

Christ Church School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100029
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	323216
Inspection date	19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Storey HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	230
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Dowell
Headteacher	Ms Paula Aitcheson-Walker
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Redhill Street London NW1 4BD
Telephone number	020 7387 7881
Fax number	020 7388 3646

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following:

- the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being
- the progress that pupils make and the standards that they reach, particularly in mathematics
- the effectiveness of leadership and management
- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The inspectors visited classrooms, looked at pupils' work, attended an assembly, met groups of pupils, held discussions with the headteacher, with the chair of governors and other staff, and looked at a range of documents and at the questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Christ Church is a slightly smaller than average school, serving an inner-city area. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made through the school's 26-place Nursery, which children attend on a full-time basis, and the Reception class. Children join the Nursery in September and January, as the older children move into the Reception class. The large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. One in five pupils have Bangladeshi heritage; the other main groups are Black African or pupils from a White background other than British. Almost two thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language. There are 25 languages spoken in the school, the most common being Bengali, Arabic and Polish. In total, 41 pupils are at an early stage of learning English; about half of these are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Over a quarter of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally; most commonly these pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Christ Church is a good school, which successfully blends its Christian values with those of its multicultural, multi-faith community to achieve its aim of 'caring for each other and learning together'. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at Christ Church; both they and their parents were keen to tell inspectors how good they think the school is, with 'fun' being a word frequently used to describe their experience!

Pastoral care is strong. Pupils follow the staff's lead in being polite, friendly and welcoming. They work and play together harmoniously regardless of background, develop a good sense of right and wrong, and learn to respect each other's faiths and beliefs. Pupils rise to the expectation that they will behave well and act responsibly. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is outstanding, and the oldest pupils take great pride in caring for the younger ones. Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe is excellent, and almost without exception parents are rightly confident that their children are safe and well cared for. Pupils have a keen awareness of the need to live a healthy lifestyle, understanding the need to eat healthily and drink plenty of water, and the benefits of exercise. This has been recognised by the Healthy School and Sportsmark awards.

A combination of pupils' very positive attitudes to their work, predominantly good teaching, and a range of additional support or challenge, ensures that achievement is good and that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of learning and future life. Each class of pupils has different starting points, but as a rule they join the school with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and language. They make satisfactory progress in their early years at the school, but still move to Year 1 with below average skills. At this point, their skills in calculating are notably lower than other aspects of their mathematical development. Standards at the end of Year 2 have fluctuated since the last inspection, in part due to differences between the groups of pupils, but also because there have been a number of changes of teachers. Greater stability of staffing, and a whole-school focus on developing teaching and learning in English, has led to improvements in 2008. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age in reading and writing was higher than that found nationally. However, standards fell in mathematics.

The rate of progress that pupils make accelerates as they move through the school. Overall, there has been a steady improvement in standards at the end of Year 6 since the last inspection, particularly in English and in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. In 2008, pupils had made outstanding progress between the end of Year 2 and by the time they reached the end of Year 6. Pupils' standards were higher than those found nationally in all three subjects. However, although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age in mathematics was higher than that found nationally, there has been an overall gradual decline over recent years, in numbers of pupils achieving these standards. The school's own tracking indicates that standards at the end of Year 6 will not be as high in 2009; nevertheless, these pupils have made good progress from lower starting points. Importantly, all groups, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those speaking English as an additional language, make good progress, because their needs are clearly identified and good support put in place. Compared with the national picture, Bangladeshi pupils do particularly well.

The curriculum is broad; provision for physical education has improved since the last inspection, and good use is made of links in the local area and visits further afield to enrich pupils' learning. Improvements in writing have been supported by well-planned opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in other subjects, and the use of individual targets to help them understand how to improve. The school has already identified the need to introduce targets in mathematics, and for pupils to have more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and solve problems.

The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have maintained the calm sense of determination and very high expectations seen at the last inspection. There is no sense of complacency, and the school has continued to move forward, despite some major challenges regarding the stability of staffing. Accurate and honest self-evaluation ensures that senior leaders and governors have a clear picture of what is successful and where improvements are needed, and this leads to determined and decisive actions. A good example is the success with which the need to review practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been tackled. Increasingly, middle leaders are involved in action planning and review, although the school has identified the need to develop their skills in monitoring and developing practice so that they can work more closely alongside senior leaders.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Each child, with their parents, has the opportunity to meet their key worker either at home or in school before they start, so that they can all get to know each other and form good relationships. Staff in the Nursery build on this through the daily contact they have when parents bring their child into the classroom. As a result, children settle quickly, get used to routines and become confident, happy learners.

The way in which children learn in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been reviewed, prompted by more accurate assessments showing that children were not developing the skills expected for their age. There are currently temporary arrangements in place for leading and managing the Early Years Foundation Stage, which do not constitute a long-term solution, but these are proving effective in making changes to the provision. The outside area has been transformed, so that children can experience a range of activities both indoors and outdoors across all the areas of learning. Activities are less teacher-led or directed than they were, with more opportunities for children to choose from a selection of activities and develop their skills to work either independently or with other children. Regular observations have been introduced to assess what the children can do, and are being used to plan the next steps in learning. Children are still leaving Reception with skills below those expected for their age, but the school's own assessments and observations during the inspection indicate that there are already signs of improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage further, to ensure that pupils get a good start to their education.
- Raise standards in mathematics across the school.

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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?	2
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	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

05 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christ Church School, London, NW1 4BD

It was lovely to meet you when we came to visit your school. Thank you very much to all of you who spoke to us in lessons, around the school, in the playground, and in the special meetings we had.

We were very impressed with how polite and welcoming you all were, and how many of you were keen to talk to us about your school! We know that you really enjoy being at Christ Church, and you will be pleased to know that we agree with you that it is a good school. Your behaviour is excellent; you have very good attitudes to your learning and get on well with each other in lessons and on the playground. Good teaching helps you all to achieve well.

I know that those of you we spoke to found it difficult to think of ways that your school could improve, but we do think there are some things it needs to do. We have asked your headteacher and others to build on the improvements they have started in the Nursery and Reception classes, so that all children get a good start to their education. We have also asked them to raise standards in mathematics across all ages.

I hope you will help in the continuing success of your school by being as well behaved and enthusiastic about learning as you were when we were there.

Yours faithfully

Alison Storey

Her Majesty's Inspector