

Ellesmere Port Christ Church CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111351
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337667
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Derby
Headteacher	Mrs Jeanette Herbert
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 10 lessons and observed eight teachers, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, governors and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the improvement plan, data on pupils' progress and attainment, minutes of governing body meetings, reports from the local authority, monitoring records and samples of pupils' work. The responses to 77 parents' and carers' questionnaires and those from staff and Key Stage 2 pupils were analysed.

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

- whether the recent recovery in Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment and progress is sustainable.
- how effective the provision is for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and for more-able pupils
- how successfully leadership, management and governance are promoting higher academic performance.

Information about the school

Most of the pupils who attend this smaller than average school are of White British heritage. A very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. Very few are at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and/or a statement of special educational needs is slightly higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.

The school has gained a number of awards for its promotion of inclusion, a healthy lifestyle, the arts and its work internationally. The governing body has achieved Financial Management in Schools status. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced extensive disruption to staffing due to sudden deaths, prolonged absences and maternity leaves. Currently, there are two acting deputy headteachers, one of whom is seconded from a local school. The school shares its site with a privately run pre-school, which is the subject of a separate inspection and report.

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

This school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is currently more successful in providing for pupils' personal development and in providing them with good-quality care, guidance and support than in ensuring their good progress and higher attainment. There are effective partnerships which contribute well to the support provided for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and in enriching pupils' experiences, both in and out of the classroom. Overall, the school engages well with parents and carers to enable them to support the school's work and their child's learning.

The period following the last inspection saw the school's performance dip, mostly due to a lack of continuity in teaching and leadership. The headteacher, effectively supported by her senior management team, has halted the decline and tackled some weaknesses in teaching and in pupils' attainment and progress in Key Stage 2. Self-evaluation is predominantly accurate, the priorities for improvement are appropriate and there is increasing stability in staffing and leadership. Despite these positive aspects, there is still some fragility in aspects of improvement and in leadership, making the school's capacity for sustained improvement satisfactory rather than good.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and then achieve satisfactorily in Key Stages 1 and 2. Attainment is broadly average throughout the school but progress is patchy, especially in writing and for the more able pupils, depending on the quality of teaching. Overall, pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. Most say that they enjoy school and the vast majority feel safe. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, eat sensibly and eagerly seize opportunities to participate in physical exercise. They contribute well in school and to the local community.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Where it is most effective, pupils make good progress and achieve well. In lessons which are least effective, pupils' progress is slower due to some relative weaknesses in pace, expectations, the use of assessment information and aspects of marking, and the appropriate match of work to pupils' needs. Pupils are not always sufficiently encouraged to apply their basic literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in a range of subjects. The curriculum meets pupils' needs satisfactorily overall. It promotes their personal development well but is less effective in meeting their academic needs. Changes to the curriculum to better reflect pupils' interests and the locality are not as yet fully embedded in practice. There are enriching activities for pupils to enjoy. They particularly like tending and harvesting the vegetable garden, looking after the school's chickens and learning in the 'forest school'. Pupils are effectively cared for and feel well looked after, especially if they have concerns or troubles.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress, especially in writing and for the more able, by:
 - enabling pupils to apply their existing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills more frequently in a range of subjects
 - embedding more fully a curriculum that reflects pupils' interests and experiences
 - ensuring that pupils always present their work with pride, consistently use their best handwriting, spell familiar words correctly and become more aware of the different styles required to write for specific audiences
 - sharpening target setting in Key Stage 1, so that the progress pupils are expected to make over time more realistically reflects their starting points.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently at least good by April 2011, by:
 - setting work in all lessons, not just some, to ensure that pupils of all abilities make at least good progress
 - conducting all lessons at a brisk pace, with appropriate changes of activities in order that pupils maintain concentration and work hard throughout the lesson
 - requiring pupils to indicate in their work where and how they have responded to teachers' advice about how to improve
 - ensuring that when leaders evaluate the quality of lessons, they focus closely on the quality of pupils' learning and on how much progress pupils make.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Typically, in lessons pupils listen attentively, participate keenly and are eager to answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Most enjoy lessons, relate well to each other, work cooperatively as partners and in groups, and act maturely when faced with sensitive or challenging work. The latter was very evident in a Year 6 sex education lesson when pupils learnt the biological names for parts of the body. There is evidence, however, that they are not always as vigilant in applying their best handwriting in all of their written work, in presenting their work as well as they should or in taking care to spell familiar or copied words correctly. The school also acknowledges that there is a relative weakness in pupils' ability to write in a style that is appropriate for a specific audience.

Children enter the Reception class with skills at levels below those expected and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage to enter Year 1 with average

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attainment. Since the last inspection attainment has remained broadly average in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 attainment fell significantly below average in the two years following the inspection but over the past two years has recovered to average. Pupils make best progress in mathematics and least progress in writing. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory overall. More-able pupils do not always achieve as well as they might because they are insufficiently challenged. Pupils are generally polite, act sensibly and have a keen sense of fair play and justice. They are sensitive to the needs of others, look out for each other in the playground and have a well-developed sense of community. The school's strong Christian ethos is reflected in pupils' evident sense of spirituality and in their moral awareness. They are keen to protect the environment and campaign strongly for sustainability. Their average basic skills and attendance indicate that they are satisfactorily prepared for their future education and life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching quality ranges from inadequate to outstanding, but is satisfactory overall.

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

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Improved teaching over the last 18 months, due to much more stable staffing, effective training and more accurate assessments, has promoted better-quality learning and recovered standards in Key Stage 2. Where teaching is at its best, the pace is brisk, pupils do not spend too long on one activity, causing them to lose concentration and tasks are challenging and appropriately linked to pupils' interests and experiences. The result is good-quality learning and accelerated progress. Where the above strengths are not evident, teaching is no better than satisfactory, resulting in slower progress and less effective learning. A consistent strength in teaching is the very strong relationships between staff and pupils which promotes a positive atmosphere in the vast majority of lessons. Less evident is sufficient challenge for more-able pupils, with staff sometimes underestimating their capabilities. Although teachers' marking is thorough and contains pertinent advice, its effectiveness is limited because pupils are infrequently required to demonstrate in their subsequent work how and where they have responded to such advice.

There are strengths in the overall satisfactory curriculum, particularly in promoting pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, their health education, their out-of-class learning and their understanding of environmental and cultural issues. It is less successful in meeting pupils' academic needs, especially those of the more able, and in fully making learning relevant to them. Leaders are aware of this and have implemented changes to the curriculum which are partly based on consultation with pupils about what topics they would particularly like to study. However, these changes have yet to have sufficient impact on raising pupils' attainment to above average and enabling them to make good progress. Good partnerships with external partners contribute well to pupils' personal, physical and aesthetic development and to their acquisition of French. Similar effective partnerships play a significant role in the good-quality care and support pupils receive. This particularly applies to pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those with a quite significant difficulty in always behaving appropriately. Specialist help for pupils who fall behind in reading is effective and the particular expertise in this area of the school's work is beginning to be more widely disseminated to enhance the provision for and accelerate the progress of pupils with wider special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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?

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The considerable difficulties caused by staffing instability in maintaining a continuing focus on the school's improvement are fast being overcome. There is now more consistency in the ability of leaders and managers rigorously to pursue higher academic achievement and better provision. Throughout the traumatic events since the last inspection, the governing body has offered strong support, provided effective strategic guidance and managed resources prudently. It has worked in close and productive partnerships with the local authority to minimise the impact of unavoidable disruption to pupils' learning and development. There is now a clear vision for improvement and further development, which is shared by a freshly motivated staff. The headteacher and the current acting deputy headteachers work well together to promote improvement in attainment and provision. Their self-evaluation of the school's current performance and provision is very largely accurate. It is based on the appropriate tracking of pupils' progress and on frequent checks on the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders acknowledge that there are still some areas of target setting which need to be more realistic in Key Stage 1 and that their evaluations of lessons would be more productive if greater focus were placed on the quality of pupils' learning and the amount of progress they make. Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements and that these are evident in the school's everyday routines. Pupils' keen awareness of e-safety is clear evidence of this good practice. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily and encourages pupils to challenge discrimination actively. There is a clear action plan that underpins the effective promotion of community cohesion. Particular strengths are the harmonious community, links with the locality and the partnership with a school in Uganda. Given the overall satisfactory outcomes for pupils, the school offers sound value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The good quality of leadership and management ensures that children make good progress and enjoy effective provision in this key stage. Children make particularly good progress in personal, social and emotional development. Despite the wide range of skills evident on entry, children's attainment overall is below that expected on entry to the Reception class. This is particularly evident in their communication skills and in their ability to socialise and cope independently. Children clearly enjoy the many interesting activities on offer or those that they choose for themselves, both in the attractive indoor area or in the stimulating outside classroom. They develop a good ability to concentrate, to share and to take turns. They listen well and work and play independently.

Staff are adept at promoting children's language skills, although their attainment in communication, language and literacy lags behind that in other areas of their learning by the time they enter Year 1. This is because they have a greater amount to catch up on from their entry to Reception rather than any weakness in provision. However, those children who are more able than most are not always sufficiently challenged to extend their vocabulary or to persevere in writing activities. Children are well cared for and welfare requirements are fully met. Observations of children's day-to-day development are recorded in detail and in a variety of ways, so that staff can plan to meet children's needs effectively and parents and carers can regularly check how well their offspring are progressing. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is knowledgeable and constantly seeks improvement in provision. Partnerships with parents and carers are good, which ensures that children settle quickly and happily into Reception and are well supported to achieve successfully.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just under half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire sent to them prior to the inspection. Parents' and carers' views were also gleaned from a meeting held with them and from the school's own surveys. A large majority have positive views of the school's work and performance. Particular areas that come in for praise, and with which inspectors concur, were the degree to which pupils were encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, how safe parents and carers felt their children were in school and how much

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their children enjoyed school. A small minority felt that the school did not deal well with instances of unacceptable behaviour, that their children did not make enough progress or that the school was not led and managed effectively enough. Inspectors looked into these matters and shared these concerns with the school's leaders and governors. There are indeed some pupils who find great difficulty in behaving appropriately at all times. Inspectors found, however, that the school's strategies for dealing with such instances are appropriate and invariably successful. Although most pupils now progress at least satisfactorily, it is acknowledged by the school that during the period of considerable staffing instability and when other traumatic events occurred, standards fell and some pupils, especially those in Key Stage 2, made less progress than they should. Apart from some more-able pupils this is no longer the case. Inspectors found that the overall quality of leadership and management was satisfactory and that several aspects were good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ellesmere Port Christ Church CofE Primary 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 171 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	51	30	39	7	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	52	32	42	2	3	2	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	36	36	47	8	10	3	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	40	31	40	13	17	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	35	45	31	40	8	10	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	42	31	40	11	14	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	43	38	49	4	5	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)	31	40	31	40	8	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	43	33	43	8	10	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	27	30	39	17	22	7	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	36	34	44	10	13	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	30	39	28	36	12	16	4	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	44	32	42	7	9	2	3

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



16 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ellesmere Port Christ Church C of E Primary School, Ellesmere Port, CH65 6TQ

Many thanks on behalf of the inspection team for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school in July. Particular thanks to the school council members for giving up part of your lunchtime to talk with us. We found you to be very friendly and to be very willing to tell us your opinions of the school.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. It does some things well, which particularly help you to become sensible and concerned young people. You generally behave well, get on well with people, know right from wrong and are concerned for others who are less fortunate than yourselves. You have many nice out-of-class activities and you obviously enjoy the vegetable garden, looking after the chickens and working in the 'forest school'. Part of my job is to work with your headteacher and governors to find ways in which the school can improve. We have agreed that you need to be helped to reach higher standards and make faster progress, especially those who find learning easier than most, and that all the teaching you receive should be at least good by April next year.

You can help by trying your very best all the time, making sure that you always use your best handwriting and take care to spell correctly the words you already know or that you copy down from interactive whiteboards or from displays.

Thank you again for helping with the inspection

Yours sincerely

Mr Paul Bamber

Lead Inspector

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