

Chipping Ongar Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114948
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326097
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	161
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rosemary Dickinson
Headteacher	Mrs Bridget Hill
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Greensted Road Chipping Ongar Essex CM5 9LA
Telephone number	01277 363789
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chipping Ongar is a small primary school set in a rural location. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language and all are fluent in English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is lower than average, but there is a higher percentage than average of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with typical knowledge and skills for their age. Since the previous inspection three years ago there have been six headteachers, many other staff changes and a significant reduction in the school roll. The substantive headteacher has been in post since January 2009. The school is part of the Essex Improving Schools Programme. It holds the Activemark and is working towards the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education. It has been through turbulent times during which the lack of a permanent headteacher and several staff changes have had an adverse impact on school improvement and pupils' achievement. The appointments of the most recent temporary headteacher, and substantive deputy headteacher and headteacher in January 2009, have improved leadership. The leadership is satisfactory and the team has a good understanding through accurate self-evaluation of what is needed to enable all pupils to achieve well. Staff have identified the improvements needed to develop inadequate provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and how to share best practice in teaching across the school.

Pupils achieve adequately. There are effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and to identify and support those who need more help or challenges in their work. In Key Stage 2, the systems ensure that pupils know what they need to do to reach higher levels in their work. As a result, some pupils throughout Key Stage 2 have made good progress in English and mathematics in recent months. Most pupils in Year 6 are working at the expected levels in English, mathematics and science and some are exceeding them. This is a tribute to the good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching in Key Stage 2.

The reduction in the school roll has resulted in a reorganisation of classes in Key Stage 1 this term. Provision for this key stage is satisfactory. Although pupils are making sound progress, there is not the clear improvement that is a feature of Key Stage 2. The teaching is satisfactory across the school. Teaching in Key Stage 1 generally plans appropriately for each age group within the mixed aged classes, although there are few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is satisfactory and they take more responsibility for carrying out duties within school. Pupils behave well and, when they are challenged and have responsibility for evaluating and improving their learning, they have very good attitudes to work. This level of challenge is not a feature of all teachers' practice. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe, knowing they can count on adults for help and support. This is because the school meets the requirements for safeguarding, cares for the pupils and gives thorough support to those who find learning difficult. Pupils make sound contributions to the local community and select national and international charities to support.

The curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Plans for development include creating more links between subjects and ensuring that the curriculum is based on the skills pupils need to acquire, while making the subject matter more relevant. Governance is satisfactory. Governors support the headteacher and teachers well and are prepared to question and challenge initiatives, although they rely on the headteacher for information about pupils' achievement. Leaders know there is some way to go to achieve their aspirations for the school, but the recent improvements and the clear focus for future development ensure the school provides satisfactory value for money and has a sound capacity for future improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

The Reception class has moved to a new location in the school, without a suitably developed outside activity area, in order to accommodate the small number of Year 1 pupils who have

joined them. These very recent changes have resulted in disruption to the provision and, as a result, the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate.

The conscientious teaching of basic reading, writing and mathematical skills ensures that children make steady progress in these areas. They join Year 1 with the expected skills and knowledge for their age. The teaching is welcoming and adults relate well to children. Children learn how to stay healthy and to keep themselves safe. They are well cared for and generally behave well. However, weaknesses in several aspects of the provision have meant that children are not making sufficient progress in their personal, social and emotional development, their knowledge and understanding of the world or their physical and creative development.

There are too few opportunities for children to make choices about the way they learn or the tools and equipment they use. A major part of each child's day is spent working with an adult, often with equipment already set out. The activities available to children when they are able to choose them are not planned to extend their learning and skills. They are not based on assessments of what children can do and what they need to learn next. Aspects of the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage are therefore inadequate. The headteacher has identified the need to provide further training and support to ensure that children's needs are met in full.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring that the curriculum and organisation enable children to make good progress across all areas of learning, involving them in decision-making and purposeful independent activities.
- Embed and disseminate the best practice in teaching and learning across the school to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards.
- Enable pupils in Key Stage 1 to take more responsibility for improving their learning by ensuring that they respond positively to written guidance.

A small proportion of the 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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are typically in line with national averages at the end of Year 2. However, fewer pupils than nationally reached the higher than expected Level 3 for writing in the 2008 national assessments. This year, pupils are working at the standards expected in all subjects. In the 2008 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, indications are that standards were close to average for English and science but were below average in mathematics. Standards for this year group were slightly above average at the end of Key Stage 1 but pupils, especially the more able, did not achieve their full potential. Teachers' rigorous target setting and pupils' consequent good progress in lessons have raised achievement throughout Key Stage 2 this year. Pupils now in Year 6 are working at the expected levels for their age in English, mathematics and science. Some of the most able pupils have made very good progress in the last few months. Pupils' achievements from the end of Key Stage 1, including those of the most able and less able, are satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Behaviour in class and around the school is good, although some younger pupils can be slow to settle to their lessons. Pupils say they enjoy school but attendance has remained broadly average, despite the school's best efforts. Pupils are attentive in lessons and respond well to teachers and other adults. They say how much they value the opportunity in 'circle time' discussions to talk about things that worry them. They have a good appreciation of healthy lifestyles and a sound understanding of how to keep safe. Older pupils readily accept responsibility as school councillors, assembly monitors, play leaders and house captains. They are involved satisfactorily with the local community through the support of local charities, the town carnival and local Arts projects. The satisfactory progress they make in acquiring basic literacy, numeracy and personal skills provides a sound basis for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, some good and outstanding lessons in Key Stage 2 were observed during the inspection. One of the significant factors contributing to the rapid learning in these lessons was the pupils' very good understanding of their knowledge and skills and what they needed to do to reach the next level. One teacher, for example, asked her group for 'Level 4 punctuation' as they described a character. Pupils were able to tell her exactly what was required and checked their work to ensure they met the standard. All teachers question their pupils well to extend learning, and assess pupils' progress to plan lessons to meet their needs. Where teaching is less effective, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and rely on the teachers to evaluate their work and tell them what to do. Some younger pupils feel, and their books show, that lessons sometimes lack sufficient challenge. Teaching assistants provide good support and pupils respond well to their effective questioning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum focuses strongly on promoting literacy and numeracy skills and is modified particularly well for pupils who have significant social and learning needs. Provision for music is good and specialist music teaching supports staff well. Tuition is provided in a good range of musical instruments. A local Christian group makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. There is a good variety of external visits and lunchtime and after school clubs, including a range of sports clubs. Information and communication technology is promoted satisfactorily throughout the curriculum. Year 5, for example, made good use of the internet to research their residential visit to the North Yorkshire Moors. There are sound links with the local community through events such as concerts and dance festivals.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Although care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, pastoral care is good. The school has a caring ethos, which ensures that pupils feel well looked after. Pupils know that they can go to an adult for help if they are worried. Procedures for child protection are in place and safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Pupils who need extra help are identified and supported. There is good provision to support pupils with complex educational needs. There are some well thought out intervention groups, such as the 'Sixes and Sevens Social Skills' group, and individual counselling when required. The systems for checking how well pupils are doing are satisfactory. Pupils are set targets in reading, writing and mathematics, which they say are helping them to improve. However, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not sufficiently involved with the monitoring of their work, particularly in the way they respond to teachers' written comments.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The present leadership and management are satisfactory, but many parents expressed appropriate concern about the lack of clear leadership in recent years. Those who did so also praised the present leadership and can already see its impact on their children. One parent, typical of many, writes, 'Since the appointment of the temporary headteacher in 2008 and the present headteacher in 2009, the school has improved greatly in all areas and the children are much happier'. Teachers appreciate the headteacher's sensitive leadership and willingly accept her guidance. Subject leaders monitor pupils' performances in their subjects and have a good understanding of what pupils need to improve. Leaders are clear that best practice in teaching is not well shared amongst all staff so that standards can rise further. The local authority has supported the school and helped to draw up plans for improvement. The headteacher knows the school's needs extremely well and is acting on her own findings too. This is an inclusive school, although there is still work to be done to ensure that all children and pupils have similar educational opportunities in the key stages. Community cohesion is satisfactory, and most parents feel that they are kept well-informed. Resources are deployed efficiently, although moving the Reception area to a less well equipped section of the school, planned before the headteacher joined the school, has not worked well.

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
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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	4
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	4
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	4
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	4
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

5 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chipping Ongar Primary School, Chipping Ongar, CM5 9LA

Thank you very much for your warm welcome and help during our visit to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. You told us that you enjoy school and are well cared for. We agree with you. We also agree with your parents that you behave well and that your school is a happy place to be.

We were also impressed by the progress you have made over the last few months, especially those of you who know exactly what you need to do to improve your work. This is because some of your teachers involve you in setting your own targets and deciding how well you have met them. We would like all your teachers to do this. All teachers give you advice when they mark your work. We want you all, including those of you in Key Stage 1, to make sure that you take their advice so that you can make your work even better. One of you told me that you were an 'average' pupil. We know that many of you are capable of more than the average standards you reach by the time you leave your school. Go for it!

Children in the Reception Class have had lots of changes over the last few weeks and this has meant that they are not learning all the things that they should. The children need to find more things out for themselves and choose what they need to work and play with. They do not have enough time to work and play together without help from a grown-up. The outside area next to the new classroom is not good enough and cannot be used unless there is a grown-up present.

You have had lots of headteachers over the last few years. This has made it difficult for your teachers to know how best to help you to achieve as well as you can. Your new headteacher knows what needs to be done to make your school better and we can see that things are already improving.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Best wishes

Mrs J Dawson

Lead inspector