

Chislehurst (St Nicholas) CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101649
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	323498
Inspection date	26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	217
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	Mrs Vicky Cliff
Headteacher	Mr John Paddington
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Road The Common Chislehurst BR7 5PQ
Telephone number	020 8467 2993
Fax number	020 8467 2993

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- Are the most able children sufficiently challenged in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in their writing, mathematical and creative development?
- How well is the school improving the teaching and learning of writing?
- Why do pupils reach very high standards in mathematics overall?
- Is the support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities effective enough to ensure that they achieve as well as possible?

The inspectors gained evidence from lessons and from the school's own evaluations of its work. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and representatives of the governing body. A range of documentation was evaluated. Samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science were scrutinised and the views of parents were gathered from questionnaires. Pupils were observed during playtimes. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own self-evaluations were not justified. These have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

This is an oversubscribed school of average size. The school is situated on Chislehurst Common in several buildings, most of which are Victorian. The accommodation is very cramped and was never originally intended to educate over 200 pupils. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, which is made up of one Reception class. Pupils use the adjoining Common land, including one area known as 'The Pit' for sports and playtime activities.

The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. Only a small proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Where pupils do have particular difficulties, these mostly relate to behaviour, dyslexia or moderate learning difficulty.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chislehurst (St Nicholas) is a good school. Pupils' personal development and their pastoral care are outstanding. This is evident in pupils' immense enjoyment of almost all aspects of school life. One pupil's words sum up the views of many when saying, 'I'm so happy here'. The school has an excellent family atmosphere and parents have great confidence in the school. They commented about the way that staff are really helpful and kind and as one said, 'Children are known personally and individually'. There is a very high regard for Christian values and pupils show great respect for different cultures and faiths. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Inspectors agree with governors when they said, 'Pupils develop into very well-rounded, confident individuals'. From pupils' higher than average starting points, and considering pupils' often considerable capabilities, their achievement is good. Pupils do especially well in English and mathematics, but, their achievement in science could be higher still.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher work well together, and with all other staff, and there is an outstanding sense of teamwork among dedicated staff and governors. As a result of careful evaluations, leaders know the strengths and areas for development in the school and there is a good capacity to develop further. Following a dip in standards in 2008, current pupils are securely on track to reach very high levels of attainment in 2009. This continues the trend for exceptionally high standards since 2005 by the end of Years 2 and 6.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is checked regularly by leaders when they sample pupils' work and evaluate lesson plans, although there is not enough monitoring of lessons, especially in science and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Some teaching in English and mathematics is outstanding, and this contributes greatly to the very high standards reached in these subjects. The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties has been strengthened in the last three years. As a result, pupils are quickly identified for additional support and make good overall progress. The school employs additional help for pupils who have dyslexia and there are close links with external agencies for pupils who have behavioural difficulties.

Leaders have put effective strategies in place to improve the teaching of writing. The 'Super Write' activities are helping pupils to become very enthusiastic writers. As one pupil said, 'It's more challenging and really good'. Pupils spoke about being able to develop 'free thinking'; this was clearly evident in outstanding and highly moving poetry work in Year 6. Staff are currently working successfully to give pupils even more high-quality guidance about how to revisit, extend and improve their work. In mathematics, pupils do really well because they engage in a very wide variety of real-life and challenging problem-solving activities. Teachers skilfully help pupils to see the patterns within mathematics, which speeds up their understanding and skills, and pupils have very good opportunities to explain how they solve problems.

The headteacher agrees that the teaching and learning of science is an area for improvement, as pupils' independent thinking is not as well developed in this subject as it is in English and mathematics. Currently, pupils do not do enough scientific investigation work. As one pupil put it, 'We need a bit more interesting science', while another said, 'We need to get down deeper into science'. This is an important area for development in helping higher-attaining pupils, in particular, to achieve as well as they can. Pupils noted that they would like to use information and communication technology (ICT) more; for example, digital microscopes. There is an overuse of worksheets, which prevent pupils from expanding their knowledge and skills.

The use of specialist staff, in sports for example, helps pupils to be fit, enthusiastic and skilled. The range of clubs is excellent and pupils value these greatly and, overall, the curriculum makes an impressive contribution to pupils' personal development and very high standards in English and mathematics. Nonetheless, there is more to do to develop investigative skills in science to help pupils to have the best possible basis for their future economic well-being. The curriculum helps pupils to know how to be safe in the world and inspires them to make an excellent contribution to the community. Pupils' musical work is of a very high standard as evident in their performance of 'Walking in the Air'. Pupils are very active in raising funds for charities and their enterprise skills are very good.

A few parents noted some concern about outside safety when pupils play in 'The Pit'. Parents can be assured that the school has carried out a thorough risk assessment in conjunction with the police. There is a clear policy for safety and the school regularly reviews this to ensure that daily supervision is consistently rigorous.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection, reflecting good and clear leadership. There has been a radical overhaul in the planning, organisation and resources offered since the last inspection. Children now have far more opportunities to learn through play and investigation and enjoy the opportunities provided to choose activities for themselves, as well as engaging in focused activities with adults. The children are delightful, enthusiastic and very keen to learn. The behaviour of most is excellent and enhanced by the warm and caring relationships among staff and children. The care provided is good and the partnership with parents is well established. Parents say such things as, 'The start of our child's education has been a positive experience, and there is a lovely ethos'.

From children's often higher than expected starting points, they make satisfactory progress. The improving arrangements for assessing children's progress demonstrate good leadership and are helping standards to rise. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, an increasing proportion of children exceed the goals expected, which is important considering their capabilities. This is most evident in their social skills, in their speaking, knowledge of letters and sounds, and in their ability to read. There has been a focus on improving the challenges for the most able children. As a result, more are reaching the higher levels expected, although this is not consistent in all areas of learning. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but sometimes adults miss the opportunity to broaden and extend children's learning. This is especially evident in writing, mathematical problem-solving and in creative development. The learning environment is well organised, although it is very cramped and opportunities for outside learning are underdeveloped. Outside learning is hampered by the considerable constraints of the buildings. These pose a major obstacle to providing space for children to flow freely from their class to outside activities throughout the day. Children have to share a very small quad area with the rest of the school, which is far from ideal. While there is a very small decked area, which is directly attached to their classroom, the decked area is not covered for 'all weather' activities. Nonetheless, staff work hard to provide different outside activities within the constraints.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given greater challenges in writing, mathematical problem-solving and creative development.

- Increase scientific investigation activities so that pupils can explore things in greater depth.

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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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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**

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chislehurst (St Nicholas) CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, Chislehurst, BR7 5PQ

You may remember that two inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for being so welcoming. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and can quite see why you enjoy being at your school. You go to a good school.

These are the things that we especially like.

- You make good progress and the standard of your work is very high by the time that you leave, especially in English and mathematics.
- Your teachers are very dedicated and want to do the best for you.
- You are a credit to your school and yourselves, especially in the way that you behave and help each other and in your respect for different people.
- The adults provide many extra clubs and activities; this makes learning fun and helps you to learn a wide range of new things and develop your fitness.
- Well done for doing so many things in your local community. We especially enjoyed your singing and instrumental playing in assembly.
- The poetry work in Year 6 is stunningly good, congratulations!

Your headteacher and other adults are working hard to make the school outstanding in the future. We know that the school is very cramped and this is not ideal. In particular, we have asked them to work on the following things.

- Make sure that the children in the Reception class, especially the ones who find learning easy, do more challenging things in writing, mathematics and in their art, musical and other creative activities.
- As you said, you 'need to get down deeper into science' and we agree. So we have asked the adults to give you more challenges when you do experiments. This will mean that you will use fewer worksheets, have a great deal of fun and hopefully get to use things like digital microscopes! This will help you to understand more complicated scientific things.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector