

Church Hill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119955
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327161
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Millett

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)	184
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	Paul Tadman
Headteacher	Jayne Willetts
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Hill Road Thurmaston Leicester LE4 8DE
Telephone number	01162 692083
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Church Hill Infant School is a smaller than average infant school situated in a multi-cultural residential area on the outskirts of Leicester. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made for children in three Reception classes. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. For approximately one third of pupils, mostly of Indian heritage, English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school has been awarded the Healthy School Award and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Church Hill Infant School is a good school which is held in high regard by the local community. The school provides an inclusive and welcoming environment. Pupils receive very effective pastoral guidance and care which results in good personal development and well-being. One parent wrote, 'I feel the school has a happy atmosphere where pupils are welcomed and parent participation is encouraged.' Relationships are good and pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and well looked after, and have confidence in their teachers. Pupils are proud of their school and relish the opportunities it gives them to make their own contribution to school life. They readily take on responsibilities and show interest in their lessons. Attendance is average due, in the main, to extended family holidays, but the school is working in collaboration with parents to bring about improvements.

Achievement is good and pupils reach above average standards. Children start school with a narrower range of skills and knowledge than is expected for their age. They settle quickly and soon start to benefit from effective provision. By the time they leave the school standards are above average. The school has very effective systems for monitoring pupil progress. Appropriate support strategies have been put in place to ensure all pupils achieve well. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make similar good progress as their peers. Pupils transfer to junior school well equipped for the next stage of their education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is progressing well as these young pupils begin to appreciate and understand the great variety of cultures in Britain and the wider world. This, along with the strong links the school has with other providers in the area, supports the development of community cohesion well.

Teaching is good. This view is shared by parents who talk of the 'high standard of teaching'. Staff work hard to plan activities that will interest and engage the pupils. Lessons move at a brisk pace to allow pupils to understand clearly what they are learning. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously and it gives clear guidance as to how pupils can improve their work and what their next steps are going to be. Teaching and learning are monitored by the headteacher. This now needs to be extended to include all the senior management team so the members have a good awareness of standards and provision in their subjects. The imaginative curriculum is enriched by strengths in the provision for art, drama, and sport, as well as a wide range of visits and visitors which add an extra dimension to pupils' learning. It also provides opportunities for pupils to use their skills in a wide range of activities.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher give strong leadership. They have rightly focused on developing the tracking system. This has led to an improvement in the progress pupils make because possible underachievement is identified quickly. Informal systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. A more rigorous approach to this involving the whole management team is now needed to ensure the good quality teaching is not only maintained but improved upon.

Governors are well informed and offer good levels of support and challenge to the school. Improvements, such as rising standards, are testimony to the good leadership and management and show the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception classes provide an exciting and stimulating environment for young children. Children enter Reception with skills below those expected for their age. They make good progress and start Year 1 well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Good provision, indoors and out, underpins children's enjoyment of learning. Staff enable children to take full advantage of the extensive outdoor area where inspiring activities such as an Easter egg hunt, incorporating phonics as well as number, take place. A real life 'Little Red Hen' captivated the children. Adult intervention is skilled and the effective use of questioning encourages children to think and reason for themselves. The children would benefit from more freedom to choose activities for themselves to develop their independence.

The knowledgeable and committed foundation stage manager provides outstanding leadership. She has established a strong sense of team work amongst all staff who produce excellent planning and assessment opportunities which are the key to the success of the unit. The close relationship that the school has with parents begins here with the well organised induction programme where high levels of trust are established. Children's personal development and well-being are fostered exceptionally well. Behaviour is managed effectively and staff ensure that children's welfare needs are met.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop and embed the role of the senior management team in well focused monitoring and evaluation to strengthen teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to Reception fluctuates from year to year but is consistently below that expected for children's age. As a result of successful induction procedures and good quality provision, children make good progress and enter Year 1 in line with national averages. A dip in standards in Year 2 was halted in 2007 when standards rose to slightly above the national average. This was a result of the effective assessment and tracking systems the school had put in place and the increasingly well focused monitoring of achievement and standards. Unvalidated data for 2008 indicates that standards rose again to well above those expected nationally. The number of pupils achieving the higher than expected standards of Level 3 has also improved. The school has set challenging targets for 2009 and recent assessments indicate that pupils are well on track to meet them and continue the upward trend. More able pupils are effectively challenged and they make the good progress expected of them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because work is well matched to their needs. Likewise, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language do well because of the specific attention they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are unanimous in their enjoyment of school. One pupil summed up the views of many saying quite simply that 'learning is fun'. A good example of the growing confidence of these young learners was seen in the way a Reception class led an assembly which was attended by

the whole school as well as their parents. They rose magnificently to the occasion and delighted everyone with their ability to speak loudly and clearly showed no signs of nerves.

Strong relationships result in pupils' good behaviour. A small number of boys are not yet able to work independently without regular intervention from the teacher but this does not impact upon the work of others. Pupil knowledge of a healthy lifestyle is excellent. Even the very youngest recognise the importance of fruit, water and sleep and can describe the effects of exercise on their bodies. They are aware of staying safe. Pupils make positive contributions to the school community and beyond. They are proud of the responsibilities they are given and understand why they raise money for charities. The above average standards pupils reach in English and mathematics and excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills contribute well to future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school. Lessons are well planned offering a wide range of carefully chosen activities that engage pupils and relate to their world. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and learning objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and revisited at the end. Skilful questioning prompts and challenges thinking. In the best lessons pace is brisk, but this is not consistent throughout the school. Pupils are given opportunities to learn in different ways. The majority respond well to working in groups or pairs. A small number of boys, however, do not always remain on task when working independently. Accurate assessments are carried out regularly and are used to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all learners, including the more able. Individual targets are set and, as a result, pupils know what they have to do next in order to improve. Informative marking and conversations with pupils reinforce these next steps.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a well planned and imaginative curriculum which contributes much to pupils' good achievement and personal development. The continuation of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum into Key Stage 1 has been very successful in promoting children's good learning and fits in well with the thematic approach to learning the school has adopted. All staff are involved in developing the links between subjects that make learning more meaningful and interesting. Key skills of language and mathematics are well promoted. Evidence that pupils are motivated by the choice of topics is seen in their enthusiasm to follow up their learning at home and take related items into school. The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of additional activities which pupils enjoy. Year 2 pupils benefit from a very popular and successful residential visit. The school makes good use of the local environment, for example regularly visiting Watermead Park. Rangers from the park also visit school. Other visitors are welcomed into school to promote the Arts, sport, and cultural understanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school that places great importance on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Adults know all pupils well and respond positively to their needs. Consequently,

pupils know that if they have a problem there is always someone there to help them. 'Our teachers are fair and help everyone,' commented one pupil. Child protection, health and safety procedures and systems for safeguarding meet all current government requirements. Improving attendance is being tackled sensitively and with some success. Pupils at risk of underachievement, those at an early stage of learning English and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by experienced, well trained staff and through good links with outside agencies. Academic guidance is good. Work is well marked with strengths identified and helpful comments on how to improve. Pupils' progress is supported well by personal learning targets which even the very youngest pupils know and understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is extremely dedicated and has been determined to drive up standards. She has been extremely well supported by the equally hardworking deputy headteacher and staff. Together, they have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The headteacher is well aware of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school through regular monitoring and evaluation. As yet, middle managers are not yet fully involved in the process of monitoring teaching and learning.

The rigorous tracking system put in place since the last inspection has contributed very effectively to the school's success. Challenging targets are well used to gauge progress. Knowledgeable governors are fully supportive of the school and take a suitably critical yet positive role in ensuring it performs well. Financial management is secure and staff and resources used well. Community cohesion is developing well with many aspects being particularly strong, for example links with the local community and the use of the curriculum to develop understanding of the lives of others.

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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?	2
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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	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?	2

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**

9 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Church Hill Infant School, Thurmaston LE4 8DE

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the interesting things that you do. Many of you told us that Church Hill Infants is a good school and we agree.

This is what we liked most about your school.

- You are very friendly, polite and helpful to visitors and each other.
- You get off to a good start in Reception and continue to make good progress through the school.
- You reach above average standards by the end of Year 2 because teaching is good.
- You show a great deal of enjoyment in coming to school and are very keen to learn.
- Adults look after you very well and make sure you are safe, in and around school and on visits.
- The school is well led and managed and your parents are very proud of the school and the way it helps you reach such good standards.
- Anyone who needs extra help with their work is always given it.
- You show a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles and know how to stay safe.
- The way you contribute to the life of the school and the local community is good.
- You are very well prepared for junior school and later life.

To make your school even better, this is what we would like to happen now.

- We would like the teachers to work with the headteacher in checking on how well lessons help you to learn so that your school becomes even better.

We know your school will succeed in this as all the adults in your school want you to have the best education possible and they have been so successful since the last inspection. Please continue enjoying your learning.

Yours faithfully

Christine Millett

Lead inspector