

Chestnut Lane School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110294
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325128
Inspection date	6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	199
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 David Begley
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Plimsaul
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	105 Chestnut Lane Amersham HP6 6EF
Telephone number	01494 727 415
Fax number	01494 725 969

Age group	4–7
Inspection date	6 May 2009
Inspection number	325128

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the impact of the curriculum and care, guidance and support on the well-being and progress of different groups of pupils. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' test results; observation of lessons and pupils' work; parents' questionnaires; and discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. 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 assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a two-form-entry infant school serving both Amersham and Chesham Bois. Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a morning Nursery and two Reception classes. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a small minority from a range of other ethnic heritages. A very small proportion of pupils are learning English as an additional language. No pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. These mostly relate to language and communication. There is a private day nursery on the site and an independent afternoon club.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chestnut Lane School is a good school. It has strengthened the good and outstanding features noted at its previous inspection through, for example, improvements made to the Early Years Foundation Stage and the continued development of its outstanding curriculum. The school makes the most of its delightful setting to provide its pupils with a host of imaginative indoor and outdoor activities, which they enjoy immensely. These contribute to the well above average standards pupils reach, and the good progress they make from their starting points. Such developments are praised by the school's parents, who rightly recognise the quality of activities and provision which their children enjoy. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to ensure that boys reached as high standards in reading and writing as those attained by girls. The very capable leadership and management and hard-working staff have pursued this issue with imagination and determination. The results of their hard work can clearly be seen in their careful planning of activities to ensure that they appeal equally to girls and boys, and in pupils' enthusiastic attitudes to reading and writing. For example, in an outstanding session observed, pupils were highly stimulated by a mystery trail leading to a selection of eggs, and their imaginations fired by the possible creatures which might emerge. The impact of this was seen in the high-quality writing which girls and boys produced as a result. One boy wrote empathetically about the hatchlings being 'so small in a so big world', while for another the stimulus conjured up a creature which was 'blood red and as strong as a mountain'. By the end of Year 2, both girls and boys reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are well above average. The impact of the school's efforts is beginning to be reflected in the higher percentage of boys working at higher levels in reading and writing, which the school is rightly consolidating. Teaching across the school is good, and the quality of academic guidance provided to pupils has been strengthened. All pupils have individual targets in reading, writing and mathematics which are shared with them and with their parents. A strong feature of this target system is the way that it is extended for pupils who are more vulnerable, or who are experiencing difficulties with aspects of their work. Targets and associated strategies are identified, and the school provides a good level of support to help these pupils achieve well. For example, pupils who are experiencing personal and social difficulties are involved in small-group activities to support their skills in these areas, which are followed up with very able individual support to nurture these skills. This is one positive aspect of the outstanding care, guidance and support that the school now provides for its pupils. Another is the very thorough procedures which the school has in place for protecting and safeguarding its pupils. The well-informed governing body takes a lead role in rigorously monitoring these procedures, and carries out its statutory duties extremely well. Leaders and managers plan well to evaluate the impact of their actions, and so to enhance the school's good contribution to community cohesion. The school is well led and managed, and the progress that has been made over the past three years is clear evidence of the very good leadership provided by the headteacher. A few parents feel that the school could do more to accommodate their views. However, leaders and governors have worked to investigate parents' opinions and find different ways to share ideas, which have met with some success. Staff have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and use this knowledge well in their planning for the future. For example, a current focus of the school's work is to develop teachers' day-to-day assessment. This is well considered as, on occasions, the small steps that pupils need to take in lessons are not always matched to what they have previously achieved. As a result, plans are now in place to provide teachers with additional opportunities to note pupils' learning 'as it happens' as well as to extend some aspects of the

Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum into Year 1 for pupils who would benefit. Pupils relish their exciting learning opportunities, behave very well, and attend extremely regularly. These positive attitudes make the school a very happy community and one which prepares pupils very well for their futures.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children arrive with knowledge and skills that are above expectations for their age. They hugely enjoy their time in the successfully reorganised Early Years Foundation Stage, and achieve well. As a result, they enter Year 1 comfortably above expectations for their age. The indoor and outdoor environments are colourful, inviting, stimulating and fun. The wide range of activities indoors and outdoors engage children very well. This encourages them to learn independently, as well as through activities led by adults. Children's interest is very effectively sustained through songs, drama and craft activities, and their creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world are real strengths. Children are confident and articulate, as a result of the imaginative opportunities that staff provide for them to express themselves in different ways and situations. They talk with enthusiasm about lockers with secret codes that they have made through collage, and confidently address a 'theatre' audience with appropriate opening speeches. Staff now make extensive use of the outdoor areas where children spend at least half of their time. They have rightly planned to fine-tune some outdoor activities to consistently match the needs of children from across the setting. For example, activities to promote children's physical development are not always flexible enough to challenge all children to extend their control and balance. Staff promote children's health and welfare extremely well. This impacts positively on children's behaviour, which is very mature. Staff use a good range of observations to chart each child's learning. Not content with this, they are currently trialling new ways of identifying children's skills and needs as they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, in order to further enhance their already good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve the effectiveness of teaching by extending the use of day-to-day assessment to steer pupils' learning.
- Ensure that activities in the outdoor areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage are consistently well matched to children's developing skills.

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
---	----------------

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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	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?	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	1

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?	1
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	1
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	1
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

19 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chestnut Lane School, Amersham, HP6 6EF

Thank you for being so helpful when we visited you. We felt very lucky to have the chance to join in some of your exciting activities and to hear about others when we spoke to you. You, your parents and your teachers helped us find out lots of things about your school. Some of you told us that you like 'everything' about your lessons, and we were particularly impressed with all the interesting things you do and learn about, which we judged as excellent. Another thing which impressed us was how much you grow up during your time at Chestnut Lane, and how well all the adults care for you and guide you. We judged these to be outstanding too. So well done to all of you. Your headteacher and all the adults run the school well, which helps Chestnut Lane to be a good school that keeps getting better. The adults have made lots of changes to the way children in Rainbow, Yellow and Purple classes learn. These are working very well. We have asked them to carry on with these and to keep checking that all the outdoor activities are 'just right' for all the children. We have agreed with your teachers that they can help you to make even better progress by watching carefully what you do in lessons. Thank you for helping us get to know your lovely school. Yours faithfully

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector