

Charter Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126292
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315478
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Paddock
Headteacher	David Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2002
School address	Wood Lane Chippenham SN15 3EA
Telephone number	01249 447223
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Introduction

Three Additional Inspectors carried out this inspection.

Description of the school

The number of pupils attending this averaged-sized school is falling significantly, in line with trends in population in the area. There are fewer pupils in the younger year-groups than the older ones and fewer classes than in recent years. Around half the pupils are taught in classes with two year-groups. Pupils come from a mix of socio-economic circumstances in the suburban area surrounding the school and their attainment on entry is broadly similar to that usually found, although there are relatively few above expected levels. Whilst the proportion with learning difficulties is only a little above average, with more in some year groups than others, there are more pupils with a statement of special educational need than usual in a school of this size. The school has a centre for ten pupils in Years 1 to 6 with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). These pupils come from a wide area of the local authority. A large new extension to the original modern building was opened recently. This accommodates the ASD centre and three classes, and replaces a series of mobile classrooms. There have been frequent changes of personnel within the leadership team and these are ongoing, with several leaders in 'acting-up' roles.

In 2006, the school had its Investors in People award renewed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This satisfactory school is recovering well after several years of decline and standards are now improving. The most important factor in this recovery has been the outstanding leadership of the headteacher who took over the school at a time of turbulence. The recent improvements and the headteacher's role in these are recognised by many parents, one of whom commented, 'He has improved the school in an extremely positive way', and another wrote, 'I feel the school is working very hard as a whole to implement the improvements.' The headteacher has established effective ways of checking the performance of the school. The rigorous procedures used have led to accurate judgements and clarity about precisely what needs to be done to improve. This has led to substantial improvements over the last year and the school clearly has the capacity and motivation to build on these improvements. After several years of decline, standards are improving and are broadly average, being higher in mathematics and weaker in English. In many parts of the school, standards in writing are lower than in other subjects and pupils, particularly the boys, find it hard to apply the skills taught in literacy lessons when writing for a purpose in other situations. Recent improvements in pupils' progress have led to satisfactory achievement after several years when achievement was inadequate. Nevertheless, some pupils are still in the process of catching up following earlier periods of slow progress. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress.

The quality of teaching and learning are improving and in some classes they are good, a view shared by many parents. However, continuing inconsistencies, even between parallel classes, mean that teaching and learning are only satisfactory. In some lessons, teachers do not match activities closely enough to pupils' diverse needs and in others, the pace is too slow. Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to assess their own learning, or to develop the skills to think and talk about how they can improve. Within the good care, guidance and support for pupils, there are elements of outstanding care and support for all, including the most vulnerable in the ASD centre and throughout the school. This reflects the commitment of all staff and contributes to the pupils' good personal development and well-being, which is a continuing strength. The good quality accommodation and facilities and the many imaginative and worthwhile experiences in lessons and during special events combine to produce a good curriculum.

Leadership and management remain satisfactory rather than good although there are some outstanding elements in the leadership of the headteacher, and other leaders demonstrate their professional commitment. The headteacher has established an exceptionally clear vision for the school and good support to help colleagues take on key leadership roles. However, frequent and ongoing changes of senior staff, including temporary appointments, have led to some uncertainties and limited the rate of progress in implementing some development priorities, such as to improve the quality of teaching.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage, including teaching and the curriculum, is satisfactory. Children make at least satisfactory progress during the year, and some achieve well. Good systems for introducing the children to school enable them to settle quickly. By the end of the year, most children attain standards that are in line with national expectations, except in writing, which is less developed, but few exceed these expectations. Effective systems for observing

and recording children's learning are used to monitor their progress. Interesting activities, such as tasting fruit, capture their interest. Frequent use is made of the outdoor areas, although these are not used to their full potential. There are relatively few opportunities for the children to learn independently, with most activities being too closely directed by an adult.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in writing, by helping pupils, particularly the boys, to make better use of skills learnt in literacy sessions, when writing for a purpose in English and other subjects
- ensure there is a good pace in all lessons and teachers match work more closely to their pupils' diverse needs
- involve pupils more in assessing their own learning, thinking about ways they might improve and what they need to do next
- within the context of frequent staff changes in the leadership team, review the structures in place to enable all senior staff to fulfil their strategic roles.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Some pupils are making good progress after a period when many of them did not make enough. Others have yet to catch up to their full potential. Most pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and respond well to the additional support they receive. Many pupils make slower progress in their writing than in other subjects; this is particularly the case for boys in a few classes. Standards are broadly average, having recovered significantly from being below average. In national tests in the summer of 2007, pupils in Year 6 attained above average standards in mathematics and average standards in English and science. Following a focus on talking about their calculation strategies, they exceeded their targets for mathematics. Pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 are on track to meet their challenging targets, but standards in Year 6 are not as high as last year because a significant proportion of these pupils have learning difficulties. Work in pupils' books shows sound progress is being made this term.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with particular strengths in the social and moral aspects. Pupils behave well. This is a reflection of positive relationships and the consistent and skilful way staff manage those few pupils with challenging behaviour. Pupils feel safe and know how to care for themselves. There is little bullying, and pupils say that any incidents are dealt with effectively. Pupils enjoy school and like all the new facilities, such as the all-weather games pitch. Attendance is good. Pupils play well together and are aware of the importance of a healthy diet and being active, and they cheered when told in assembly about the resumption of 'huff and puff' at lunchtimes. Many pupils are keenly involved in helping run the school as councillors, prefects or monitors. They have many opportunities to contribute to the wider community, running stalls and raising money when the school has fundraising events. This contributes well to their sound preparation for the next stage of education and adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there are good elements of teaching and learning developing across the school, the quality of lessons remains inconsistent, even in sessions planned for parallel classes. Teachers plan interesting activities that capture the imagination of pupils, for example setting up a mini-beach with real water, waves and sand in a geography lesson on coastlines, or producing a multimedia presentation following a class visit. Teachers create a purposeful learning atmosphere. The well-qualified teaching assistants contribute strongly to the learning, especially of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the ASD centre and throughout the school.

In some lessons, the pace is too slow. Pupils spend too long being inactive. In other lessons, including where there are classes with two-year groups, teachers do not make the best use of the assessment information to help guide their planning. As a result, work set does not always match pupils' needs precisely enough. In a few lessons, pupils are encouraged to think about their learning and how they can improve but many pupils find it hard to explain what it is they are learning or what they need to practise to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum is enriched well by a wide range of additional activities such as the creative arts week, clubs, visits such as the recent one to Clevedon, and valuable residential experiences in Years 4 and 6. A clear long-term framework helps teachers to identify key questions and make connections between subjects, but not all teachers use this to the best advantage when planning individual lessons. The personal, social and emotional curriculum is a high priority and contributes well to pupils' effective personal development. Most teachers make good use of the excellent accommodation. The ASD centre provides good quality facilities and enables staff to adapt the curriculum well to the needs of each pupil. Pupils have good access to computers and use technology well across other subjects although they have little experience of working with databases or robotic systems.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Exceptionally effective and sensitive systems for monitoring pupils' emotional and behavioural well-being enable the school to deploy staff very effectively in response to specific needs. An example of this is the twice-daily counselling sessions by teaching assistants to support those pupils experiencing problems. There are extensive links with partners, including parents, through such things as the family learning days, about which several parents commented very positively. Other links include learning networks with other schools that have ASD centres and effective links with external agencies. These help the school to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils very well. Academic guidance for pupils has improved. There is good use of performance data to set them long-term targets, but pupils do not feel fully involved in the process of setting short-term targets. All the national procedures designed to safeguard pupils are implemented rigorously.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are improving. The headteacher provides an excellent role model. He quickly assessed the actions needed to reverse the decline in standards and successfully created a sense of purpose and shared commitment to school improvement. He has established clear systems for monitoring pupils' progress and setting challenging targets for pupils in all year groups. These are just part of the comprehensive and robust systems for monitoring the performance of the school that have been a significant factor in reversing the previously downward trend in achievement. Other leaders are keen to fulfil their roles and have contributed to the improvements. However, the lack of continuity caused by frequent and often temporary changes of staff has meant that the leadership team has not yet raised the overall quality of teaching sufficiently to promote consistently good achievement. New, and mainly temporary, leaders have needed time to assess the implications of their new roles and gain confidence to fulfil them, and this has limited the implementation and impact of some new developments. These uncertainties are being largely resolved and this is strengthening the school's capacity to improve. The ASD centre meets the needs of its pupils well but its leadership is not linked clearly into the overall leadership team. Governors are well informed about the school, by the headteacher and through their own monitoring systems. They are involved fully in key decision-making and do a good job of holding the school to account.

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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	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	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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	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?	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	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

12 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Charter Primary School, Chippenham, SN15 3EA

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing some of your work. Yours is a satisfactory school in which some important things are improving quickly. There are several things that are good but also some that need to improve. Here are some of the highlights:

- You try hard in lessons and are now making more progress in your work than you did in the past. Many of you do better in numeracy than you do in literacy.
- You behave well and lots of you take on important jobs around the school.
- You have an excellent school building and lots of extra spaces and facilities indoors and out. You help to look after them and the teachers use them well to provide you with lots of interesting things to do and learn about.
- Everyone who works at the school takes good care of you. When you are worried or have a problem the school always finds someone to help you.
- Your parents are pleased with all the improvements going on in the school. We agree with them about that and the way they value what your headteacher is doing to improve the school. All the staff are supporting him.

Even though the school is improving rapidly, we have suggested four things that we would like the headteacher, staff and governors to work at together to make it even better. They are:

- help you to use all the skills you learn in literacy lessons when you are producing a longer piece of writing in other lessons and subjects
- ensure teachers always give you work which is neither too hard nor too easy and that you do not spend too long on any one activity
- find ways of helping you to assess what you have learnt, and provide more times for you to talk with staff about how you might improve and what would be helpful targets for you to aim at
- think of more ways of helping staff leaders do their jobs, especially those who have recently taken on new responsibilities.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at Charter School and help the staff as they work hard to make it a great place.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector