

Christchurch Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113734
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	325870
Inspection date	12 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Gehane Gordelier HMI

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)	375
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	20
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Parker
Headteacher	Jane Ashenden
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Addiscombe Road Christchurch BH23 2AE
Telephone number	01202 485851
Fax number	01202 479149

Age group	4–7
Inspection date	12 May 2009
Inspection number	325870

© 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. They investigated the following issues:

- the rigour with which the progress made by different groups of pupils is tracked and used alongside assessment strategies and information, to ensure the needs and interests of all pupils are consistently well met
- the quality of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation and how these have been used to bring about improvements in the school's performance, for example, in raising standards in mathematics and reading for lower attaining pupils and in writing for lower attaining boys
- the progress made by pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Evidence was gathered from: school documentation; the analysis of pupils' work and their progress; observation of lessons, some of which were undertaken jointly with the headteacher; and discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator, the inclusion manager and a group of staff. Inspectors also took account of responses in the parents' questionnaires and held discussions with 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 were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools and is the biggest infant school in Dorset. Most pupils are of White British heritage. However, in the last three years the school has seen an increase, to levels above national average, in the number of pupils from minority ethnic groups who are predominantly from a White Other background. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than in most schools. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals; however, the school does not provide a hot meal and some parents have not registered for free school meals. There are an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but significantly more than is the case in most schools have a statement of special educational needs. These needs are mainly related to speech and language, with a small minority who have physical disabilities or moderate learning difficulties. The school provides specialist places for 16 pupils with speech and language disorders in the Speech and Language Base.

The school has achieved the Healthy School Award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Sportsmark and the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

There is additional before- and after-school care which is run separately from the school by an outside provider. The school also hosts a wide range of extended services used by the local community.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Christchurch Infants is a good and improving school in which pupils make good progress and reach standards that are above national averages by the end of Year 2. The quality of leadership and management is good; this has enabled the school to maintain and develop well in the last three years. Consequently, the quality of provision for the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as well as the personal development and well-being of pupils, the quality of care, guidance and support, the way the school works in partnership with others and the quality of the Speech and Language Base, is outstanding. The school is extremely well led by the headteacher, who is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. This ensures a high level of teamwork not just among staff but between the school, parents and the local community. The school makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion and engages well with communities outside the school. There is a good level of evaluation about this aspect of the school's work. Staff and pupils contribute to making the school a warm and friendly place in which pupils are very happy and all feel equally highly valued. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent expressed a view shared by many: 'Christchurch Infant School has been fantastic for my daughter and she has flourished. The school is friendly from the front door desk through to the headteacher. Teaching staff are very good and the support of teaching assistants is first class.'

The majority of pupils make good progress in reading and their progress in mathematics is becoming increasingly good; progress in writing is outstanding. There has been good progress made in science, which was a key issue at the time of the last inspection. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading are significantly above average; in mathematics they are broadly in line with the national average and improving. Standards in writing are very high. More pupils than is the case nationally attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils develop particularly good speaking and listening skills. Pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. Most pupils met their targets for reading, writing and mathematics in 2008. The school is now working more effectively to help raise standards in mathematics and to improve boys' writing. There are now more challenging targets for those pupils who have already met or exceeded their targets for the year.

Good teaching in the school is characterised by lessons which engage and maintain pupils' interest, for example, through the use of practical activities and teachers' use of interactive whiteboards. Teaching generally takes good account of the different ways in which pupils learn and also ensures pupils understand what is expected of them. Additional adults add good value through skilled and well-informed intervention and support. Pupils appreciate opportunities to work together and to discuss and share ideas, for example, through the use of 'chatty partners'. Where teaching is less successful, some pupils sit passively for too long during the introductory parts of lessons. This results in insufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils. Although the school is developing a thematic approach to the curriculum, the effective use of cross-curricular links which also include a clear focus on the separate skills for each subject has yet to become firmly embedded throughout the school. Consequently, there are some missed opportunities to maximise learning, especially in terms of basic skills. The school has adopted a more rigorous approach to teaching letters and sounds, but pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to apply these phonological skills to read and write new and unfamiliar words across the curriculum.

The use of assessment strategies is developing well and marking is generally good. Pupils are becoming more involved in the assessment of their learning, although not all teachers check pupils' progress regularly or well enough during lessons. The personal, social and health education part of the curriculum is a particular strength. The curriculum is enriched by extensive and varied extra-curricular activities as well as visits to places of interest and visitors from the local community coming into school. The level of pastoral care, guidance and support for pupils is exemplary and this ensures that many pupils who are initially taught in the Speech and Language Base are eventually integrated into mainstream schooling. All pupils are prepared well for the future. They demonstrate an outstanding understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Pupils are encouraged to take on additional responsibility as they progress through the school. Their behaviour is excellent and they contribute well to the school and the local community. By the time pupils leave, they have developed into confident, mature, responsible and well-rounded young people. Attendance levels are satisfactory. The school has successfully improved the attendance of targeted pupils. As a result, the percentage of unauthorised absence is at its lowest level for four years and very few pupils are persistent absentees.

Leadership and management of the school ensure that the quality of care as well as the personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. The school ensures that procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils meet current government requirements. The recent improvement in the interrogation and use of data has enabled the school to focus more sharply on the progress made by different groups of pupils. However, this is not done equally well throughout the school and this at times limits the school's ability to self-evaluate. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and effective in managing their areas of responsibility. They produce action plans and evaluations and undertake a wide range of activities in their areas of responsibility. However, action plans and evaluations do not focus sharply enough on the outcomes for pupils. Furthermore, there is insufficient use of quantifiable targets to enable managers to measure rates of success. This is reducing the impact that subject leaders have in helping to raise standards and is limiting their contribution to whole-school priorities. Governors continue to be supportive of the school and contribute well to the school's efforts to respond to the needs of the whole-school community. The school has correctly identified the need to provide some governors with additional training so that they can become even more effective in their role as critical friend.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

There are very good induction procedures to ensure children settle quickly and parents feel confident that their children are happy, safe and extremely well cared for. The quality of leadership and management of the Early Year Foundation Stage makes a significant contribution to the excellent gains children make in their learning, particularly in developing their communication, language and literacy skills and in their personal, social, emotional and physical development. The progress made by children is carefully tracked and monitored. Assessment information is used very well to identify those who require additional support and guidance. Teaching and support staff work extremely well together to help meet the broad and varied needs of children, including those from the Speech and Language Base. Teaching is consistently good and some is exemplary. Where possible, learning in the six areas is integrated into exciting topics. A good example is the introduction of topics about robots, space and dinosaurs to help engage more fully some of the lower attaining pupils. There is a very good balance between

child- and adult-initiated work. In an outstanding lesson in which children were developing their knowledge and understanding of computers, they drew pictures to depict a windy day using a simple painting programme. When children had finished their picture they used the keyboard and knowledge of letters and sounds to type a sentence to describe their picture. The activity generated a lot of speaking and observational skills as well as a good opportunity for pupils to develop hand-eye coordination skills. All these young children remained captivated by the activity because of the high quality of what they were able to produce while working independently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teaching is more consistently good, particularly for higher attaining pupils, and maximise learning opportunities by embedding cross-curricular links which focus sharply on learning and basic skills.
- Continue to develop the role of subject leaders so that they have a greater impact on helping to raise standards and ensure that action plans and evaluations identify outcomes for pupils.

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?	1
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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	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	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?	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	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**

13 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Christchurch Infant School, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 2AE

I am writing to thank you for taking the time to talk to the inspectors about your school and to tell you some of the things we found out. We agree with you and your parents that Christchurch Infants is a good school and some things are outstanding. We were extremely impressed by how well you behave, how much you know about how to be safe and healthy and how much you enjoy coming to school. All the staff work very hard and teaching in the school is good. This helps you to make good progress. You do especially well in writing and your reading is also good. Work in mathematics is getting better. Some of you do extremely well in reading, writing and mathematics. The work of the staff and the children in Reception is outstanding. We think the work of the school with parents and other people is outstanding and this helps to make sure you are cared for and looked after exceptionally well in school. This can also be seen by the outstanding work of the Speech and Language Base.

Those responsible for leading and managing the school are doing this well. Your headteacher does an extremely good job and your deputy is very good at helping her. All the staff work well as a team and your teaching assistants provide you with good and helpful support in lessons.

We have asked your school to do a few things to help it to become even better.

- Although teaching is good, we would like the school to make sure it is always as good as it can be, especially for some of you who sometimes find work easy. We would like your teachers to help you all to make more use of what you already know and build on your basic skills as much as possible.
- The staff who help the headteacher and deputy with their work are already doing a good job. To help them all to become even better we would like them to make sure they plan how you will benefit from their work and for them to check how their work helps you to progress.

You can help your school by continuing to work hard, especially with your writing and mathematics, and by making sure you come to school when you are supposed to.

Gehane Gordelier

Her Majesty's Inspector