

Chirton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126314
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340957
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Gillie Baker
Headteacher	Kate Lloyd Jones
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Seven lessons were observed and three teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. The inspector observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's plans, policies, and records of progress made by the pupils and 24 completed questionnaires received from parents and carers.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the rate of progress made by pupils particularly in Key Stage 2 and in writing
- how well the school tracks pupils progress and sets targets designed to raise attainment
- how effectively the school provides for the different needs of pupils with several year groups in each class
- the rigour and effectiveness of the school's checks on its performance.

Information about the school

The number of pupils on roll has doubled in the last three years; nevertheless, the school remains exceptionally small. Pupils are registered in two classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage share a class with pupils in Years 1 and 2. A new building was completed earlier this year, providing office accommodation and an additional teaching space adjacent to the two main classrooms. This has enabled pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 to be taught in two groups every morning. Almost all pupils are White British and none are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has increased and is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs has also increased and is above the national average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties related to speech and language issues. The school has recently received Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. All the teachers are part-time and all year groups are taught by more than one teacher during the course of the week. The school is on two sites either side of the village street. The Chirton Pips pre-school on site is not managed by this school's governors and so is not reported upon here.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It has a number of good features but also several important aspects that need to improve. The school makes the most of its small size by ensuring all the pupils are exceptionally well known by all staff and by each other. This promotes a very strong family ethos in which pupils' personal development and self-esteem are promoted effectively. The behaviour of pupils is outstanding throughout the school day, with older pupils showing quite exceptional care and consideration for younger ones, and pupils new to the school feeling welcomed and valued from the beginning. Parents and carers appreciate the friendly atmosphere and the good care, guidance and support their children receive. They unanimously agree the school keeps their children safe, and comments such as 'My son really enjoys school' and 'I have found Chirton a very warm, welcoming school' were typical of those received by the inspector.

Attainment is average but fluctuates considerably from one year to the next, with very low numbers in each year group. Pupils make satisfactory progress from starting points broadly as expected on entry to the school. Progress in reading, mathematics and science is stronger than in writing, particularly in Key Stage 2. Pupils are attentive in lessons and keen to learn but teaching, although good in a few lessons, particularly in mathematics, is satisfactory overall as teachers do not consistently match work closely enough to the wide range of abilities in the mixed-age classes. This is especially the case in English lessons. The school does not have an agreed policy for marking pupils' work or providing feedback and there are inconsistencies in the way this is carried out, with missed opportunities to explain how pupils can improve their work. Whilst children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress, the range of experiences provided for them is restricted by the lack of a designated outdoor protected area and by insufficiently coordinated weekly plans to provide the full range of experiences needed by these young children in a class composed mainly of older pupils.

The headteacher, who has a substantial teaching commitment, has a clear vision for improving the school. This has led to some significant improvements since the last inspection, including the addition of a new building and the creation of a third teaching group each morning. She leads a satisfactory range of monitoring activities to check the school's performance and has an accurate view of what is going well and what needs to improve. This ensures that the school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

However, in the absence of a leadership team and any full-time teachers, there is an over-reliance on her to conduct these checks. They are not always carried out systematically and whilst the findings are shared they are not always followed up robustly with colleagues.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress, especially in writing, by:
 - increasing the proportion of good or better teaching in both classes to at least 50% of lessons by March 2011
 - ensuring work is carefully matched to the wide range of different abilities within the mixed-age classes
 - establishing a clear approach to marking and responding to pupils' work by July 2010, ensuring frequent constructive feedback and opportunities for pupils to reflect on the next steps in their learning.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - clarifying the expectations of staff regarding subject leadership
 - increasing the range of systematic checks on the way the school implements agreed practices and improving the way findings are shared
 - enabling governors to obtain all the information needed in order to hold the school to account.
- Improve the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring there is detailed planning of their curriculum by June 2010 across all areas of learning
 - providing a sheltered, secure and designated outdoor area to enable frequent free-flow in and out of doors.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

By the end of Year 6, attainment is average over time, although it fluctuates considerably from year to year with so few pupils in each year group. Relatively few of these older pupils have been in this school throughout their school life, and a high proportion of those arriving later have special educational needs. This impacts on the overall rate of progress and attainment. Evidence from lessons, pupils' books and the school's assessment records shows that boys and girls of all abilities make sound progress in both classes, but relatively few exceed expectations for their age. Progress in writing is less secure than for other subjects, such as reading, on which generous time is spent, and in recent years a few pupils have not made enough progress. This year, progress in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 has increased as a result of the creation of an additional teaching group each morning and more carefully targeted work. However, in a few lessons, progress remains slow for some pupils for whom the work is not carefully matched. A few of the pupils with special educational needs make good progress, responding well to the additional help received; however, progress remains stubbornly slow for a few despite the school's best efforts in partnership with parents and additional adults.

Pupils' outstanding behaviour is exemplified in the way boys and girls of all ages readily

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

play together, return very sensibly to class without adult direction at the end of playtimes, talk positively about each other and co-operate well in pairs and small teams in a variety of situations. Their moral and social development is particularly well developed, for example when passionately debating the destruction of the rainforest, and by the exceptionally sensitive way older pupils care for younger ones on the walk to and from assembly and during it. The Activemark and Healthy School's awards reflect the way the school successfully encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and their enthusiasm and commitment to participate in competitive sport enable the school to 'punch above its weight' in inter-school sporting competitions. Pupils enjoy school a lot and struggle to think of ways it could be improved. They feel safe in school and appreciate the steps taken by adults to look after them and respond if they have a problem. One said to the inspector, 'When I come through these gates, I feel pleased to be here.' Many are involved in helping out in the school and contributing to the local community, for example planning and leading 'wake and shake' sessions, making Christmas cards for each household in the village, setting up the sensory garden or contributing ideas in the school forum. However, despite the obvious levels of enjoyment and strong personal development, their overall achievement is no better than satisfactory, as the level of key skills needed for the next stage of education and overall attendance rates are average and academic progress is satisfactory.

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	1
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

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

The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**2****How effective is the provision?**

Teaching and assessment are consistently at least satisfactory, with good elements of teaching in both classes, frequently in mathematics lessons. Pupils' learning is supported strongly by their own positive and mature attitudes and by the small class sizes throughout the school, with pupils often being taught in groups of less than 12. Pupils are all very well known and this strongly supports the good care, guidance and support received by all and enables early assessments and identification of pupils with special educational needs. Another feature of the good care and support is the way the school successfully nurtures pupils who are potentially vulnerable. A parent of one such child was very keen to meet the inspector in order to say how well his particular needs are being met.

Good learning is achieved when pupils become motivated and enthused at the prospect of a challenge, for example when competing to solve differentiated subtraction problems with a partner, and when work is carefully tailored to different groups needs, as, for example, when young pupils were seen learning to solve problems with money. However, in other lessons observed and from the careful analysis of lesson plans and pupils' books, teachers do not always take full advantage of the small class sizes or make the best use of assessment information to carefully match work to different pupils' needs. Most work is marked, often with celebratory comments but the quality of marking varies between teachers, especially in the books of older pupils. There are few examples of pupils being actively engaged in reflecting on their learning or responding to teachers' comments.

The curriculum is broad and embraces all the required national curriculum subjects. However, the classroom displays do not fully reflect this and there are relatively few displays promoting learning with key objectives, vocabulary or prompts. The school works effectively to overcome limitations in physical education imposed by the small hall. It is introducing new ways of planning the curriculum designed to ensure a progression in key skills. Topics are carefully chosen to avoid repetition in the mixed-age classes. Systems for checking and sharing these plans are not firmly established and at the time of the inspection, some were not readily available. Pupils' opportunities to use computers are satisfactory and have improved after a period of technical hitches. Innovative materials are used effectively to promote personal and emotional education and there is a good range of enriching activities, visits and special events.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a very strong commitment to meeting the needs of pupils and knows them all exceptionally well. She has a clear vision for developing the school and has successfully improved the infrastructure and working practices, for example by establishing this year a third teaching space and an additional group in the mornings, and by establishing effective systems for tracking each pupil's progress and setting challenging targets. These are features of the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. However, leadership responsibilities are heavily reliant on the headteacher who is the only full-time teacher and who also has a substantial class teaching commitment. There are frequent checks on the school's performance but many of them are carried out informally, with findings not always sufficiently robustly recorded and shared. This leads to some gaps in information presented to governors and restricts their ability to hold the school to account. In other ways, the governors fulfil their roles conscientiously but seldom take the initiative in seeking information about how the school could improve further. Governors ensure all the required policies are in place. Safeguarding arrangements are robustly implemented and constantly under review, with an ongoing staff training programme. The staff team work together on checking some aspects of practice, for example looking at new ways of assessing pupils' writing and mathematics. Whilst teachers take on nominal lead roles for subjects or aspects of work, they carry little responsibility for promoting or monitoring the effectiveness of that subject, or formally reporting their findings to their colleagues or the governing body.

The school works effectively to promote equal opportunities. Discrimination is not tolerated, and its inclusive philosophy is reflected in the additional resources and staffing used to meet the needs of potentially vulnerable pupils, several of whom have transferred into the school from other schools. The success of the school's work to promote partnership with parents and carers is demonstrated by the many positive returns received from their questionnaire. The school is a pivotal feature of the local community and plays a strong lead in promoting community spirit. It also has advanced plans, already being implemented, to extend pupils' understanding of diverse communities nationally and globally, for example through the twinning project, exchanging letters and diaries with a school in Slough.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good induction arrangements enable children to settle quickly into the class they share with older pupils. One parent wrote, 'The settling-in period for my child was great.' The children's attainment on entry fluctuates but is broadly as expected, although frequently above average in relation to personal and social development. Their days are divided between doing whole-class activities with older pupils and learning through play with the support of an adult. This is often with the teaching assistant, for example as when seen outside filling a very large flower pot with compost ready for planting. Activities planned for the younger pupils are usually adapted satisfactorily from plans for the older pupils, but there is little systematic overall planning to ensure a coherent balance of experiences across all six areas of learning for these young children. The teacher and teaching assistant carry out sound observations to assess the children's progress and adapt activities accordingly. The children make satisfactory progress and by the end of the year most are working towards the learning goals expected nationally, with some aspects being exceeded, especially personal and emotional development. There is no designated outdoor area that offers security or protection from the weather. This restricts the times and opportunities for children to move freely in and out of doors and the range of experiences that can be provided without causing some degree of disturbance for older pupils in the classroom.

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

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

An unusually high proportion of parents and carers replied to the inspector's questionnaire, reflecting their interest and commitment towards their children's education. Whilst the very large majority supported each aspect of the school's work, fewer than half 'strongly agreed' with most questions. They were unanimous in their agreement about the school keeping their children safe, with almost all agreeing their children enjoy school, and the inspector concurs. Several wrote additional positive comments about the caring and friendly nature of the school. There was only one negative comment and this was about a minor issue.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chirton 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 42 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	58	15	39	0	0	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	25	66	13	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	55	15	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	42	20	53	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	50	16	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	37	21	55	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	50	17	45	1	3	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)	10	26	25	66	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	39	21	55	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	42	20	53	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	39	19	50	3	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	42	17	45	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	53	14	37	1	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



5 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chirton Church of England Primary School, Devizes SN10 3QS

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and seeing some of your work. Yours is a satisfactory school, with several good things and some that need to improve. Many of you told me you feel safe in school and that adults take good care of you. I agree and so do your parents and carers. I was particularly impressed by your behaviour which is brilliant at all times during the school day, in class and outside. The way those of you who are older care for the younger ones is quite exceptional, for example when going to and from assembly. I was pleased you know so much about keeping healthy, enjoyed seeing the fun being had during 'wake and shake' and was impressed by all the sports events you take part in and how well you do in various inter-school sports competitions.

The new cabin is making a big difference to Class 2, with smaller groups each morning and lots of opportunities for individual attention from the staff. In all lessons, you listen carefully and get on with your work very sensibly. You are making sound progress, although some of you make slower progress in writing than in other subjects. The headteacher has ideas about how to improve the school and keeps an eye on how well everything is working. I have asked her, along with the staff and governors, to work together on three things to improve the school even more.

- Make sure all teachers set you work that is not too hard or easy, especially in writing activities, challenge you to do your very best, and give you lots of help when marking and discussing your work to help you think clearly about how to improve and speed up the progress you are making.
- Involve the staff more systematically in carrying out checks on how well the school is doing and make sure the most important things they find out are fully discussed and shared with the school's governors.
- Improve the opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, for example by providing a sheltered and secure area outside where they can freely play and move in and out of doors without disturbing the older pupils.

I am sure you can talk about these and how you might help at your next meeting of the school forum.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly

Lead Inspector

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