

Cherry Grove Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111209
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	325313
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Marguerite McCloy HMI

The 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Becky Fryer
Headteacher	Mr C Marron
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 11 lessons, conducted 'learning walks' and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, checked pupils' books and the school's system for tracking pupils' progress. They examined the files of four vulnerable pupils, to see how well the school manages their provision and checks their progress. A wide range of the school's documentation was also examined, including: reports by the local authority school improvement partner; policy documents for safeguarding and other statutory requirements; documents and plans relating to the school's curriculum and teaching. In addition, inspectors scrutinised 38 parental questionnaires.

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

- whether standards of attainment are high enough and whether all groups of pupils are making satisfactory or good progress
- the quality of provision and overall effectiveness of its Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of the work of senior and middle leaders in securing improvement
- what progress the school has made in addressing the areas for improvement identified at its last inspection, which were to: raise standards and accelerate progress for all groups of learners; make better use of assessment information to set challenging targets and appropriate levels of work; ensure that the quality of teaching and learning are improved through more effective evaluation and monitoring.

Information about the school

Cherry Grove is a slightly larger than average primary school. It is situated in an area of generally above average socio-economic advantage and most pupils come from within the school's immediate area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average at around 16%. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or a statement of special educational need. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery class and two Reception classes. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Activemark awards.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Cherry Grove is a satisfactory school with a number of strengths, not least of which are good relationships and levels of care, and the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. The good curriculum is enhanced by a variety of visits, visitors and residential trips that pupils enjoy. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and appreciate the well-coordinated range of physical education and sporting activities that the school offers.

Pupils make satisfactory progress across Key Stages 1 and 2 and reach standards that are in line with the national average, taking into account variations from year to year. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, in some lessons it is good and occasionally outstanding. This is particularly the case when teachers are making effective use of information about pupils' prior attainment and progress to set them challenging targets for improvement. The leadership of assessment and target-setting has lacked rigour, so not all teachers have an equally clear understanding of how to accurately assess pupils' progress and adjust their planning accordingly. Not all pupils are aware of their targets and what they need to do to achieve them, as the quality of teachers' marking and feedback is variable.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, attend regularly and behave well. They are confident and happy to share their views, and are thus able to make a contribution to the school and local community. Most pupils have good basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). The good personal qualities they develop, including speaking and listening skills, and the ability to work both independently and within a team, help to ensure that pupils are well prepared for their future.

While leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory there are major inconsistencies in the effectiveness by which middle and senior leaders carry out their work. For example, self-evaluation is not sufficiently rigorous in analysing the performance of teachers or pupils and offers an overly optimistic view of the school's overall effectiveness. It lacks the level of detailed analysis required to identify weaknesses and effect improvement.

Conversely, effective leadership by the deputy headteacher in developing the curriculum is improving pupils' interest in their studies and is helping middle leaders to gain a better understanding of their subjects for which they are held increasingly accountable. This work is also supporting improvements in pupils' achievement and standards.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Improve leadership and management at the highest level by:
 - increasing the rigour of self-evaluation so that it is succinct and evaluative, based on clear evidence of the school's strengths and areas for development
 - establishing clear systems for the regular monitoring of teaching and learning, using the information gained from this to share good practice more widely and provide well-focused training to move more teaching to good or better
 - ensuring that governors are more actively involved in challenging underperformance and evaluating the impact of the school's policies and systems.

- Improve the quality and impact of the school's assessment and target-setting procedures by:
 - reviewing assessment and marking policies then checking that these are clearly understood and consistently applied across the school
 - improving teachers' skills in using the assessment information to inform their lesson planning so that tasks are more consistently well matched to pupils' abilities and ensure that all make good or better progress in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Evidence from lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' books show that an above average proportion of the current Year 6 are reaching or just exceeding nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their learning. The school is aware of slight differences between the performance of boys and girls in some subjects, although it is not significant. Strategies to improve boys' writing are showing signs of success.

Standards of attainment are in line with or just above national averages at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and pupils make satisfactory progress. The trend over time is variable and there was a dip in standards across the school in 2007, particularly in pupils' writing. Action has been taken to remedy this, with the impact showing in recent improvements in writing, although the school acknowledges the need to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in this aspect. In a Key Stage 2 science lesson, pupils were observed making excellent progress in their understanding of chromatography, because they were enthused by the opportunity to become 'real investigators'. Absorbed in their work and applying thinking and problem solving skills, a typical comment was 'Wow, that was cool!'

In such lessons, pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for learning is particularly evident.

Outcomes for pupils are good in all other respects. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, and feel that there is always someone to talk to if they are worried. They respect others' views and interests, and appreciate that everyone is different but equally important. The school council is active in suggesting improvements on behalf of all pupils, and appreciate the opportunity to ensure that their views are taken into account. Activities such as the gardening club and health-themed weeks contribute to pupils' understanding of how to live healthily. Some pupils (and their parents) have suggested replacing the white toast snack at break times with brown toast instead.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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

How effective is the provision?

Lessons observed across the school during the inspection were evenly balanced between good and satisfactory, with one that was outstanding. Strengths in the teaching included:

- good relationships and children's positive attitudes to learning
- the promotion of group work and independent learning skills
- teachers' generally strong subject knowledge and use of resources
- effective support by teaching assistants for pupils with additional learning needs.

All lessons contained aspects of these positive features, although teaching is not yet good or better overall because the strengths are not consistently evident and the use of assessment to inform teachers' planning is variable. Where it is good, teachers use information about pupils' attainment effectively to set clear targets for improvement, incorporating these into their marking of work and questioning of individual pupils. However, some teachers are less aware of the attainment of all groups of learners and of how to set and monitor pupils' progress towards appropriately challenging targets.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

In the best lessons, teaching is brisk and challenging, and expectations are high. Activities are well planned to match the needs of all groups of pupils. Skilled questioning and a focus on motivating pupils to investigate and solve problems promote high quality learning.

The school provides a good curriculum that is broad, balanced and promotes pupils' achievements well through a range of well-planned and imaginative activities. The school plans to review its curriculum to improve planning for cross-curricular links between subjects to enhance pupils' learning experiences further. This will also enable pupils to apply their skills in using information and communication technology across a range of topics.

The school's care, guidance and support for all pupils make a good contribution to their personal development and well-being. Provision for vulnerable pupils, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is well led and their progress is carefully checked. There are a few examples, endorsed by their parents, of individual pupils being helped to overcome potentially significant barriers to their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Variability in the skills of leaders at various levels to drive forward improvements in the school means that some of the areas for improvement raised at the last inspection are still to be fully resolved.

The deputy headteacher's good leadership of the curriculum is ensuring that subject coordinators are taking increasing responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of their subject areas. This is a factor in the increasing proportion of good or better lessons. Positive developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage have ensured that provision is good and overall effectiveness and leadership are improving. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is closely tracked by the middle leader with responsibility for this area and is helping increasing numbers to make good progress.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well and looks for gaps in the achievement of groups of pupils, with some success where there are concerted efforts across the school, for example in improving pupils' writing. Community cohesion is promoted through the curriculum, for example in European themes, and in a variety of projects in the school and its local community. There is more to do in developing pupils' global awareness and in evaluating the school's contribution to community cohesion in all three strands: religious, ethnic and socio-economic.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in line with government requirements. Leaders recognise that some aspects of the school's work lack rigour. There are suitable development plans for bringing about improvement and leaders are receptive to support and guidance from local authority advisers. However, the school's systems for self-evaluation and target-setting are not consistently informed by regular monitoring of all aspects of the school's work. The leadership of assessment is not strong enough to ensure that it makes an effective contribution to improving teaching or to higher levels of pupil achievement.

Governors satisfactorily discharge their responsibilities and are moving towards having greater involvement across the school. Link governors are beginning to look at the work of subject leaders and provide feedback to the full governing body. They are proud of the school's good reputation in the local community, its links with parents and the general 'family' ethos that is apparent in the school. However, governors are also aware of the need to challenge underperformance more effectively.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children in the Reception classes have attended nursery provision, almost half of these at Cherry Grove. When children start in the Foundation Stage their overall skills are typically in line with those expected for their age. However, there are variations from year to year and a significant number of pupils in the current Reception class entered with below average skills in, for example, their emotional development, calculations and knowledge and understanding of the world. Lesson observations and evidence presented by the school shows that most pupils are making good progress. The majority are well prepared for Year 1, having reached, or in some cases exceeded, the learning goals set for them.

With guidance from local authority advisers, the school has worked successfully to improve the provision since its last inspection, and procedures and policies meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leadership is satisfactory and improving, as the relatively new coordinator is developing the skills to monitor and evaluate the provision and plan actions to bring about further improvement.

Relationships are very good and children respond well to the secure routines that help to build their confidence. Children enjoy the well-planned indoor and outdoor learning activities, as the chosen topics engage their interest and support their personal development effectively. For example, the 'Superheroes' topic was motivating children by drawing on their own interests, particularly of the boys. From this, good opportunities for both child-initiated and adult-led activities were planned to remedy gaps in children's letter formation and writing skills. Children develop good levels of independence and cooperation. Teachers and assistants are appropriately deployed to target groups of children who may need extra support in their learning, and in the direct teaching of phonic skills in short, regular sessions. Records of children's work indicate how well they are progressing. Links with parents are very good and staff are developing further the use of children's 'learning journey' books to incorporate observations of their learning and experiences from home.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cherry Grove Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 38 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 414 parents and carers registered at the school.

Most parents and carers who made their views known to the inspection team expressed positive views of the school. Sixteen of these questionnaires had written additional comments that were positive, for example:

- the way their children are well supported and helped to settle in to the Early Years Foundation Stage
- pupils' enjoyment of school and the good quality of care they receive, which builds confidence and meets the individual needs of pupils who need extra help
- Cherry Grove is 'a happy school that welcomes children and parents'.

Nine questionnaires had written additional comments about issues of concern, for example:

- some parents and carers feel that they could be better informed about their child's progress
- whether the school was doing enough to challenge pupils who are more academically able
- apparent unfairness in sanctions applied to some pupils accused of wrongdoing, including a bullying allegation
- security of the site if a door is left open.

Inspectors found that the school provides similar levels of information about pupils' progress as other schools, although some pupils could be given clearer guidance on their targets and how to reach them. During this inspection, pupils' behaviour was good and they felt that bullying was not an issue, but that any problems reported would be looked into. Where teaching was good, in over half of lessons, the level of challenge provided for all pupils was high, although inspectors agree that this is not consistent across all year groups and all lessons. During the inspection, the safety and security of the pupils was well provided for and unauthorised access to buildings was not possible.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	8	1	1

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:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
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.

6 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cherry Grove Primary School, Chester, CH3 5EN

Thank you for making the inspection team welcome when we visited your school recently. We judged Cherry Grove to be satisfactory overall with lots of good things going on, too! For example:

- your behaviour and attendance are good and you are keen to learn and enjoy your lessons
- all the adults in school take good care of you and help you to develop useful skills such as being confident and independent learners, but also work well with others as part of a team
- you have good knowledge about how to be healthy and safe
- the school encourages you to take on responsibilities and have your views listened to, and to be involved in your school and local community
- your work in writing is improving
- the school provides a good curriculum that includes lots of visitors and after-school clubs and trips for you to enjoy
- the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, and they make good progress.

Although quite a lot of the teaching is good, we found teaching and learning to be satisfactory overall, because you make satisfactory progress in your work. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory too, but there are some aspects of this that need to be better.

To make sure the school improves to become good overall, we have asked the leaders and governors to check its work more thoroughly and challenge any aspects that should be better. This should also mean that each of you, and your parents, would know exactly how well you are doing in your work and what you need to do to make good progress towards your own challenging targets!

Good luck and best wishes for the future

Marguerite McCloy
Her Majesty's Inspector

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