

Church Hill Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120165
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313540
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	277
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Gray
Headteacher	Shereen Kirk
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	Church Hill Road Thurmaston Leicester LE4 8DE
Telephone number	01162 692509
Fax number	0116 260 4143

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Church Hill Junior School is bigger than the average-sized primary school. Pupils' attainment on entry into Year 3 is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and with a statement of special educational need is above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and whose home language is believed not to be English is well above average. Very few of these pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for 10 months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Church Hill is a satisfactory school. However, the school views itself as better than this. Although there is some good learning in Years 5 and 6, pupils in Years 3 and 4 do not always do well enough, especially the more able. As a result, standards are average by Year 6 and pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards in English and mathematics are average and standards in science are above average. Pupils' progress in science is good. In this subject, pupils have some good opportunities to carry out experiments and to develop their own ways to record their work. However, in English, pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their writing skills across the curriculum, particularly to write at length giving their own ideas and opinions. This limits the progress they make.

The headteacher and the newly formed senior management team have accurately identified priorities for further development. With the staff and the governors, they are strongly committed to improving the school. The capacity to do this is satisfactory. Already, well focused support and a stronger emphasis on developing pupils' mathematical language are helping some lower attaining boys to gain confidence and improve their achievements in mathematics. While this action is proving successful, the monitoring of pupils' learning is not always focused sharply enough on whole-school priorities. These include improving writing opportunities across the curriculum and ensuring greater challenge for the more able. The uneven implementation of strategies, in areas such as these, leads to inconsistencies in teaching and learning, most notably in Years 3 and 4.

Some good aspects of teaching in Years 5 and 6 enable pupils to build effectively on what they already know. Lessons in these year groups move at a good pace and pupils know what they need to do to improve. All pupils have targets for improvement but pupils in Years 3 and 4 are not always sure how these targets can help them. In addition, teachers' marking of the younger and older pupils' work does not always provide sufficient information for pupils about how they can improve this. All teachers now have information about how well pupils have done previously. Teachers in Years 3 and 4 do not always use this information sufficiently well to identify the next steps in learning, particularly for the more able.

Parents are right to feel their children are well cared for and pupils say they feel safe. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and the level of care pupils receive leads to a calm and caring learning environment. Pupils behave sensibly and have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They show respect for each other and people from other cultures. Many pupils say that they like school and their attendance is good but some say their lessons could be more exciting and enjoyable. Teachers value pupils' efforts and praise their achievements. Pupils enthusiastically join in with the extensive range of out-of-school activities, including educational trips, residential visits and clubs. These contribute successfully to the pupils' enjoyment of school and extend their learning opportunities, particularly in music and art. Pupils are very aware of what makes a healthy diet but younger pupils do not always make sensible choices about what they eat. Pupils cooperate and work well together in teams and their satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy prepares them adequately for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- provide more stimulating opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills across the curriculum

- ensure that teachers in Years 3 and 4 make better use of information about pupils' achievements to plan more effectively the next steps in learning, particularly for the more able
- ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work further
- check rigorously the success of strategies to improve pupils' learning and ensure that any shortcomings are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

A small proportion of 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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are average by the end of Year 6 and pupils, including those with LDD, make satisfactory progress. Standards in science are above average and pupils make good progress as the range of investigative work increases their interest, and they have good opportunities to devise their own ways to record their findings. In science, pupils make good use of scientific language because the school places a strong emphasis on helping pupils to develop scientific vocabulary. The level of independence seen in pupils' learning in science is not as evident in other subjects. The overuse of worksheets in some subjects restricts opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas and to demonstrate the range of writing skills they have mastered in literacy lessons. In Years 5 and 6, the challenge in lessons often enables pupils to do their best but in Years 3 and 4, this is not always the case. Sometimes, more able pupils complete the same work as the average attaining pupils. This does not help the more able pupils to make good progress and leaves them having to catch up in Years 5 and 6. These are key reasons why standards are no higher than average and pupils' progress no better than satisfactory by the end of Year 6.

The recent push to help pupils to develop a better understanding of mathematical terms is beginning to take effect and this is helping to raise standards in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils take good care of themselves and others. They have a strong sense of the difference between right and wrong and they act safely and sensibly. Pupils show a good awareness of their own and others' beliefs and demonstrate respect for the values and traditions of a range of cultures. Pupils are welcoming and friendly and these features enable them to develop constructive relationships. Pupils' enjoyment of school is satisfactory and their attendance is good. They like school because it is friendly but some say their lessons are not always interesting enough. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Lessons are usually calm and orderly, although sometimes pupils need extra reminders to listen carefully. Pupils make satisfactory choices about healthy lifestyles. Most are fully aware of healthy eating but some younger pupils still choose food they know is not good for them. Pupils make sensible choices about exercise and many participate in the sporting events the school offers. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. The school council is becoming more involved in making their school a better place to be. Senior managers acknowledge there is scope to extend this further. Pupils take part in local events. They raise

funds for charity because they want to help others less fortunate than themselves. These and other fund raising events contribute satisfactorily to pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers use some good strategies to engage pupils in their learning. These include 'talking partners', where pupils share their ideas and clarify their thinking with each other, and visual resources such as video clips that provide a good stimulus for discussion. These features often provide a firm starting point for the next part of the lesson. This is often the case in Years 5 and 6, where lessons have a lively pace and support pupils' learning successfully. In Years 3 and 4, pupils' learning does not always build effectively on this positive start because sometimes the subsequent activities do not challenge the more able pupils to do their best. Improving the management of pupils' behaviour is a key priority for the school but not all teachers are consistent in the way they deal with pupils. This inconsistency is confusing for some pupils and does not always promote good behaviour. Marking celebrates pupils' achievements but is not yet fully effective in all classes because it does not give pupils enough information about how they can do better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Improved information about pupils' prior achievements is helping staff to adapt the curriculum to meet more closely the needs of pupils. This often works well in Years 5 and 6 but this process is less successful in Years 3 and 4 because activities here are sometimes too easy for the more able pupils. Promoting pupils' writing skills across the curriculum is a priority for the school and senior managers acknowledge that this is not yet fully embedded or effective. The extensive range of exciting activities outside normal lessons supports aspects of pupils' personal development well. These include residential visits and the popular art and gardening clubs. The flourishing choir and dance club contribute successfully to pupils' enjoyment of school, as does their learning in music and physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Staff are fully trained in child protection procedures and parents are right to feel that their children are in safe hands. Staff show a high level of care for pupils, including those with LDD. They regularly remind pupils how to stay safe and to keep fit. This enables pupils to develop a good understanding of safe practices and to appreciate the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise. Links with outside agencies provide good support for pupils from minority ethnic groups. Although pupils in Years 5 and 6 understand and regularly use their targets for improvement, pupils in the younger year groups are not always sure about what they need to do to improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's procedures for evaluating its work are satisfactory. In the last 10 months, the school has put in place a number of key policies and systems to improve pupils' learning. These have brought about greater consistency, for example, in the teaching of mathematical language and in the way staff track pupils' progress. Better tracking is helping to identify more clearly the correct priorities for improvement. This enables the governors to be in a much stronger position to raise questions about the school's performance and helps the school to set suitably challenging targets. Senior managers and subject leaders do not check sufficiently rigorously if teachers are using the strategies introduced to improve pupils' learning. This means that sometimes these mechanisms are not as successful as they should be and that the school does not identify soon enough any differences in the quality of teaching. This allows inconsistencies to persist in pupils' learning and slows the rate of progress in some year groups.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

23 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Church Hill Church of England Junior School, Thurmaston, LE4 8DE

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing all the different things you are doing. The people in charge and your teachers do a satisfactory job. This is helping you to make satisfactory progress and to attain average standards by the time you leave school.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school.

- You make good progress in science and attain above average standards by Year 6.
- You know how to keep safe and you are good at looking out for yourselves and others.
- You are friendly and polite and this helps you to get on well together.
- You make good use of the many exciting clubs you have outside normal lessons.
- Your teachers take good care of you.
- You like school and your attendance is good.

To improve the school still further, we have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on four things:

- Give you more stimulating chances to develop your writing across subjects so that you can do even better in your work.
- Make sure that teachers use information about how well you are doing to plan work that helps all of you do your very best.
- Make sure you know how you can improve your work further.
- Make sure that the plans to help you improve are really working well and that all teachers use these plans effectively to help you with your learning.

You can all help by working hard and behaving well.

With best wishes for the future

Fran Gillam Lead Inspector

Annex B



23 November 2007

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Fran Gillam
Lead Inspector