors. For example, they have made suggestions about making lunch a special occasion, as in a restaurant, with flowers and menus on the tables. Pupils show excellent understanding of how to be healthy and how to keep safe. They develop skills that prepare them extremely well for later life. Pupils enjoy coming to school and the school has worked effectively to reduce absences. As a result, attendance is good. It has risen in recent years from below to above the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall. This has led to the maintenance of consistently high standards and achievement throughout the school. The lessons seen during the inspection were at least good and often outstanding. Teachers are energetic, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Staff explain clearly, engaging and holding pupils' interest. As a result, pupils are serious about their work while enjoying it greatly. In outstanding lessons, teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves, to explain their ideas and to rise to a challenge. The staff are developing ways to help pupils practise their skills for a purpose. Pupils were excited by work which involved calculating costs for an impending trip to Frinton. Staff manage classes extremely well and relationships are excellent. Teachers and support staff work seamlessly together with

a clear, shared understanding of each pupil's abilities and the next steps in their learning. Strong teamwork ensures that pupils, whether in single or mixed-age classes, make progress at an appropriate pace. Teachers' planning takes account of the more able pupils and those who need support. Staff evaluate how well pupils understand and use this information to guide subsequent teaching. Learning is skilfully reinforced, for example, by using 'reminder cards' that help pupils to tackle their work confidently. Assessment is detailed and used well to guide subsequent teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum, providing breadth and depth in pupils' learning. Pupils are well grounded in basic skills of literacy and numeracy. They make a start in learning French and very much enjoy this. The school offers a good range of popular clubs, including choir, country dancing and football. The whole school community participates in special occasions such as the recent 'French Friday'. Themed weeks for the whole school, which have included a health week and a multicultural week, engage pupils practically and extend their learning. Pupils are encouraged to use their developing skills, for example linking history and literacy in writing a postcard as from a Victorian seaside holiday. Such activities are helping pupils to build interest and confidence in writing as part of the school's drive to raise standards further in this area. The school is now revising its curriculum planning to draw out themes and links between subjects more consistently. It is concerned to ensure that children in the Foundation Stage have plenty of opportunity for independent activity. With this in mind, the school is planning further development of the outdoor play area. The school has introduced interactive whiteboards as a tool for teaching and learning, and pupils gain skills in using computers. The school has identified the need for further training to help staff in using information and communication technology to maximum effect across the whole curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. This helps pupils to grow as people, becoming confident learners and responsible members of the community. Procedures for child protection, and arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety, are very well established. Teachers and support staff work together very effectively to overcome barriers to learning. The school provides excellent support for pupils with particular difficulties and takes great care in helping children who are learning English as an additional language. Any concerns about pupils' progress, however minor, are followed up quickly. The school has close links with pre-school groups, including visits to them before children join the school. These contribute to a smooth transition and continuity of care. At every stage, the school works very closely with parents, explaining the next steps in learning for each child. Targets in literacy and numeracy help pupils to understand what they need to do next to improve their work, and these are shared with parents. Lunchtime supervisors are well trained so that expectations of behaviour are consistent throughout the day, and children are given positive guidance in learning to play constructively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding, fostering excellence in teaching and learning so that pupils achieve consistently high standards. The headteacher, well supported by the deputy head, creates an extremely positive climate for learning. Teamwork is strong and every member of staff is encouraged to take responsibility for leading the school forward in aspects of its work. The school is very committed to developing its staff. This motivates the staff team and builds expertise on which the school then draws. The leadership of the school's provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is highly effective. The headteacher regularly monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching and learning, and the progress pupils are making. Monitoring leads rapidly to action that brings about improvement. The school is open and challenging in its self-evaluation, focusing on how it can do even better. The school improvement plan has clear priorities that are vigorously pursued. Governance is good because governors are highly supportive and well informed. They visit the school regularly and make helpful reports on areas of the curriculum. The school works very effectively with others in seeking the best for pupils. It makes imaginative use of its accommodation, while recognising its constraints, to provide the best possible environment for learning.

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

Achievement and standards

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

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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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?	1
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?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	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

23 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Chipping Hill Infant School, Witham, CM8 2JL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for telling us about it. Everyone seems to love the school and we understand why. We think you are lucky to go to such a wonderful school where the staff teach you so well and make learning such fun.

There are many special places around the school grounds for you to explore and enjoy. You learn how to look after things too, and you know a lot about recycling. You have good ideas about how to make the school even better, like having flowers and menus on the tables at lunchtime. You think about ways of helping other children, such as having a friendship bench at lunchtime. We were pleased to hear about all the ways you have helped to raise money for people who need it. You are very good at sharing and you behave really well.

All the staff have lots of good ideas about making your work interesting and helping you to do as well as possible. The staff will be planning more ways of linking up the work you do so that you can put all your skills to good use. They also want to find more ways of using computers to help you learn.

We enjoyed our visit to your school. We hope that you go on enjoying all that the school does to help you learn so well.

With best wishes,

Joy Richardson

Lead Inspector