

Chambersbury Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117214
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312533
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dawn Herriott
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Conlon (Interim)
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2007
School address	Hill Common Bennetts End HP3 8JH
Telephone number	01442 256435
Fax number	01442 242463

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds, although a small and growing proportion comes from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or those who need extra support with their learning is broadly average, but there are far higher proportions of pupils who need extra support in some year groups than in others. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is higher than average. Children's attainment on entry covers the full range, but overall is below that expected for their age and well below the county average. A relatively high proportion of pupils joins and leaves the school other than at the usual times of the year.

At the time of the previous inspection in January 2007, the school was given a Notice to Improve. It currently has intensive support from the local authority and is led by an interim headteacher and deputy who will be in post until September 2008. There have been further significant changes to staff this academic year, including six new class teachers, two of whom are on temporary contracts until the new headteacher and deputy take up their posts. There is also a new school secretary. The school has attained Sportsmark and Healthy School accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with legislation, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. It is improving rapidly and now provides a sound education for its pupils. A period of turbulence resulted in a decline in standards and a slowing of pupil progress over the past few years. The recent upturn in standards is the direct result of overall good leadership and management. The leadership provided by the interim headteacher is excellent. Arrangements for evaluating the school's performance are now good. Rigorous monitoring systems are being embedded into the school's work so that the good rate of improvement is maintained. Both the interim deputy headteacher and the local authority are supporting the interim headteacher very well in this. As a result, the school has turned a corner. It currently provides satisfactory value for money and now has a good capacity to continue to improve.

Pupil progress is now satisfactory throughout the school and quickening. Pupils are on track to achieve increasingly challenging targets. Currently, achievement in lessons is increasingly good in mathematics and reading, which have been the focus of recent whole school development. Achievement in writing, which is the present area of focus, is also significantly better, but still satisfactory overall. Standards in the core subjects of English and mathematics are now in line with those expected for pupils' ages at Year 2 and Year 6. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and that for English and mathematics is frequently good. This is because of increased teachers' confidence in these aspects of learning, combined with the implementation of good, whole school policies for planning and marking, which are monitored rigorously by senior staff. The school acknowledges that it now needs to embed the good new policies and practices for developing writing and to improve teaching quality of non-core subjects in the same way.

Teachers have good relationships with pupils and consistently high expectations of behaviour. As a result, behaviour is good and pupils enjoy coming to school, pay attention and concentrate well in lessons. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The main learning objective for each lesson is explained to the class and each pupil knows their own individual targets and uses them on a daily basis. Assessment in English and mathematics is good. It is rigorous and used very effectively to track progress and highlight pupils who require extra support. These procedures are being extended to include assessment of non-core subjects to the same degree. The curriculum is good. It covers all of the required subjects in suitable depth and is supplemented by a good range of interesting and exciting visits, visitors and well-attended clubs. The care guidance and welfare the school provides is good overall. The provision for pupils to learn about a healthy lifestyle and make healthy choices is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Standards on entry to the Foundation Stage are overall below those expected for children's ages. They are well below the average for the county. Children settle happily into the Nursery and Reception classes because of good induction procedures, which help to settle children into school easily. Progress and achievement are satisfactory in the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers establish good relationships with the children and set clear expectations. As a result, children know what is expected of them. Children who are not performing as well as expected are swiftly identified, given help, and the impact of the intervention tracked carefully until the

problem is resolved. The school has now rightly identified the need to develop the curriculum for outdoor learning and to make better use of the information from assessment when planning the day-to-day activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in writing throughout the school.
- Include more outdoor work for Reception children and link the curriculum more explicitly to assessments of their progress.
- Ensure that teaching is more consistently of a good standard, particularly in non-core subjects.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. There has been significant under-achievement in the past, but this is no longer the case. Children settle well into the Nursery and Reception class and make satisfactory gains in their learning, due to the sound quality of the provision. Progress is satisfactory overall from Year 1 to Year 6. Currently achievement in lessons is frequently and increasingly good, particularly in English and mathematics. This is as a direct result of the good leadership and management, which has focussed on raising standards, particularly in mathematics and reading and, more recently, in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are supported effectively so that they achieve satisfactorily in relation to their abilities. Currently, standards are broadly in line with those expected for pupils' ages at Year 2 and Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy and enthusiastic learners and enjoy coming to school. 'I enjoy having targets and being successful', one pupil said. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Pupils talk openly and confidently to each other. They greatly value their friendships with each other as well as with their teachers and other adults and work really well in partner and group activities. Pupils in Year 6 have individual responsibilities to support the running of the school. However, such responsibilities are not yet established to the same extent in other year groups. Pupils are well behaved and listen attentively to staff and each other. They know how to stay safe with the support of a caring staff, the 'buddy' system and a 'worry box'. If they have a worry, pupils know what to do and who to talk to. The school council ensures that pupils' views are heard and taken into consideration. Pupils enjoy healthy lifestyles as reflected in the school's achievement of Healthy School Award. They are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. A significant and growing proportion of teaching is good, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics. The quality

of marking is good, owing to a consistent and efficient marking policy implemented across the whole school. Teachers plan lessons well to be exciting, to challenge pupils, and to grab their attention and interest. Pupils say they feel that 'the level of work and challenge is about right'. A consistent feature in lessons is the clear explanation at the start of the lesson of the focus for learning and the good evaluation sessions at the end that let pupils know how far they have met the goals. Assessment is good in English and mathematics and is now being developed in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and gives pupils access to a wide range of subjects. There is particular emphasis on English and mathematics. Subject leaders are working hard to improve the curriculum further by developing stronger links between subjects, especially through the use of writing, and to develop a more creative curriculum. Throughout the school, pupils are provided with a wide and varied range of experiences that encourage enthusiasm for learning. These include visits to the St Alban's Museum and the Isle of Wight and visitors such as the local vicar, a theatre group and the community police officer. There is a good range of school clubs, such as, football, netball, board games, chess, and speed stacking. The extensive grounds provide good opportunities for pupils to enjoy their play and to support outside learning. Pupils' work in personal, social and health education is good and this supports their knowledge of healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good and a strength of the school. Staff know and respond to pupils' social and emotional needs in a sensitive and caring manner. The individuality of pupils is recognised and success is always celebrated. Required procedures for safeguarding pupils' and their welfare are securely in place, providing confidence to pupils that they are safe and secure in school. Pupils feel valued and they know that they will always be listened to, which encourages them to be open and confident speakers. It is in this caring and nurturing environment that pupils are helped to reach the challenging targets they are set. The good links forged with outside support agencies, supplemented well by the school's own internal systems, means that help is swiftly on hand for any pupils experiencing social, emotional or academic difficulties. Academic guidance is a strong and effective feature of the school's work, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics. It makes a significant contribution to how well pupils achieve. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do next to improve. Pupils who need extra help are supported well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall and this has resulted in the school making good progress and improving standards in many aspects since the previous inspection. The leadership of the interim headteacher is outstanding, with good support provided by the interim deputy headteacher. This partnership is a significant factor in the improvements in standards in many parts of school life.

The leadership of the chair of governors is strong and effective, but many other governors are relatively new. They are undergoing training to develop their monitoring role. Many of the subject coordinators are new to their posts and the school but they have made a good start in monitoring their subjects and in formulating subject development plans. The school's policy for equality of opportunity is implemented effectively. The school provides good quality information for parents. However, a significant minority in letters and questionnaires have said they feel communication could be improved still further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	3
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	3

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	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	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

3 March 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Chambersbury Primary School, Hemel Hemstead, HP3 8JH

I am writing to thank you for the way you made us feel welcome when we visited your school recently. I also want to share with you what we found out about your school. I especially want to thank all those of you we met in groups and talked to at lunchtime. This was very helpful to us and we enjoyed hearing about your work and how much you enjoy being at school.

These are the really good things about your school.

- You are well behaved and enjoy school.
- Teachers make lessons interesting.
- You all learn a lot about being healthy and staying safe.
- You are developing into confident learners and are able to speak clearly to adults.
- Teachers plan your learning well and you have some really good lessons in English and mathematics.
- Your school looks after you well and gives you good information about how you can make your work even better.
- Your headteacher knows a lot about how well you are all doing and how to make the school even better.

We have asked your teachers to do the following things.

- To help you make even more progress in writing.
- For those of you in the Foundation Stage, to have a lot more opportunity to learn outdoors, and for activities to better build on what you already know.
- Work to provide more good lessons in subjects other than English and mathematics.

We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Barnes Lead inspector