

Christ Church CofE (VA) Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117473
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339015
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bob Owen
Headteacher	Mrs Ania Vaughan ()
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2007
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent one third of their time in school directly inspecting learning and 12 teachers were seen. They visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, including a sample of pupils' books, teachers' planning documents, tracking and assessment data, and analysed questionnaires from 95 parents, 130 pupils and 12 staff.

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

- the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2
- the quality and use of the school's assessment and tracking procedures
- provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- pupils' behaviour.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average although the number of pupils with statements of educational need is below average. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award.

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

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. However, provision for the outdoor curriculum does not promote children's independent learning skills sufficiently. This good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. There has been some underachievement for a number of years in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6. Under the dynamic leadership of the acting headteacher, pupils' progress is now satisfactory. Clear priorities have been set for further improvement and leaders and managers are keen to improve. A realistic view of pupils' progress has been achieved and leaders now have a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. These improvements and pupils' accelerating progress show that there is a satisfactory capacity to maintain and sustain improvements. However, subject coordinators have not all had the opportunity to observe the quality of teaching in their subject. Staff are responding positively to the support and guidance they are receiving in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching is improving as a result, although there is still some inconsistency across the school in teachers' expectations and level of challenge for pupils. Parents are very supportive of the school. They like the positive family atmosphere and one parent commented: 'The school values and ethos give my child a firm foundation from which to explore life and learning and she is excited and happy to come to school every day.' Staff clearly want the best for each child and strive hard to achieve this goal through working closely with families and external agencies.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and they understand the need for healthy lifestyles. Parents say their children enjoy coming to school and pupils agree enthusiastically, one pupil writing: 'My school is great fun; it's a caring place where people listen to you'. A strong moral code is implicit within the school's ethos and this is reflected in pupils' good behaviour. This in turn has a positive effect on the progress pupils make in lessons. In most instances, they work hard and conscientiously, both independently and co-operatively, without the need for constant adult intervention. The curriculum ensures that pupils receive a satisfactory variety of interesting activities and experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to school. Pupils particularly enjoy the after-school activities and clubs, including sporting opportunities. The school has well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils, which contributes to their well-being and supports their learning effectively. Data from the school's assessment and tracking system are now being used pro-actively to ensure that any pupil falling behind is identified quickly and support promptly provided. The school has very good links with the local community and organisations but realises it needs to do more to develop and strengthen ties with groups in the country and overseas.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 by improving the consistency and quality of teaching so that it matches the best across the school, improving teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and improving planning to ensure appropriate challenge for the range of ability groups within each class.
 - Improve the quality of independent learning and creativity in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing increased opportunities for children to make choices and decisions about their activities.
 - Strengthen the role of subject coordinators and leaders by providing opportunities for them to observe the quality of teaching in their subjects.
- About 40% Of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, their levels of skills match those typically found for their age. Children make good and, in some cases, very good progress as they move through the Nursery and Reception classes. This good progress continues into Years 1 and 2. After a period of barely satisfactory progress, pupils in Years 3 to 6 are now making at least satisfactory progress due to the successful initiatives introduced by the acting headteacher. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Observations during lessons and around the school confirm that pupils' behaviour is good and a credit to the school and reflects pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show considerable respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. In most cases, they have good attitudes to learning and develop considerate relationships with their peers and with adults. They feel safe and understand the need for healthy lifestyles and the need for exercise. Pupils have a good range of opportunities to contribute to school and local communities through the work of the school's 'Family Forums' and regular collections for a number of charities. They value their school community and participate constructively in school life. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the above average level of attendance. Their satisfactory skills in literacy and numeracy and their good behaviour and good social skills prepare them soundly for the future world of work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and varies between satisfactory and good across the school. Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They ensure classroom routines are made clear and regularly reinforced so that learning takes place in a well-structured environment and all pupils can contribute to lessons. Learning intentions are made clear at the beginning of each lesson and, as a result, pupils know precisely what it is that they are expected to do. Most teachers monitor pupils' work well during lessons, pick up any general misconceptions and adjust their plans accordingly. However, in a small minority of lessons learning and progress are held back because teachers do not always plan work adequately for the range of abilities in the class or ensure sufficient challenge for all pupils. In the best cases, teachers are well supported by effective and skilled teaching assistants who are fully involved in lessons and ensure that pupils receive extra help as they need it. Marking in most instances is up to date and encouraging but does not consistently point out what steps pupils should take to improve their work. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to school. Pupils attend the satisfactory range of after-school clubs, including sports clubs, enthusiastically. The school has well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils which contributes to their well-being and supports their learning effectively. When needed, a wide range of specialists and support agencies is called upon to support those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Clearly targeted support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities results in good progress for these pupils.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 acting headteacher has successfully introduced a number of initiatives designed to arrest underachievement in Key Stage 2, embed ambition and drive improvement. Improvements include securing good behaviour in lessons and around the school and supporting teaching so that it is now satisfactory or better across the school. Under her leadership, the analysis and use of school assessment and tracking data has been strengthened. These new systems have been particularly effective in ensuring that teachers now have 'ownership' of the data analysis. As a result, they have a much better understanding of where pupils are when they arrive in their classes and the progress they are expected to make over each half term. Key subject leaders are starting to effect improvements although, as yet, they do not have a full understanding of provision as they have not all had the opportunity to undertake observations of teaching in their subjects. The governors now have a satisfactory overview of the school's work and future priorities and are fulfilling their roles as 'critical friends' of the school effectively. The school has good relationships with most parents and its good partnerships with outside agencies support pupils' learning and well-being well. The school promotes equality of opportunity and community cohesion satisfactorily. It has a good understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the school and local community but realises it needs to pay more attention to improving pupils' awareness of the national and global dimensions. The school has good safeguarding procedures. It identifies dangers, fosters a realistic understanding of risk and helps pupils to keep themselves safe.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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 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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the youngest children is good. Children in the morning and afternoon Nursery sessions and the two Reception classes clearly enjoy school and play happily together and individually. They undertake a variety of whole class and group activities and cooperate well when working with others. They delight in learning and seeing new things. There are good relationships with parents and carers through daily contact at the start and end of each session or day. Pastoral care and welfare arrangements are good with the result that children are safe, well cared for and aware of how to be healthy. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly, are well supported and are integrated well into all activities. The Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms have free access to spacious and secure outdoor areas. However, almost all activities, indoors or out, are adult-led or planned and as a result children do not get enough regular opportunities to freely explore their own interests and develop their independent learning skills. Leadership and teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and children make good progress in communication and number skills and in their personal development as a result. There are good systems for the long-term assessment and tracking of children's progress.

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

The great majority of parents are very satisfied with the school. Over 90% of parents believe their children enjoy coming to school, that the quality of teaching is good, that the school helps them to support their child and declare themselves, overall, happy with their child's experience in school. However, one quarter of parents do not feel that the school is preparing their child well for the future. The inspection team found that,

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although this had certainly been the case in the recent past, it is not currently the case due to the improvements in teaching and in the school's assessment and tracking procedures. Similarly, one third of the parents disagree that that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. This reflects certain recent events in the school involving the behaviour of one or two children and the current whole-school focus on improving behaviour. The inspection team judges behaviour in and around the school to be good or better.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Christ Church C of E 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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 305 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	62	32	34	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	34	36	50	53	8	8	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	21	62	65	8	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	26	53	56	10	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	42	48	51	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	28	62	65	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	29	57	60	9	9	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)	19	20	51	54	6	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	25	58	61	7	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	15	45	47	11	12	11	12
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	14	61	64	10	11	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	25	26	55	58	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	45	38	45	2	2	2	2

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.



3 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christ Church C of E (VA) Primary School, Ware, SG12 7BT

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleagues and I very much enjoyed our visit. We enjoyed watching lessons and talking to some of you. You told us you like coming to school and, as a result, your levels of attendance are higher than in most schools. You have a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles and you told us that you feel safe in the school. You work well with your teachers and other adults who help you and as a result, you are making satisfactory progress with your learning. Most of you work hard and try to succeed in all that you do. Well done!

Overall, we judged that the school is giving you a satisfactory education, which means that, although it does a number of things well, some things need to improve. We have asked those in charge to do a few things to make it better.

The school's leaders and managers to support your teachers to make all lessons as good as the best ones, so that you all make better progress.

To help the youngest children to develop their independent learning skills

To give teachers in charge of subjects the opportunity to observe teaching in their subject so that their understanding of how well you are doing across the school improves.

You can help by continuing to behave well and doing your very best at all times.

I wish you well in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis

Lead inspector

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