

Chaulden Infants' and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117202
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312531
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	125
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Howard Mason
Headteacher	Mrs Jackie Hood
Date of previous school inspection	28 October 2002
School address	School Row Chaulden Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 2JU
Telephone number	01442264588
Fax number	01442397392

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Chaulden is a small infant school with attached Nursery. It also has a speech and language unit that currently provides for 11 pupils, 9 pupils have statements of special educational need. Overall, the social circumstances of pupils are below average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and a few are at an early stage of learning English. The school has gained the National Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Chaulden provides a satisfactory standard of education and is on an upward trend. The new headteacher has made an excellent start and already provides good leadership. She has led improvements in the school's provision and pupils' progress, ably supported by leaders. This means that the school has a good capacity for further improvement. Pupils are well cared for and this is recognised by parents, who are highly supportive of the school. Typical of their many positive comments was, 'This is a happy school. The staff are dedicated and the children always come first.' Many parents commented on the 'Welcoming, happy and friendly atmosphere.' This strong ethos of nurture enables children to make very good progress in their social and moral development. Pupils' personal development is good. Their enjoyment, regular attendance and willingness to talk about the school demonstrates their positive attitudes. 'I don't like school, I love it,' said one pupil.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has strengthened the rigour with which staff with responsibilities check pupils' progress and the school's teaching and learning. The good evaluation processes have resulted in effective improvement planning that has ensured that actions have had a positive impact on pupils' progress. Consequently, achievement is satisfactory and quickening, particularly in reading and mathematics. Pupils in Year 2 are on course to attain standards that are close to the national average in reading and mathematics, though the proportion gaining the higher levels is small, particularly in writing. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Previous inadequate teaching has been removed and the improvements have been an important factor in raising achievement and standards. However, the new arrangements need time to bed down to enable pupils' progress to become consistently as good as it is in the best lessons. Furthermore, progress in mathematics is hampered because pupils have not yet been given targets for improvement as they have in reading and writing.

Although the curriculum is satisfactory and meets national requirements, there is a weakness. At present, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to have explicit information and communication technology (ICT) lessons due to a lack of resources.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly and well in the Nursery because staff encourage children well, give praise and provide a wide range of good quality activities that the children enjoy. Children's skills on entry are well below those typically found, particularly in their personal and language skills. Because the provision is good in both the Nursery and Reception class, children make good progress. In both year groups, the staff have placed a particular emphasis on developing the children's letter sounding skills. These are taught effectively and, in consequence, their progress in communication, language and literacy is particularly strong. The well-organised curriculum ensures that there is a good balance to enable children to make choices for themselves as well as being directed. The opportunities for outdoor learning are a strength and the newly arranged space, particularly outside the nursery, is used to good effect. Children achieve well, and when they enter Year 1, two thirds attain the expected goals.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and, in particular, increase the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels.

- Develop more consistency in teaching by bringing all up to the quality of the best.
- Provide targets for pupils in mathematics and science.
- Strengthen the curriculum for ICT by providing dedicated lessons in that subject.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but who have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

There has been a recent strengthening of pupils' achievement to the current satisfactory levels. In the past, due to weaknesses in provision, pupils' progress was inadequate. This has resulted in overall standards that have been significantly below average in most years. Standards have been particularly weak in writing. However, current Year 2 pupils are on course to attain standards that are just below average, in reading and mathematics. In writing, many pupils sometimes produce work that is of a good standard, but it is not consistent. This is because there is a legacy of under-achievement in this area. However, there are positive signs of improvement. Nonetheless, too few pupils are on course to attain the higher levels.

Pupils in the speech and language unit make good progress towards their targets. The school's provision for children with learning difficulties or disabilities, whether they are for delayed speech and language, behavioural difficulties or general learning needs, is good. This ensures that these pupils' progress, though slower than others, is good and they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. This is grounded in the strong ethos of support and nurture that helps the pupils to feel secure and confident and to enjoy school outstandingly well. Older pupils delight in taking responsibility for younger ones as, for example, when they escort them from lunch and look after them in the playground. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe. The discussion times provided in all classes enable pupils to have a say in how the school is run and they take pride in helping to negotiate their own classroom behaviour rules. Because of the effective provision, pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are eager to point out the many opportunities that they have for robust and energetic play. Pupils are appropriately prepared for their move to the junior school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most lessons are at least satisfactory and, in the Foundation Stage and the speech and language unit, they are good. Although there are strengths in the teaching that stem, in the main, from the good relationships and behaviour management of pupils, there remains some inconsistency in the overall quality of teaching. However, the project to strengthen learning is paying dividends. Teachers now invariably set out what has to be learned and what pupils have to do to achieve the lesson's objectives. This has helped to involve the pupils in their learning, encourage them to be more independent and give them a clear idea of how to improve,

particularly in their writing. In addition, in the better lessons, teachers' questioning of pupils is good. This is the case for pupils in the speech and language unit where, for example, probing questioning by the teacher led to pupils giving extended answers when discussing the 'Three Little Pigs'. The school rightly recognises that, although there are some lessons of good quality, too many lessons remain satisfactory and the need to make all lessons consistently as good as the best. Learning assistants are effective. They make a valuable contribution to lesson quality in all classes including the Foundation Stage and speech and language unit.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well. There are strengths in the personal, social and emotional curriculum that enable pupils to achieve well and enjoy lessons in this area. The school's curriculum for pupils' academic development is satisfactory. Staff link subjects together well to make learning meaningful and enjoyable for pupils. The current topic on homes, for example, includes work in literacy, drama, design and technology, history, ICT and art. Most plans ensure that work is well-matched to the pupils' differing learning needs. There is an appropriate range of additional activities comprising of extra-curricular clubs, some educational visits, and a good range of visiting speakers. However, there is a weakness. At present, although all national requirements are met, there is insufficient opportunity for a whole class to be taught ICT lessons because resources have been limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils' care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There are considerable strengths in the care and support provided for pupils though there is a weakness in pupils' academic guidance. Pupils flourish in their personal development because adults know them well and there is an atmosphere of care and support. This ensures that pupils are helped to feel safe, secure and to develop confidence and positive attitudes. In particular, this supports the much higher than normal number of pupils that have learning difficulties and, especially in the Foundation Stage, where many children's personal and social skills are limited.

Safeguarding arrangements are met in full and pupils' health and safety is assured. Recent improvements in the school's arrangements for checking pupils' progress have made a positive impact on achievement in reading and writing. This is because the good data that is produced can quickly help to identify underachieving pupils in these areas and enable the necessary support to be put into place. However, these arrangements do not extend to setting targets in mathematics and science and thus, pupils are not clear about what they need to do to improve in these subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher leads the school with a clear vision. She has brought increased rigour and accountability into its management and has ensured that the school has an accurate view of its provision and pupils' progress. With effective support from the senior teacher, she ensures that all staff with responsibilities are given a voice in decision-making and are also held to account for their work. As a result, staff willingly take on responsibility, and some, such as the

Foundation Stage leader and the teacher in charge of the speech and language unit, provide good leadership. The school has a good capacity to improve in the future. This is because self-evaluation is used well. Senior and middle leaders are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders are improving standards because they are using the tracking of pupils' progress successfully. One or two subject leaders are not fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Governors are highly committed to the further development of the school and even though they currently have a number of vacancies, they meet their responsibilities appropriately.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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.

Annex A

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 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	3
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chaulden Infants' and Nursery School, Hemel Hempstead HP1 2JU

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when I visited your school. I really enjoyed meeting and talking with you and watching you learn. I know you like school and enjoy learning. Yours is a satisfactory school and all the adults look after you well. You told me that you enjoy lessons and that your teachers are kind to you. I can see that this sometimes helps you to do well in lessons because teachers help you to understand the lesson objectives and success criteria.

I was impressed with your good behaviour and I could see that you get on well together. I thought that older children are very kind to younger ones and you enjoy looking after them. The staff take good care of you and those of you that need extra help are well supported.

Your headteacher runs the school well and knows how to make it even better in the future. These are the things that I have asked to be done.

- Improve the level of your work and for more of you to get higher levels.
- Make all your lessons as good as the best ones.
- Give you targets in mathematics and science as well as writing.
- Have more ICT lessons.

You can help by making sure that you work hard to meet your targets.

Best wishes

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector