

Christleton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111149
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	325301
Inspection dates	10–11 February
Reporting inspector	Mike Hoban 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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	210
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Jenkins
Headteacher	Mr Alan Brown
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Quarry Lane Christleton Chester Cheshire CH3 7AY
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and held meetings with governors, the school improvement partner and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's data and documentation, including material on pupils' progress, safeguarding, the curriculum and parental questionnaires.

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

- how well pupils were making progress in their learning
- the effectiveness of teaching and learning
- the evidence supporting the school's judgements on pupils' outcomes
- the capacity of the school to deliver further improvement.

Information about the school

Christleton is an average sized primary school serving the village of the same name. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in its Reception class. Its catchment includes socio-economically advantaged areas. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is well below the national average; and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage. The deputy headteacher has been acting as headteacher since September 2007, as the substantive headteacher is currently seconded to the local authority, and the acting headteacher was leading the school at the time of this inspection. The acting headteacher is, consequently, referred to as the headteacher in the report.

The school has received the Healthy Schools award.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Christleton provides a good education for its children, with pupils typically entering the Reception Year with skills that are average for their age, and leaving the school with levels of attainment well above national averages. The good teaching and learning and pastoral care at the school are the major contributors to this commendable achievement. The headteacher has led the school through a period of staff changes, with his leadership role determinedly focused on maintaining those high standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Other outcomes for pupils – such as their adoption of healthy lifestyles – are good. Opportunities for subject coordinators to contribute to measuring pupils' progress and setting individual targets are limited and the school's work on community cohesion beyond the Christleton area is less well developed than its actions to promote community cohesion within the locality.

The school possesses good capacity to improve. This is partly because it has dealt imaginatively with the previous inspection report's area for improvement by developing the curriculum to promote extended writing opportunities aligned to themes. High standards have also been maintained and the school's challenging and realistic targets are firmly based on its analysis of the past performance of pupil groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To develop the role of subject coordinators to encompass:
 - Peer observation of lessons in the subject they lead
 - Leadership of the development of individual target setting for all pupils in their subject areas
 - Supporting class teachers in lesson planning and assessment, to provide work more closely matched to pupils' abilities for higher attaining pupils
 - Offering advice to class teachers on more evaluative marking of books.
- To develop the school's community cohesion strategy further to take greater account of socio-economic, religious and ethnic dimensions beyond the Christleton and Cheshire areas.

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

2

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with, overall, skills which are average for their age and make good progress there. Progress is slower in Key Stage 1, and there has been a slight decline in overall standards in recent years. Although pupils' attainment in reading and writing remained above the national average, it was below average in mathematics in 2008. Inspectors found, however, that the school has since intervened successfully to improve pupils' progress. Pupils' attainment is well above average by the end of Key Stage 2 and inspectors found that pupils make good progress during that key stage. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that its challenging targets were broadly met in 2008, although a lower than average proportion of pupils attained the higher level in English. Work by pupils currently in Year 6 shows that they are on target to maintain the school's above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all make good progress in lessons, due to highly effective support from teaching assistants.

Pupils commented that they feel safe and well cared for in school. Their parents echoed this view. Behaviour is good in lessons and in the playground. Pupils' involvement in clubs after school, their knowledge of healthy eating, plus their outstanding attendance levels, signal that they adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils enjoy working with the outside community, whether it is entertaining at local events, or involvement in sports and other activities with local schools. Pupils' high attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics, their involvement in enterprise work and familiarity with information and communication technology, demonstrate that they are well placed to move on to the next stage of their education. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge is strengthened by their knowledge of the good they are doing by involvement in charitable events; their awareness of a range of faiths and cultures; and their support for younger pupils, such as the Year 6 and Reception Year buddying scheme.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2

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?	2

The quality of the school's work

The strengths of the teaching and learning at Christleton are the secure subject knowledge of teachers, good behaviour and relationships within the classroom, effective use of resources, and good deployment of teaching assistants, which supports improvement in pupils' academic and pastoral outcomes. Lessons generally demonstrate good pace and the enthusiastic engagement of pupils in group and full class activities leads to them making good progress. In the most effective lessons observed by inspectors, good planning and the careful matching of work to pupils' abilities enabled teaching to meet effectively a wide range of needs. However, this match was less apparent in a few lessons, meaning that higher achieving pupils were not sufficiently stretched. Generally, marking in books is not sufficiently evaluative to enable pupils to move on to the next level of learning.

In the recent past, assessment has not been effective in monitoring how well pupils have performed: for instance, the slower progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 in recent years. More effective tracking has now been put into place, which incorporates recording of both academic and behavioural elements of pupils' progress. Although that tracking has led to successful interventions in Key Stage 1 and in Year 3, it is planned to be developed across all classes to set targets at individual pupil level.

The curriculum's breadth is typified by the successful use of themes (such as the Ancient Greeks) to encourage extended writing. With a sound foundation in English, mathematics and science, the curriculum has been developed to enable pupils to express themselves through art and music. Sporting and creative extra-curricular activity is a strong feature of the school's provision, adding to pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum and of their time at Christleton.

Support, guidance and care is good, with parents reflecting pupils' views that they are well looked after by Christleton's staff. One example of targeted support is the work with an under-performing group of Key Stage 2 pupils. This has extended beyond academic aid to include pastoral support that has enabled those pupils to progress well both socially and academically.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has worked diligently with his staff to overcome past barriers to achievement, through targeted interventions, for instance in improving pupils' progress during Key Stage 1. However, there are insufficient opportunities for subject coordinators to enable these middle leaders to contribute to measuring pupils' progress and establish individual targets. The high attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, and the good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, signal that the school has tackled inequalities in performance. For example, interventions in Year 3 have improved pupils' progress. Safeguarding and risk assessment procedures are in place and appropriate training has been undertaken by relevant staff. Pupils commented that they have been guided by the school to recognise potential risks and to respond appropriately.

The governing body has used its professional expertise to challenge and support the headteacher, particularly given staffing changes. Parents and carers make an effective contribution to the school, beyond serving as governors: they provide support in the classroom with, for instance, reading, and this helps to improve pupils' skills and confidence. The school's own survey and the views expressed to inspectors reflect a positive picture of relationships between parents and school. Partnership with other schools, the local high school and with other agencies is strong and effective in terms of the enrichment of the curriculum and also pupils' care and support.

The school's strategy on promoting community cohesion is focused principally on its relationship with the locality. This includes participation in events such as the Harvest Festival, the village fair and working with local community groups. Christleton's work with other schools in different circumstances – such as those in urban communities – allows pupils to learn more about life in other parts of the county. Its work on global sustainability signals that pupils are learning about community life beyond Christleton. However, the national and global aspects of community cohesion are less developed than the school's involvement in work on community cohesion locally. The school has managed its resources efficiently and its internal rebuilding has resulted in good use of space. It provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
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	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start in Christleton's Early Years Foundation Stage. Most enter with skills which are broadly average for their age, with their personal and social development and knowledge and understanding of the world above expected levels, but their writing and calculation skills generally below. Good teaching and pastoral care enable children to make good progress. Regular assessments of children's progress allow teaching to reflect children's developing needs. The effective teaching of phonics and writing is paying dividends, with those aspects improving at a good pace during children's time in Reception. Children are able to contribute to the planning of their learning: for instance, a lesson exploring patterns led children on to a 'building' theme, with children enthusiastically taking on the role of house builders.

The Early Years Foundation Stage classroom is a welcoming environment and, with its strong welfare provision, leads children to comment that they feel safe and secure. Children's behaviour is very good and inspectors observed them playing together cooperatively and harmoniously. The use of outdoor provision and opportunities for children to create and explore are less well developed. Children stress the importance of healthy living: they commented that, 'fruit is good for you' and carefully washed their hands before break times. Children are able to develop their ideas through play, supported by adults who are knowledgeable about the Early Years Foundation Stage and the personal development and academic progress of individuals.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good: the leader has a clear picture of children's progress, based on regular assessments. Relationships with parents are very strong and the involvement of parental helpers enables children to relate more effectively to adults and to become more independent and self-confident.

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 school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

Seventy four replies to the inspection questionnaire were received from parents, representing 99 pupils. The vast majority of parents who replied are content with the

quality of education and care provided at Christleton. Comments included, 'The school has a committed and enthusiastic staff.' and 'The school is a friendly and caring place.' A small number of parents commented that they felt that higher achieving pupils were not stretched enough; other parents stated that they would welcome more formal parents' evenings to discuss their children's progress.

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.



12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christleton Primary School, Cheshire, CH3 7AY

You may remember that a colleague and I visited your school to see how well Christleton primary is supporting your education and your care. In this letter I set out what our main judgements are, but first of all I would begin by saying that we found Christleton to be a good school and that we enjoyed the time we spent there.

To give you some idea of what we thought were good aspects of your school, here are a few examples.

- You make good progress in school, reaching standards which are well above the national average at the end of Year 6.
- You are adopting healthy lifestyles, particularly through your involvement in the wide range of activities the school offers.
- The teaching and learning at Christleton Primary is good, enabling you to make good progress.
- The support, guidance and care at your school provide you with effective support.

We want your school to be even better, so we have made a few suggestions about how the school can improve further. The key one is that the teachers responsible for subjects (such as English) should work together with other class teachers to create individual targets for all of you. We consider that this can be achieved through a range of activities, including making sure that all lessons include a range of tasks that stretch you all. In addition, we have asked the school to broaden further your knowledge of different religious and ethnic groups beyond your area.

I really enjoyed meeting with you and talking to groups of you, as did my colleague. We both wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mike Hoban HMI
Lead inspector

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