

Chiltern Gate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110578
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337524
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Lynne Kauffman

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judy Pantridge
Headteacher	John Headland
Date of previous school inspection	7 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They spent 70% of inspection time observing learning and visited 10 lessons where teachers, teaching assistants and often therapists were observed. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, therapists, administrative staff and teaching staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, policy documents, school newsletters and 46 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact on pupils' progress of the relatively new systems for collecting and analysing data
- the quality and consistency of teaching and learning
- the effectiveness of managers at all levels to ensure future developments are sustainable
- the role of parents as active participants in their children's progress.

Information about the school

Chiltern Gate School is a local authority special school with residential facilities used by some pupils. The school caters for pupils with complex needs including: moderate learning difficulties; communication difficulties; autistic spectrum disorder; and emotional and behavioural difficulties. There have been significant changes since the previous inspection in 2006. Since 2006 the school leadership team has comprised of an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. In September 2009 a substantive headteacher was appointed who has developed an extended management team. The team includes the manager of the Early Years Foundation Stage. A small number of pupils board for the week but on this occasion there was no separate social care inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Chiltern Gate School offers a lively atmosphere and committed staff that are passionate about the progress and personal development of their pupils. Over recent years the school has undergone significant changes through a period of changes in headship. The new headteacher has seized the opportunity to develop managers at all levels with the mantra 'everyone will be a leader', and good practice in leadership is becoming the norm across the school although not yet completely consistent.

Most pupils love coming to school. Activities such as 'wake and shake' to energize learning, and opportunities to take a lead in an assembly song by choosing the animal sounds to be used, all help develop pupils' confidence and self-belief, which has a positive impact on their learning.

The increasing use of a variety of assessment techniques is a feature of most lessons. Record keeping instantly notes academic progress and personal development, including the acquisition of independent learning skills. This information is used effectively to track progress and is shared with parents when they attend annual reviews and assess their children's individual education plans. Aspects of pupils' personal development are good, although areas of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda have not been audited and so the school does not know where pupils have gaps in their understanding and areas to celebrate. Pupils are well mannered, polite and have clear empathy for others, as seen in the school council meeting. The effective use of symbols, picture-exchange communication and signing, ensure equality for all in developing communication skills, knowledge and understanding. The satisfactory curriculum is broad and balanced; parents appreciate the development of life skills, such as swimming. Information and communication technology (ICT) has had a good impact on pupils' involvement in their learning and the ICT club at lunchtime is regularly oversubscribed. Extra-curricular activities are varied and enjoyed by all.

Teaching is satisfactory overall but there are moments of inspiration, as seen in outstanding and good lessons. These good features of teaching are not consistent across the school. In a few classes there are missed opportunities to match work to pupils' needs.

Overall, pupils make good progress from very low starting points. This is due in part to the good quality of care, guidance and support provided by staff. Teachers and teaching assistants have a thirst for knowledge about physiological and neurological impact on pupils' progress and this is recognised as an area for development through staff training. In lessons where the roles of therapists were integrated into planning, pupils consistently made good progress.

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The effectiveness of the school's leadership in embedding ambition and driving improvement is satisfactory. A number of significant changes have been made but these are too recent to have created evidence of impact. The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate but systems for collecting evidence to support the evaluation process are underdeveloped. The Early Years Foundation Stage, although satisfactory, lacks a policy that communicates the interesting developments in the area; in addition, the outdoor learning environment is not consistently used well. Developing use of outside expertise such as therapists, local advanced skills teachers and the local authority, is making a significant impact on the school, the pupils' progress and their personal development. The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory rather than good because new systems and structures are not yet proven. Despite a good response to the majority of issues identified in the previous report, teaching and learning improvements are not yet firmly established.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning by December 2010 until all is good or better by:
 - ensuring assessment techniques are consistent across the school in matching work to pupils' needs
 - developing the roles of the occupational therapist and the speech and language team through whole school training
 - developing the monitoring and evaluation role of senior managers.
- Develop the strategies and systems for gathering evidence used in self-evaluation by the end of the summer term 2010.
- Enrich the Early Years Foundation Stage provision by improving the outdoor play area and communicating the work of the setting through a clear policy.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils make good progress from very low starting points, showing good progress in aspects of their personal development. Attainment cannot be specified because the complex cognitive abilities of the pupils make a comparison with mainstream pupils' attainment inappropriate.

Most pupils feel safe in school and show thought for others. The expectations and diligence of staff in referring to the school's code of practice enable pupils to gradually understand their rights within the school community. In Year 6, pupils were able to produce and sign their own classroom rules, illustrating their understanding.

Behaviour is good because teachers' expectations are clear, and most pupils can understand that actions have consequences. Pupils are guided to a satisfactory understanding of healthy eating and the importance of exercise. They are happy to share their feelings through symbols, signing or guided discussion. The school council is more than ready to share its views; there is open access to taking on the responsibility

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of working on the council, illustrating the school's commitment to inclusion.

Pupils like coming to school. Attendance is satisfactory; health issues often cause erratic attendance for some pupils. Work-related skills and skills that address economic awareness are difficult concepts for pupils, but curriculum planning is helping to ensure that communication, handling money and using computers are central to the school's planning. Exclusions are few because pupils understand the school's new systems for rewarding good behaviour and dealing sensitively but fairly with inappropriate behaviour. One parent said, 'It's reassuring to know that our son, as well as ourselves, can talk to the school about anything worrying us, knowing it will be dealt with promptly.'

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. The school community is harmonious; at break and lunchtime pupils play well together, stimulated by opportunities for different games. The well-placed guidance from teaching assistants supports play and promotes pupil-led activities. Pupils enjoy exploring cultural differences through art and music. Their facial expressions and actions show they understand the difference between right and wrong.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In sixth form schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

3

How effective is the provision?

In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants motivate their pupils well by identifying and praising their achievements. Comments on 'good looking', 'good listening' and 'good sitting' are used regularly to reinforce pupils' concentration; as a result pupils try exceptionally hard to do as well as they can. Relationships between pupils and staff are effective and staff role modelling has a good impact on pupils' learning. Many class teams have been working together for a relatively short time but, because of the new procedures and expectations of staff, teams work seamlessly in support of pupils' progress. Occupational and speech therapy are beginning to be integrated into planning rather than therapists removing pupils for support. This is having a good impact on teachers' understanding of pupils' medical needs in relation to their educational needs. The best teaching demonstrated purposeful planning and a passion for learning. These lessons show meticulous use of individual education plans and curriculum plans for assessment throughout lessons. Peer assessment is included in sessions at the end of lessons to consolidate learning. In addition, the enthusiasm of the teachers and teaching assistants is contagious. Literacy lessons involving drama, discussion and retelling a well-loved story presented genuine challenge to concentration and recall, while still encouraging exuberant fun. In mathematics, sequencing was explored through pupils' good use of the interactive whiteboard to share their understanding. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school and a few teachers have expectations that are not high enough. For example, work set does not always fully meet the needs of more able pupils in supporting their learning. In these cases the drive to ensure pupils raise their performance is limited.

There is focus on emergent basic skills in literacy and mathematics; this is beginning to be tracked across the curriculum. The curriculum generally matches pupils' needs and interests.

Care, guidance and support are a strength of the school. Pupils have a high level of trust in the staff and are confident to ask for help if needed. Partnership work is developing with a range of agencies, in particular occupational therapy and speech and language support. More vulnerable pupils are well supported through the school's tracking and record keeping. This focus ensures good support for pupils and their families at all times, especially in times of crisis.

The manager of the boarding provision works in unison with the school. The boarding team supports boarders' confidence by encouraging good routines in a homely atmosphere. The bedroom and social areas are very pleasant and well maintained despite the problems with engaging a full team of cleaners. The site manager has given good support to boarding during this difficult time. Issues identified in the previous social care visit have been addressed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has instilled passion and commitment in the staff team with a central theme of equality for all. Governors support the headteacher's open style of leadership. Middle managers are energized by the renewed responsibility they have in the school. The head of boarding is very much a part of the vision. Teachers and teaching assistants at all levels have developed a greater involvement in performance management and have highlighted their personal needs for training. All staff are aware of the school's priorities from a recent whole staff consultation. School priorities are displayed alongside teachers' planning in many classrooms to show the link between the two. However, the school is not analysing its performance as well as it might. For example, all teaching and learning are evaluated by the headteacher as other leaders are not yet sufficiently trained in observation and monitoring. A plan to enhance middle leaders' skills in monitoring, evaluation and feedback to teachers is a priority for this spring term.

Community cohesion is generally satisfactory. Strong local initiatives, for example the 'big dig' with neighbours of the school, together with links with national and international activities, such as the visit of gospel singers from Germany, all contribute to community cohesion. However, this area has not been audited to identify gaps and promote the links already established.

Governors' work is satisfactory. They are actively supporting the school's rapid developments. Their recent regular recorded visits are crisp and helping them to establish areas of the school where they have evidence to challenge the leadership as 'critical friends'. Self-evaluation involves the governors now they have consolidated their role and committee structures. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are satisfactory.

Despite the new and effective systems in place, the senior leadership team, governors and local authority agree that in one term there is insufficient evidence to judge the sustainability of the initial impact. Inspection evidence supported this assertion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	3

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

A new manager of the Early Years Foundation Stage took up post in January 2010. The Early Years Foundation Stage has made metamorphic change during this time and many parents' questionnaire responses included comments on the immediate improvement in their children's communication and physical capability. From low starting points, children make good progress. The innovative new approaches to assessment involve key workers on the Early Years Foundation Stage team and include work with the occupational therapists and the speech and language team. This intense support has had an immediate impact on teachers' planning and children's individual targets. Learning and development targets are in line with children's individual education plans and the school's simplified steps for the areas of learning and development. Behaviour is good. The learning environment is appropriately stimulating, although the restricted outdoor play is limiting physical development and independence. In addition the lack of a formalised policy for Early Years Foundation Stage means that opportunities are missed to share progress and plans with parents and the rest of the school staff. It is too early in the new development to see whether immediate impact is sustainable. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory with elements of exciting development for the future.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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Views of parents and carers

Parents were positive about the recent changes in the school, in particular the new management. Quotes such as: 'I have seen positive changes with the new headteacher' and 'the new settle routine is essential' illustrate their confidence in the new managers. Parents do have a concern about communication. The inspectors found evidence that the school has identified the issue and the new management team has taken steps to improve communication, such as the parent call system, to make contact with parents by email and text.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chiltern Gate School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 94 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	50	22	48	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	57	20	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	41	22	48	3	7	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	35	25	54	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	52	18	39	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	9	13	28	4	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	26	31	67	1	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	28	28	61	1	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	43	22	48	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	41	22	48	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	33	29	63	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	46	21	46	1	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	43	21	46	2	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chiltern Gate School, High Wycombe HP12 3NE

Thank you all from my colleague and from me for the happy time spent in your school watching you learn and play. You are so polite and kind that it made us feel very welcome, especially when we joined you for lunch and came out to see you in the playground at break time. You have many exciting activities in the playground and it was interesting to see you exploring and having fun.

Your school is satisfactory and improving fast. Your teachers, teaching assistants and therapists are working very hard to help you learn new skills and knowledge. We saw so many of you had gained good stickers for concentrating, joining in lessons and also having good behaviour.

It was good to see that you now have a new headteacher who has many exciting plans to help you to make progress and continue to enjoy new challenges such as the allotment link with your neighbours. I am sure that you will soon be cooking the vegetables you are starting to grow.

To help your staff continue with the improvements in the school we think that they should:

- follow up closely on how your teachers teach and you learn
- help your parents to be more involved with your learning through better communication from the school
- make sure all the new systems in school are well established and will last
- develop the Early Years Foundation Stage by improving the outdoor area and developing a policy so that your parents and visitors understand the work carried out there.

We send our best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Kauffman

Lead Inspector

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