

Christ Church, Church of England Junior School, Downend

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109165
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	324915
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Mo Roberts HMI

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 (total)	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Robbins
Headteacher	Alex Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2006
School address	Pendennis Road Downend South Glos BS16 5JJ
Telephone number	01454 866516
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large junior school on the outskirts of Bristol, serving both private and social housing on either side of the South Gloucestershire and Bristol City boundary. Pupils are mostly of White British heritage although there is now an increased number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds in the school. No children speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. More pupils are eligible for free school meals than at the time of the last inspection. Recently some classrooms have been rebuilt, making them spacious and self-contained. The school has Healthy School status and it received the South Gloucestershire Award for Sports in 20007. The school has achieved Eco Silver School status and is working towards the highest award; Green Flag. The school has submitted its work for a Silver Arts Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with improving standards. Performance in English is particularly strong, with especially good results in the subject in 2008. The curriculum has been adapted well to include practical activities such as keeping chickens and gardening, which interest pupils in a wide variety of learning related to environmental issues. After-class activities are also stimulating. A high number of pupils take up sport at the various levels offered. Because of these approaches, pupils enjoy school and are justifiably proud of what they achieve. Their knowledge and understanding of how to keep fit and healthy are excellent and they make good progress in their personal development. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Almost without exception, they work hard and achieve well in relation to their starting points. They are enthusiastic about learning French and the high quality of this work enhances the rounded experience pupils receive at the school.

Teaching is good. Teachers' raised expectations have had a strong impact on raising standards. Well paced lessons hold pupils' attention, and clear groupings ensure that all pupils have work that matches their individual needs well. Good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants helps pupils of all abilities to do their best. The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. The carefully devised support given to pupils with any additional difficulties successfully develops their confidence and self-esteem.

The school uses effective ways to assess pupils' learning, including involving pupils in evaluating their own progress. The tracking of pupils' progress and the subsequent targets set for their next steps in English and mathematics have a good impact. The monitoring of science has begun to identify the gaps where additional challenge is required so more pupils reach the higher level by Year 6.

The school is led and managed well. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, and the new staff team has settled well and is productive. Effective monitoring has ensured that the quality of teaching and learning is more consistently good. The strong commitment of the whole staff team and the improvements in the standards pupils reach demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. Pupils currently have some opportunities to be involved in the running of the school and contribute to the local community, but have few opportunities further afield. The school has recognised this, and a three-year plan is in place to extend the links with the wider community and the city. The school is increasingly working well with the infant school, for example, regarding pupils' progress in learning letter sounds. This ensures better continuity of learning as pupils move between the schools. Governors offer the school strong support; the chairperson is fully involved in strategic development and in challenging the school to improve. The majority of parents who replied to the questionnaire speak highly of the school's work, and the governors are already taking suitable action to address one or two matters that were raised. The newsletter and the school's website offer detailed and timely information about the school's work. Parents are strong partners with the school and are now more involved in their children's learning. All issues raised at the last inspection have been successfully resolved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the science programme to include more challenges for those who learn quickly in all year groups, so that more pupils achieve rapidly and reach the higher level in Year 6 tests.

- Embed the well devised programme for enhancing community cohesion, ensuring that pupils have further opportunities to take responsibilities in the school and to visit and participate in the wider Bristol community.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are considerably higher than at the time of the last inspection. In English, standards have risen the most, and pupils are clearly fulfilling their potential at all levels. The quality of writing is much improved. Standards in mathematics have been broadly average for the local authority, but there is good focused work in hand to ensure that those who might be able to reach the higher levels get good challenges to help them strive to do so. While steady progress is made in science and pupils reach the general level expected for their age, there is not enough consistent challenge to ensure that all pupils who learn quickly can reach the higher levels. Overall, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. This is evident from the school's detailed tracking; it is also clear in pupils' books and from discussions with them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do as well as others in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils demonstrate empathy with each other and have a good awareness of the difference between right and wrong. They respond positively, contribute to spiritual presentations, and appreciate the guidance given in the school's assemblies. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They help in the school and are involved in the local community but they have few opportunities to contribute to activities in Bristol or at a national level. There are plans to host pupils from Chernobyl in the summer term to help pupils develop further understanding about how global and environmental issues can impact on humanity. Attitudes to less structured periods of the school day such as break and lunchtimes are good, with pupils responding well to school strategies to support cordial and respectful behaviour. The school has undertaken activities to combat bullying; pupils are aware of how to respond to it. They say incidents are rare and the response from the school, when necessary, is prompt and helpful. The vast majority of pupils are punctual and attendance rates have marginally improved since the last inspection. Attendance is now good. It is evident from the school's extensive consultation with pupils that they enjoy school and their lessons. Pupils report that they feel strongly supported by adults. The school council has some opportunities to contribute to school decisions, but these are limited and do not include greater responsibilities like controlling a related budget. Citizenship develops well as pupils progress through the school, which ensures that they are well prepared for both their economic well-being and the next stage of their education. Their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are good and they use them for a wide variety of purposes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Almost all teachers use questioning consistently well to extend pupils' thinking skills. Pupils' speaking and listening skills improve because adults set good examples for them to follow and

give good opportunities for pupils to talk with a purpose in lessons. Discussions between pupils in the ICT suite, for example, were very purposeful and productive as pupils helped each other. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Teachers set clear expectations for work and behaviour in the classroom. As a result, pupils develop confidence and are keen to work, even when they find some work hard. Well deployed teaching assistants give good support to carefully identified groups and individual pupils. Systems for gathering information about pupils' performance and tracking their progress are proving effective in helping teachers to understand where pupils could improve further. Teachers do not consistently make enough use of this information to plan work for those who learn quickly in science.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Teachers carefully plan the curriculum together to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils, including those in the mixed-age class. They are experimenting with exciting ways to link subjects together, and the topic on the world since 1945 is a good example of this work. Because of these links, pupils find learning interesting and use their literacy skills well across the curriculum. There has been a very strong emphasis on literacy and this has helped raise standards. The provision for the development of key skills in ICT has developed well. It continues to be a focus for school improvement with the pending introduction of additional mobile equipment. The interactive whiteboards help teachers bring learning to life. A good range of visits, visitors, after-school activities as well as specialist focus weeks significantly enrich the curriculum. The library provision is a strong feature that supports the curriculum well. The school has applied for an Arts Mark award and it supports pupils effectively in learning a range of artistic techniques. Just occasionally in the mixed-topic lessons, the specific learning intended is not quite clear enough. Singing, often associated with the church, and the orchestra are further strengths of the provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school complies with all guidelines for safeguarding children. Risk assessments are in place. Pupils and almost all parents agree that the school deals with any bullying swiftly and sensitively. The good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities often involves creative ideas and shows genuine care and consideration for the pupils. For example, some younger pupils meeting to learn letter sounds have named themselves 'the rise and shine group'; this helped them remember it is an early morning activity and that they are confident they will do well. There are effective links with external support agencies where appropriate, and the good individual tracking and the range of carefully selected interventions lead to these pupils making good progress. All learners benefit from clear individual targets. These give them helpful guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. Marking reinforces this, although not entirely consistently in all classes. Reports to parents are thorough and set out clearly what pupils' next steps should be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a strong sense of purpose and looks for creative solutions to issues. A devolved management structure gives the deputy and senior staff key responsibilities across

the school. They are making good progress in leading significant developments, such as the introduction of the new technology equipment and the drive for higher standards in mathematics. Many subject leaders are new to their role; they are working effectively to check provision and standards across the school in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and their monitoring of the quality of teaching in other subjects is developing appropriately. Resources, including the lovely new classrooms, are used well. The school gives good value for money. Governance is good. All statutory requirements are met and the governors are giving due attention to further developing the community cohesion agenda. Governors get good timely information to help them hold the school accountable. They are fully involved in strategic planning and worked successfully to help the school with the staffing changes. The school sets challenging academic targets and is increasingly meeting them. Staff have a good sense of shared purpose and high aspirations for the future development of 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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	3
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?	3
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

30 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christ Church, Church of England Junior School, Bristol BS16 5JJ

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us to your school for the recent inspection. It was good to speak to so many of you and you gave us lots of helpful information. Special thanks go to those who showed me all their ICT work and those who discussed the school council with my colleague. This letter is to tell you what we found out.

Lots of you and your parents told us how much you enjoy school and that you go to a good school and we agree. Your headteacher and staff work hard to make your school a safe and exciting place to be. We were very pleased to see how hard you work in lessons and how well you behave. Because of this, you are learning well and your work is of a better standard than when inspectors last visited the school. It is very pleasing to see that your writing has improved. You and your teachers have worked hard to make this happen. Well done, and please keep it up!

Your teachers teach well and give you work that has just the right level of difficulty. They and the teaching assistants make sure that if you need extra help, you get it. They are now working to help you improve in mathematics so more of you reach the higher levels by Year 6. I have also asked them to make sure that you get enough tough challenges in science to help you think deeply, so those of you who learn easily can get the higher levels. The other thing I asked them to do was to make sure you have plenty of chances to organise more things for yourselves and to be further involved in more Bristol and national activities.

I know how good you are at thinking about environmental issues. You look after your school chickens well and are growing up to be sensible and responsible young people. Thank you for the eggs. By the way, I think your vegetable patch will soon need digging over ready for the spring. I also liked the way you cooperate and help each other, which makes your school a very nice place to be for everyone, including visitors like me. I want to end by congratulating you on your excellent knowledge on keeping fit and healthy; I was delighted to see how enthusiastically you are learning to play hockey and to try new movements in your gym club.

Best wishes for the future from Mo Roberts Her Majesty's Inspector