

Christ Church Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124034
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328033
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	158
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	Sue Marbrow
Headteacher	June McCarthy
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dale Street Burton-on-Trent DE14 3TE
Telephone number	01283 239445
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in Nursery and Reception classes and serves an area of high social deprivation. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average and many are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features and provides pupils with a very caring and stimulating setting in which to learn. The vast majority of parents support the school and appreciate the exciting activities experienced by their children. Two parental comments are typical of many: 'I am very happy with the progress my child has made at this school. He enjoys coming to school and gains a lot from all the opportunities provided for him,' and 'I value the genuine care, work and support that are given to my children.'

Good leadership and management underpin the school's success. The headteacher has high aspirations for all staff and pupils and provides a clear focus for school improvement. Senior leaders ably support her, and all involved in the school share a strong commitment to enabling pupils to achieve as well as they are able. Leaders at all levels promote community cohesion well, particularly within school and the local community. This stems from the outstanding relationships in the school between staff, pupils, parents and governors, and a willingness to be outward looking in their shared ethos of promoting a sense of belonging by all communities. As a result, all are treated equally and fairly and everyone works together harmoniously for the good of pupils. Leaders carefully check and evaluate curriculum planning in reading, writing and mathematics to make sure pupils develop key skills systematically. This is not carried out as rigorously in other subjects, which leads to skills not always being built up in a progressive manner in some areas. The track record of leaders in recent years shows there is good capacity to make any necessary changes.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is maintained throughout the school. As a result, pupils attain standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. This represents good achievement from their low starting points on entering school. Leaders identified that the performance of pupils in writing had been relatively weaker than in reading and mathematics in recent years. As a result, they introduced a variety of initiatives, including a more focused whole-school approach to teaching phonics, to bring about improvement. These have proved successful and the rate of progress at which pupils are developing writing skills is beginning to accelerate. Pupils have secure calculation skills in mathematics. However, they are not adept at using these skills to solve number problems in a variety of contexts.

Pupils' outstanding personal development means they behave in an exemplary manner and are very polite and courteous to others. They show great enjoyment in coming to school and have very positive attitudes towards their work. This makes a significant contribution to the good teaching and learning that is evident throughout the school. Excellent relationships lead to classrooms being very friendly and calm places in which to learn and are instrumental in promoting the good progress that pupils make. The good curriculum is tailored well to meet the needs of all pupils. It is effectively enlivened by a wide range of enrichment activities that include lunchtime and after-school clubs and visits to places of educational interest. The care and support of pupils is excellent and enables them to flourish within a very safe and caring environment. Parents and pupils are particularly appreciative of this aspect of the school's work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age. Good provision enables them to make good progress and achieve well, though standards are below average on entry to Year 1, particularly in the key area of communication and language. The strong emphasis placed on promoting children's social skills, which are poor on entry, successfully raises their self-esteem and confidence. As a result, their personal development is excellent and they tackle their activities with much enthusiasm and interest. Adults plan activities that effectively meet the needs of children of different abilities, and the pace of learning is good. Of particular note is the outstanding support provided by bilingual workers for children at an early stage of learning English, which enables them to make the same progress as other children. The good balance between activities led by adults and those chosen by children effectively promotes their development as independent learners. In mathematics, there are too few opportunities for children to use their calculation skills to solve practical number problems and this restricts the progress they make. The use of the outdoor area does not fully meet the needs of children across the areas of learning throughout the day. Good leadership and management has forged strong partnerships with parents through home visits and effective induction procedures. All statutory welfare requirements are met and pastoral care for children is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' ability to use their mathematical calculation skills to solve number problems in a variety of contexts.
- Use the outdoor area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage more effectively to promote their learning.
- Evaluate curriculum planning rigorously to ensure key skills are always taught systematically across subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve well, reaching broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Their performance in reading is relatively stronger than that in writing. This stems from the well-structured guided reading sessions and the enthusiastic involvement of parents at home in this aspect of pupils' learning. Pupils' ability to solve number problems is a weaker aspect of their performance in mathematics. Leaders acknowledge that pupils need more opportunities to develop these skills. Recent improvements to the curriculum in science mean that activities are more focused on developing pupils' investigative skills. As a result, pupils are making better progress in gaining these skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English make the same good progress as other pupils and achieve well because of the well-targeted extra support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are very kind and helpful to others, working together effectively in pairs and small groups. Pupils show great respect for the different traditions and beliefs of the variety of ethnic groups represented in

the school. They happily take on responsibilities, such as being a school council member, and, in so doing, make a positive contribution to the school by giving pupils a voice in its development. Pupils also contribute very well to the wider community, such as by raising funds for local charities. Pupils say they really enjoy school but, despite the school's best efforts, attendance is only satisfactory, because some parents do not see the value of ensuring their children attend regularly. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles very well, as seen in the enthusiastic way they take part in the whole-school 'fit and fun' session at the start of each day. Pupils also have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and this is reflected in the responsible way they move in and around school. They make good progress in gaining basic literacy and numeracy skills and so are well prepared for when they join the junior school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils show interest and enjoyment in their activities and are keen to learn. They are curious and willing to find things out for themselves, such as when involved in practical scientific investigations. Pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively in these activities and this makes a positive contribution to their personal development. Teachers manage lessons well to maintain pupils' concentration and, as a result, there is a good pace to lessons and pupils have a high work rate. Teachers plan lessons well in reading, writing and mathematics, to develop skills in a systematic way. Planning is less effective in other subjects in promoting skills in such a manner. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to be involved in problem solving activities in mathematics. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils talk enthusiastically about the well-attended lunchtime and after-school clubs. These add further interest to the curriculum and include yoga, gardening and cookery clubs. The good opportunities to work with a variety of visitors, and visits to places such as a woodland park and a forestry centre, effectively widen their horizons and promote their social development. Excellent links with other providers, such as professional sports coaches and artists, further extend their skills. Curriculum planning in some subjects is not always effective in ensuring pupils' skills are developed in a progressive manner. Leaders are seeking ways of improving links between subjects so pupils are better able to use skills learned in one subject to support their learning in others. The good programme for personal development contributes effectively to the good progress pupils make in this aspect of their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The safety and well-being of pupils is given a very high priority, and safeguarding arrangements are very rigorous. For example, child protection procedures are comprehensive and all staff are very aware of the steps to take if they have concerns about the well-being of a pupil. Pupils say they feel safe in school and on the playground and are confident they could talk to an adult if they have any worries or concerns. The excellent links with outside agencies, such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists, ensures extra support is available

for individual pupils when required. The information gained from the good procedures for checking the progress that pupils make is used well to provide them with effective guidance on how to improve their work. Good guidance is also given to pupils as to how they can evaluate for themselves how well they are doing and how they might improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Accurate self-evaluation enables the correct areas for development to be identified and prioritised. Decisive action is then taken to bring about improvement, as seen in the improving progress pupils are making in writing, because of initiatives introduced by leaders. Performance management effectively links individual staff professional development needs to whole-school priorities. Leaders promote equality of opportunity in an outstanding manner and this is a key element in the very harmonious atmosphere to be found throughout the school. The monitoring and evaluation of curriculum planning is not always successful in promoting a systematic development of key skills in some subjects. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements comply with current government requirements. Governors support the school well and play a prominent role in evaluating its performance and helping it to move forward.

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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

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?	1
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?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	1
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	1
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 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christ Church Infants' School, Burton-on-Trent DE14 3TE

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the interesting things you do. Your school is good in many ways and some things about it are outstanding. It helps you to make good progress and reach standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

What we found about your school

- You show a lot of enjoyment in coming to school and are very keen to learn.
- It is a very friendly place in which to work and play.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you work really well with others, in pairs and small groups.
- A lot of you join the lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- You contribute a great deal to the life of the school and the local community.
- Anyone who needs extra help with their work is always given it.
- Adults look after you very well and make sure you are safe, in and around school and on visits.
- You lead healthy lifestyles and show a very good awareness of how to stay safe.
- You are well prepared for when you start junior school.
- Your headteacher and teachers are working hard to make improvements and help you do better.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Help you do better in mathematics by giving you more opportunities to solve number problems.
- Improve the use of the outdoor area for children in Nursery and Reception, to better support their learning.
- Check carefully the way your activities are planned, to make sure you are taught important skills effectively in all subjects.

You can help your school improve further by continuing to try your best in all you do. All of you are a credit to your school.

Yours faithfully

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector