

Chesham Bois Church of England Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110425
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	130958
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Anthony Knight
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Brown
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 October 2005
School address	128 Bois Lane Chesham Bois Amersham HP6 6DE
Telephone number	01494 726 901
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons. They also held meetings with parents and carers, governors, staff, and pupils. Groups of pupils gave presentations and showed inspectors their work on designing a new playground (Design for Real). Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence, including tracking systems used to monitor pupil's progress, the work that pupils were doing in their books, and the questionnaires completed by 68 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the use of targets and assessment to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can
- the effectiveness of middle leadership in raising achievement
- the key factors that made the school judge pupils' personal development as outstanding.

Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school. There are seven classes in the school, one of which is the Reception class that forms the Early Years Foundation Stage. Since the last inspection there has been a new headteacher, and half the staff have either retired or changed their posts. The school works in partnership with Dr Challoner's High School in the teaching of physical education and French. The school has received numerous awards, including the Buckinghamshire Swan award in 2008 for sustained high achievement at the end of Key Stage 2, the Activemark award and Investors in Families. The school site is small and there is limited space for pupils to run freely in.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

- Chesham Bois Church of England Combined School provides outstanding

education for its pupils.

- All aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage are equally good, and support every child effectively. The children progress well in their learning and development, so that the vast majority are ready to start the National Curriculum programmes of study in Year 1.
- Partnerships with other settings and outside agencies are used exceedingly well to promote good-quality education and care. Because of this, all pupils regardless of gender make good progress throughout their time in school, including those vulnerable to underachievement, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.
- Self-evaluation and planning for improvement are good, as evidenced by plans to develop an outside area for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the new vision statement. In both cases, all members of the school community have been involved in their development and implementation. Capacity for further improvement is good as shown by the way that the school sets and meets challenging targets.
- Although a good variety of activities is used in class, pupils sometimes do not have enough opportunities to learn independently.
- Pupils of all ages do not have enough opportunities throughout the school to develop their roles and responsibilities for themselves.
- Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school is fully inclusive, and makes a strong contribution within its own, local and global communities. A comparative weakness is the pupils' lack of first-hand knowledge of how children and their families from other backgrounds and heritages contribute to life in Great Britain.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to learn and act independently by ensuring that:
 - pupils take on a greater responsibility for their own learning by having a clearer understanding of their precise, individual goals and how to achieve them
 - pupils take greater ownership of their roles and responsibilities for themselves.
- Ensure that pupils have greater first-hand awareness about how children and their families from other backgrounds and heritages contribute to life in Great Britain.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

1

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, those children who start in January generally are less advanced in their skills, knowledge and understanding than those who start in September. Nevertheless, all children make good progress towards the early learning goals, and most reach them by the time they start in Year 1. The transition from the Reception class to Year 1 is carefully and sensitively managed.

To enhance early literacy skills, in Reception and Key Stage 1, staff are using a new phonics programme delivered in discrete daily sessions. In these sessions, inspectors saw pupils learn to convert a letter or letter group into sounds that are then blended together into a word. This synthetic phonics programme has improved early success in reading, writing and spelling. This is because pupils are learning to decode words more quickly and easily.

Throughout the school the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who are vulnerable to underachievement, are identified early. There are very good support systems in place to enable them to achieve as well as their peers. As with the other groups of pupils, they make good progress throughout the school and their achievement is good in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

There are some minor differences between the attainment of boys and girls, but this is not reflected in the progress and achievement that they make. Pupils in some classes are given more opportunities to learn for themselves than in others. The teachers in these classes encourage small-group work with peer assessment. These pupils act as critical friends, explaining to each other what they need to do to improve and how well they judge each other to have met the objectives of the lesson. Pupils enjoyed these activities and were far harsher critics than the teachers.

Pupils find it easy to make friends, enjoy each other's company, and show good levels of respect and tolerance for their age. Racial harmony is a significant strength of the school. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Pupils are given roles and responsibilities throughout the school. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop and extend these roles for themselves.

Attainment as measured by Year 2 and Year 6 national tests is above average. Unvalidated test results for those pupils who left Year 6 in 2008 show that all of them made at least two National Curriculum levels of progress during their Key Stage 2 years. A high proportion of them attained well above the national average, particularly at Level 5, the highest level, and achievement is outstanding.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

- In all the lessons observed, lesson objectives were clearly shared with pupils and frequently referred to during the lesson and in the plenary session. As a result, they know what they have learned and what they need to do to improve their work.
- In the vast majority of lessons, staff use interactive whiteboards to enhance pupils' learning.
- Non-teaching staff are used extremely well to support the learning of those pupils who need extra help.
- Assessment and marking of pupils' work is regular and systematic, and shows them how they can improve their work.
- The use of partners to help teach pupils French and sports is having a big impact on the standards that pupils reach in these subjects.
- Support, guidance and care, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils, are outstanding. This involves high-quality local partnerships with the pupil referral service and excellent access to child and adolescent mental health services.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels of the school strive for further improvement, and all staff work together as a unified team. The restructured leadership team has been very successful in raising standards at the same time as providing a rounded education for the children they serve. The school sets challenging targets for all aspects of its work; these are regularly met and often exceeded. This is a school that is not complacent. A good example is that the assessment results compiled by the school in January show that a good proportion of the pupils have reached, or are well on the way to making, their academic targets. Consequently, the school has increased its overall targets to drive standards even higher. However, this school is not a

hothouse. It is a school where pupils receive a rounded education.

Pupils and parents or carers are confident that there are no racist incidents in school, and that any isolated unkindness or bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively. This is because all staff in the school celebrate diversity. The systems to support and safeguard pupils are robust.

The school contribution to community cohesion across the three strands of ethnicity and culture, faith, and socio-economic status, is satisfactory overall. There are strong elements in the school's contribution to community cohesion, particularly in the school's own community and the local community. However, pupils are not sufficiently aware of how children and their families from other areas, backgrounds and heritages contribute to life in Great Britain.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

- Teachers and teaching assistants, together with other adults, support children's learning very effectively. This was clearly evident in the sessions that were observed during the inspection. Progress is good in all areas of learning, with no marked differences between them.
- The school provides an exciting environment in which to learn, and staff use a range of interesting activities and stimuli for learning. Children are active and creative learners, for example in the free choice of activities they engage in. This is palpable when they are creating imaginary characters from a variety of materials and acting out various scenarios in the role-play corner.
- The quality of planning provides very well for children's development in all areas of learning. In particular, planning is explicit in meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and of those who are most able.
- Assessment is rigorous. Observations are made on a daily basis, and this feeds into a detailed profile on each child. This enables staff to tailor and direct support and guidance where it is needed most. This is particularly good in relation to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those vulnerable to underachievement.

- There is a good range of purposeful play. However, there is no designated outside area for the Early Years Foundation Stage. While the outside is utilised as much as possible, there is no free flow between the inside and out. This restricts opportunities for creative play. However, active learning is promoted through ‘learn for real’, for example, when the children were helping to construct gardens they had designed.
- Key people in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well aware of the school’s safeguarding procedures, and take appropriate action where necessary.
- Good health and well-being is promoted very effectively through ‘Wake up and shake up’ for example, and the emphasis on a healthy diet.
- Staff have high expectations of behaviour. Children are expected to listen to their teachers and one another, and behave well, having regard to others. This results in good standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

Sixty eight parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, with some having more than one child at the school. This represents about a third of the school’s families and is an average response rate. A large majority expressed complete satisfaction with the school. They felt that the strong pastoral care was a particular strength. Many mentioned the emphasis upon developing the ‘whole child’ and believed that the school met individual needs well; inspection evidence concurred. However, a small minority expressed concern over the lack of detail given to them by the school about the progress their child was making, and considered that the school did not always provide sufficient academic challenge. Inspection evidence does not support the view that pupils are not sufficiently academically challenged. The school is in the process of using an improved method of sharing learning goals with parents and carers that will provide greater detail on an individual level.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

17 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chesham Bois Church of England
Combined School, Amersham, HP6 6DE



Thank you for your very warm welcome when we came to inspect your school. This letter is to let you know what we found out. We very much enjoyed seeing you in lessons, looking at your work, and hearing your wonderful singing. A big thank you to those of you who talked and shared with us what makes your school so outstanding!

- You all work hard, make good progress and leave school with exceedingly high standards.
- Those pupils who find learning difficult make the same good progress as other pupils. This is because of the support that the adults provide. Just as important is the help you give to each other.
- Your behaviour is good and this, along with your very positive attitudes to school and to each other, makes a real difference to how well you can learn in lessons.
- You and your parents really appreciate how all staff work hard to ensure you are well cared for and happy in school.

You have such wonderful adults who are always looking for ways to make your school an even better place to be! We have asked them to do the following three things to make your school even better.

- Give you more chances to learn things for yourself in class.
- Encourage you to take charge and develop your own ideas for the roles and responsibilities you have in school.
- Make sure that you get to understand the lives of other children, and their families, who come from different backgrounds and heritages and live in Great Britain.

I know you have a great website, so if you want to see the full report please go to ours which is at this link: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Thank you for being so polite and helpful during the visit. I hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and do your best. Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

With my very best wishes for your future. Good luck with the car race, Year 6, and with your performance at the Albert Hall choir!

Yours faithfully

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

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