

Charing C of E (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118739
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339286
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Vale

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	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Cooke
Headteacher	Anne Foulkes
Date of previous school inspection	9 September 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and children. They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents to show what the school was doing to improve and to raise standards. These included the school development plan, evidence of the progress pupils make in classes and across the whole school, data showing pupils' progress, pupils' work books, monitoring information, local authority visit notes and support information, governing body minutes and documentation related to safeguarding. Staff and pupil questionnaire responses were looked at and 56 parental replies and comments were analysed.

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

- the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and checks
- how well the school provides for vulnerable pupils
- pupils' progress and development
- evidence of drive and ambition amongst the leadership of the school and subject managers in raising standards.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average, consisting of four mixed-age classes made up of Reception and Year 1 children, Year 2 and 3, Year 3 and 4, and Year 5 and 6 pupils. Around a quarter of the pupils come from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest minority group is of Gypsy Roma origin. A relatively high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities; of these, most have moderate learning difficulties. An above-average number of pupils join and leave the school part-way through their primary education. After a period of uncertainty, a substantive headteacher was appointed in April 2009. At the time of the previous inspection 14 months ago the school was given a notice to improve. The school has Healthy School status and gained an Activemark award in 2009.

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

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Charing Church of England school has made significant progress over the last year and now provides its pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. As one parent wrote, 'The school has improved greatly in the last 12 months. The staff are all obviously determined to get it right.' The school has tackled its weaknesses with vigour and determination under the strong leadership of the newly appointed headteacher. It has been well supported and challenged by the local authority and the more robust governing body, and has benefited from greater staffing stability. Leaders and governors have a very clear view of what needs to be done to build on the recent successes. Their drive and commitment, together with the advances made since the last inspection, show that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

More rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems have been introduced in order to show key areas of underachievement and to put strategies in place to raise standards. A range of effective support programmes have been established to accelerate pupils' progress. At the same time, teachers have been challenged and supported to expect more of their pupils, although there is still more to do to raise teachers' expectations still further. Pupils' attainment has risen throughout the school to reach broadly the national average. This is a vast improvement on previous year's attainment. Staff are not complacent and recognise that there is still more to be done because there is still a legacy of underachievement.

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although outdoor learning facilities are not stimulating enough for Reception children. The school provides good care and support for its pupils, in particular those that are vulnerable. It has a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and increasing numbers of vulnerable pupils. These children are provided for well through the support of the family liaison officer and the special educational needs coordinator.

Although teaching has generally improved, some inconsistencies remain. Sometimes activities are not challenging enough for the most able pupils and they do not make as much progress as they might. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently as high as they should be, although in good lessons, such as the practical science lesson seen in Year 5/6, pupils are effectively challenged to discuss their findings, thoughts and hypotheses and respond well. Teachers' marking is satisfactory because it does not always give pupils clear enough guidance on how to improve. While

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assessment is much improved in the last 14 months, and teachers are well aware of the differing abilities in their mixed-age classes, pupils are not clear about the targets they should work towards in order to improve their work still further.

Rightly, the school's efforts have been concentrated successfully on pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, there are some good links between subjects, but these are not always systematically built on to allow pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their understanding. Pupils are fortunate because although the school is small, there is a good number of clubs such as trampolining and netball on offer after school for pupils to belong to. Parents say that pupils generally feel safe and have confidence in the adults around. A few expressed concerns about behaviour but inspectors found behaviour to be satisfactory, with good behaviour seen on occasions, such as during the Remembrance Day assembly.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and achievement by improving the quality of teaching so that the vast majority is good or better by autumn 2010 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently to challenge more able pupils to achieve as well as they can.
- setting individual targets for pupils in order to help them to move on more rapidly by understanding their next steps for learning.
- Improve the outdoor learning environment for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In lessons, pupils are generally keen to learn. Staff handle mixed-age groups well and pupils and staff alike respond well to the challenges presented.

Pupils' progress reflects the quality of teaching. For example, in one good mathematics lesson, pupils were engaged fully in their learning as they applied their numeracy skills to calculating areas and perimeters. Progress was good and gains were made at all different levels of ability that the pupils were working at. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and hence overall progress is satisfactory rather than better. In satisfactory lessons, pupils' progress slowed because teachers' expectations of what they could achieve were not high enough. Pupils from Gypsy Roma families are fully integrated into school life and they make similar progress to their peers.

In the recent past, in assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6, attainment has been well below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Successful changes have been introduced to raise standards, for example, letters and sounds are now taught daily. More opportunities for discussion prior to writing have been introduced; specific teaching of relevant vocabulary to the subject being taught has led to the use of a wider selection of vocabulary when pupils are writing. These are having a positive

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effect and are particularly successful in supporting those pupils with learning needs. Standards are rising and confirm that pupils are now satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and the world beyond. Attendance is satisfactory, although some attendance is affected by Gypsy Roma absence when they move around the country.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and this permeates the life of the school, from the healthy snacks pupils eat during the day to their healthy choices at lunchtime and their appreciation of the importance of exercise. They feel safe at school. Spiritual, moral and social development is strong and reflects the Christian ethos of the school.

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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the good lessons, pupils have a clear idea of what they are expected to learn and imaginative and varied approaches are used to stimulate their interest. In satisfactory lessons, expectations are too low and the

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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learning expected of different groups of pupils is not identified. Consequently, progress slows. Teaching assistants are deployed well. The curriculum is balanced and there is evidence of some cross-curricular links enhancing learning, seen for example in a Year 2/3 lesson where literacy skills were being taught through history. Pupils were composing questions they would like to ask women who went to work during the Second World War. This sort of activity helps pupils to see how the different parts of their learning fit together, but is not yet well developed across the school. The curriculum is well enhanced by a range of clubs, visits and visitors to the school.

The good level of support given to various groups of vulnerable pupils is illustrative of the good care, guidance and support provided by the school. It has established effective links with a wide range of external agencies that benefit pupils in need of further support. The provision of a breakfast club both at the school and in the adjoining village held in the children's centre for pupils at Charing school (including the families of Gypsy Roma children) further supports families and pupils are happy to attend.

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?

The school has emerged through some challenging staffing issues. For instance, the school has had four headteachers in the last 18 months which has inevitably led to a feeling of uncertainty amongst some families. There is now a substantive headteacher in place and all teaching posts are filled with permanent appointments. The improvement process has been effectively led by the two advisory headteachers supported by the local authority and school improvement advisor. They quickly identified what needed to be done to bring about the rapid improvement required and secured a common sense of purpose.

A small number of parents commented that they believed morale was low in the school but the inspection team did not find any evidence to show this. In fact there is a real sense of purpose and unity amongst the staff in supporting pupils and helping them to make the progress needed. The momentum of improvement is continuing under the new headteacher. Subject leaders understand that more needs to be done. This is evident in generally realistic self-evaluation and clear plans for improvement. The governing body are more knowledgeable than they were previously. They are aware of the need to act as a critical friend. Funds have been spent on reorganising the school and smartening up its appearance. More is still to be done in this respect but good

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inroads have been made in creating a stimulating learning environment for the pupils. The school has a very clear commitment to equal opportunities, with particularly good support for more vulnerable pupils, but higher attainers still need further challenge. Everybody at the school takes the safeguarding of pupils very seriously and at the time of the inspection child protection and other health and safety arrangements procedures were robust. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion, particularly within the local area, and there are close links and good collaboration with other small village schools around and with the local church. The school is held in high regard by many parents and the family liaison officer works tirelessly to reach out to groups of parents who do not readily engage with the school.

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	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

Children's skills and knowledge, when they join the school, are generally below national expectations, particularly in communication, language and literacy; personal, social and emotional development; and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children adapt well to working and playing with the older Year 1 children in their class, although expectations of what they know and can achieve are not always high enough.

Overall they make satisfactory progress during their time in Reception. There is a satisfactory mix of child-initiated and adult-led activities. The outside learning environment is not ideal. While there is a great space for them to move about in and it is safe and secure, it is not a stimulating learning environment. Resources are limited and lack imagination and there is little to challenge or stimulate a young enquiring mind.

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Children enjoy doing creative activities when they have the opportunity and enjoy participating in make-believe play. The darkened area of the classroom where children could enact bonfire night and learn about the differences between light and dark was very popular in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world. The range of free-choice activities is satisfactory to stimulate enquiry. The teaching of letters and sounds is satisfactory.

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

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents recognise the positive changes that have been taking place over the last year. As one commented, 'It feels like the school has become much more organised and dynamic. I am much clearer of what is expected with regards to my child's learning. My child is always happy to go to school.' However a number of parents indicated that they do not feel that their child is making sufficient progress in their learning. The inspection team agrees that over a period of time there has been underachievement and pupils have not always made the progress expected or that they are capable of. Current inspection evidence, however, shows that this trend has halted and that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in their learning and in some instances, good progress. However, there are still areas where the legacy of underachievement is being addressed. Some parents feel that there is good communication between home and school, while others feel that they are ill-informed about the progress that their child is making. Inspection evidence shows that there are regular parents meetings held to discuss children's progress and there are good links established between the family liaison officer and some families.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Charing C of E 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 inspector received 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 96 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	43	27	48	4	7	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	28	50	25	45	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	25	31	55	8	14	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	36	20	36	6	11	5	9
The teaching is good at this school	22	39	23	41	3	5	2	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	21	32	57	2	4	6	11
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	45	29	52	2	4	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)	18	32	20	36	9	16	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	34	27	48	8	14	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	27	22	39	17	30	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	21	21	38	10	18	7	13
The school is led and managed effectively	15	27	25	45	11	20	3	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	43	21	38	9	16	2	4

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.



11 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Charing C of E (Aided) Primary School, Charing N27 0JN

You may remember that two inspectors visited your school. Thank you for being so friendly and for explaining to us what you were doing when we came to see you in lessons.

Your school has improved recently because the adults have been busy trying to make it better for you. Your school is satisfactory overall. This means that most things are suitable for you. Some things are good and some things need to be better.

The good things include:

- You are looked after and cared for well.
- You all understand about keeping a healthy lifestyle.
- Your behaviour is better than when inspectors visited last.
- You enjoy learning.
- You are making better progress in your learning than you did previously.

The areas we have asked the school to improve are:

- To raise standards and achievement by raising teachers' expectations of what you can achieve.
- To ensure that work is always challenging enough so that those of you who learn more quickly achieve as well as you can.
- To set individual targets for you in order to help you to understand better the next steps you need to take in your learning.

You can help in this by asking for more challenging work if you find the work too easy.

We have also asked that the outdoor learning environment for the Early Years Foundation Stage be improved.

Yours faithfully

Sue Vale

Lead inspector

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