

Chalkwell Hall Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114718
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	326058
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Halladay
Headteacher	Mr Richard Spence
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2006
School address	London Road Southend-on-sea Essex SS9 3NL
Telephone number	01702 478570
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chalkwell Hall Junior is a large junior school. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and from minority ethnic backgrounds are lower than average. In addition, a lower than average number of pupils have English as an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with a statement of special educational needs are both below average.

The school has the Healthy Schools Award, the Active Mark and the Sports Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chalkwell Hall Junior School is a good school, with many outstanding and indeed exemplary features. The words of one parent sum up the views of many others, 'The wonderful thing about Chalkwell Hall Junior School is its focus on the 'whole child' and on inclusion. Every child feels they have achieved something.' Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils really love school and are eager to learn, and as another parent says, they have 'huge opportunities for making a contribution to their community' both within school and in the wider community. Indeed, the extent to which pupils are involved in decision making in the school is remarkable. Care, guidance and support are also outstanding. Parents recognise the dedicated support their children receive. Data is analysed in detail, with increased regularity, and when pupils begin to fall behind, carefully planned action is taken to prevent underachievement and enable pupils to catch up.

From above average standards on entry, last year's Year 6 pupils made satisfactory progress overall to reach above average standards in English and science. Standards in mathematics however, remained in line with the national average because a number of pupils did not make sufficient progress. However, because of improvements in the quality of teaching, a change to the nature of the curriculum, sharper analysis of data, higher expectations and greater accountability for all staff, pupil progress is accelerating. Pupils are now making good progress in English and science. Progress in mathematics is now satisfactory, although many pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6, are making good progress. The school is on target to exceed considerably last year's results in the 2009 Key Stage 2 tests.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very clear focus on improvement, and have been instrumental in driving these improvements. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have continually sought ways to improve progress, and although standards improved after the last inspection, this improvement did not continue, as planned action did not have the expected impact. The recently introduced and very exciting creative curriculum has enthused pupils and staff alike. It is truly outstanding! Imaginative ideas abound throughout the school, and can be seen in displays, in models, in lessons and everywhere. It is having a noticeable impact on improving standards, particularly in writing and in mathematics. The range of extra-curricular activities is second to none, and the outcomes are spectacular. The trophy cupboard bears witness to this; but the achievements are not limited to sports, for example, street dancing and singing on a West End stage are not things that many pupils achieve, but pupils from Chalkwell Hall Junior School did.

A change of approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning by seeking out and sharing best practice and embracing support has also borne fruit. The impact of this action is that teaching and learning are now good overall, with some outstanding practice. There is however a pocket of less effective, satisfactory teaching which lacks the challenge and excitement of other lessons. Teachers' use of assessment is good, and teachers know their pupils well. However, whilst some teachers plan different activities to meet the needs of all their pupils, others are not doing so as effectively and are missing opportunities to accelerate pupils' learning.

The same is true of marking and feedback. There is very good practice in most classes in English, but not in mathematics, and as a result, pupils are not given sufficient guidance as to how to improve their work. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy

headteacher are well supported by the other members of the senior leadership team, and by knowledgeable, challenging governors. The school's capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of learning and teaching by ensuring that all lessons reflect outstanding practice in the school in terms of pace, challenge and expectation and learning activities which are designed to accelerate the learning of all pupils.
- Improve the quality of marking and feedback in mathematics to match that established in English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with above average standards, and a key challenge for the school has been to maintain and improve on these standards. In the 2008 unvalidated Key Stage 2 tests, overall standards were satisfactory, although they were good in English and science. Progress was satisfactory in English and very good in science. Standards in mathematics were satisfactory, but there was evidence of underachievement, with a number of pupils not making sufficient progress. Although the progress made by these pupils had accelerated in Year 6, they were not able to overcome historic underachievement in earlier years. The progress of current pupils however, is improving and pupils are now making good progress in English and science. The school is well placed to considerably exceed last year's results in the Key Stage 2 tests and meet its 2009 targets, and evidence shows that this improvement is set to continue in 2010.

There are no significant variations between the progress made by different groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school tremendously and are very enthusiastic learners. A parent commented, 'The school is a vibrant, exciting place and my child enjoys every day that she spends there.' The ethos of care and respect permeates all aspects of school life, resulting in excellent relationships. Attendance is good, and behaviour is usually exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils say that they feel safe and that that adults are easily approachable. Bullying is very rare and is effectively dealt with by staff. The school council takes its responsibilities very seriously and pupils are confident that their views will be listened to. The school's focus on raising self-esteem is very successful. Pupils become articulate, increasingly independent and able to evaluate their own learning. One pupil said, 'The school builds up your confidence.'

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is enhanced through assemblies in which pupils participate and often lead. Pupils are sensitive to the feelings of others and develop a very good understanding of different cultures and beliefs. In addition to the council, there are many ways in which pupils contribute significantly to the life of the school. For example, they help to raise money for several charities, the school choir and orchestra perform in the local community and all take part in the 'exchange' day with the local infant school. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of the benefits of healthy lifestyles and the need for regular exercise. A high proportion take part in the wide range of after-school sporting activities. Pupils become excellently aware of the economic dimension through enterprise and finance theme days and because of the practical and innovative nature of the curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and aspects of both teachers' work and the way pupils learn are outstanding. Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils' abilities and encourage them to be involved in deciding what they aim to achieve in their lessons and to evaluate how well they have met the objectives. Teachers conscientiously ensure each pupil has the basic skills needed to make good progress and most plan lessons that challenge them to apply their skills. This makes learning fun. One pupil said, during a lesson labelled 'topic' when pupils planned and costed their trip to the Globe theatre, 'I think this is maths!' Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils very effectively, encouraging them to extend their ideas and test their understanding. Some teachers' delight in their lesson theme shines through pupils' responses. Pupils describing Lady Macbeth's feelings at the point of madness, used sentences such as 'Guilt spread across her mind, blood spread across her hands.' These demonstrate their empathy and love of words.

In a few lessons, pupils do not have the same opportunities for such involvement in their learning because teachers spend too long explaining the task or revising previous learning. Sometimes pupils are not given enough challenge and activities are not tailored to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities. Teachers' mark pupils English work very well, giving them wise advice about how to improve and their next steps. This is not sufficiently developed in mathematics and in several classes, marking includes few written comments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has recently changed the curriculum as part of the drive to raise pupils' achievement. The skills pupils need to acquire for each subject and for their personal development form the bedrock of the planning. From this list of skills, teachers plan the themes and the content of their lessons, often involving pupils in the process. It is very flexible and allows the planning to be adapted in response to world events. An excellent lesson, for example, where pupils were learning to write accounts, had the theme 'Your plane falls to earth and lands in the Hudson river'. This outstanding curriculum is relevant, rigorous in the teaching of skills and, most importantly, gives a real purpose to pupils' learning.

The creative curriculum extends beyond school. Pupils' homework is open-ended and they make decisions as to how they will complete it and what aspect of the topic they will study. This extends to all subjects. High quality, three-dimensional models of desirable toys, or eco-friendly machines were made at home. A pupil researched the performance of different actresses in the role of Lady Macbeth, because he wanted to. There is an exceptional range of enrichment activities, including many sports clubs. Several pupils run clubs themselves. Visitors, such as a banker talking to pupils about the 'credit crunch', ensure pupils are in touch with national issues. Information and communication technology is used across the curriculum and pupils use their skills to good effect, adding to their outstanding preparation for their future lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. One pupil said, 'The school supports you in everything.' Parents share this view. There are robust systems in place for child protection and health and safety that allow pupils to work and play in a safe environment. These procedures include a very successful behaviour policy, which is clearly understood. As part of the exceptional pastoral care, pupils are encouraged to help others. The excellent programme of personal, social and health education ensures pupils' awareness of the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise. This has been augmented by recent guidance on the safe use of the internet. Pupils get good support and guidance especially in English because most teachers make sure that they know how to move on to the next steps. The school makes good provision for pupils who have additional needs, including those who are at the early stages of learning English. There are good links with both the infant school and senior schools to ensure smooth transition.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very strong leadership. They have successfully created a sense of purpose shared by all staff. Written by pupils, the school motto 'if we believe, we will achieve' underpins the beliefs of the school. The senior leadership team know their roles and responsibilities and carry them out well. Teaching staff are very aware of their accountability for pupil progress. Self-evaluation procedures are thorough and improvement since the last inspection has been good overall, and outstanding in relation to the creative curriculum. These improvements have been largely due to the changed approach to professional development with staff effectively learning from expert peers, either at the school or elsewhere. This approach has had considerable impact in terms of improving the quality of teaching. Partnerships with a range of other schools, outside agencies and parents are outstanding with all in school benefiting. Of particular note are the links with the infant school that have had tangible success in enabling pupils to settle quickly into the school. Work to promote pupils relationships with other communities and cultures is also outstanding and pupils demonstrate a high level of awareness of and empathy with broader global issues. Governors, who have a wide range of skills, give a good level of support and challenge to the school. They effectively play their part in school improvement through formal and informal monitoring and by raising searching questions.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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

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	2
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	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

23 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chalkwell Hall Junior School, Southend-on-Sea, SS9 3NL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were extremely impressed by your politeness, your behaviour and by your enthusiasm for your work. We were also very impressed by many things at your school. We think that your school is a good school with many outstanding features. One of these is the way that you work with your teachers to decide the success criteria for your lessons and another is the way you help to make decisions about the work of the school.

Mr Spence and the staff are working hard to make sure that you all make good progress, but they are not satisfied with that, because they want you to make even better progress. I know they think 'if we believe, we will achieve'! Your school's new creative curriculum is so exciting; it is the best we have seen. Your teachers plan your work very carefully, and together with your teaching assistants, teach you well. Your school looks after you extremely well because the support, care and guidance you receive are outstanding.

Mr Spence, with the help of the other staff has identified how to help you make even more progress, but there are two particular things we think they need to do. These are to:

- make sure that all teachers mark your work in mathematics in a way that lets you know how to improve your work (as they do in English)
- make sure all teachers plan lessons which keep you thinking and activities which make sure that your work is never either too easy or too hard, so that you can make the best possible progress.

You can help by making sure that you do improve your work as they suggest. We know you will.

With best wishes

Heather Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector