

Culvers House Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131103
Local Authority	
Inspection number	341093
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Sarah McDermott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	367
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Lynne Smart-Steel
Date of previous school inspection	6 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' exercise books and looked at data the school had collected on pupils' progress, the school development plan and procedures for keeping pupils safe. Inspectors also analysed the responses to 72 parental questionnaires that were returned.

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

- whether all pupils are making sufficient progress in their learning
- pupils' attendance levels
- whether the teaching is of good enough quality to raise pupils' achievement
- the impact of leaders and managers at all levels in contributing to the school's improvement.

Information about the school

Culvers House is a larger-than-average primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with about a quarter coming from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who need help with language, social skills or mobility is above average. The school houses an Opportunities Base for up to 16 physically disabled learners. It has gained the Activemark award and the silver Arts Mark 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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Pupils do not make sufficient progress in their learning. The school successfully makes sure the pupils are looked after well and enjoy a range of interesting activities, such as themed weeks and after-school clubs, which develop their creative side well. However, it has dwelt too much on these aspects in isolation and not focused sufficiently on raising achievement. The rest of the curriculum is not sufficiently stretching and rigorously planned to ensure all pupils make enough progress. Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science has been low for several years and there is not enough evidence to demonstrate a strong improving trend.

The headteacher, governors and senior leaders rely on significant support from outside agencies. Strategies to improve the pupils' education and well-being have not been successful. Governors are aware of what needs to improve, but have not acted quickly enough to challenge the school's underachievement. The headteacher and outside consultants monitor teaching regularly but the results have not been used productively to pinpoint the professional development required to raise pupil achievement.

Attendance has improved and is now in line with national averages. Behaviour is satisfactory. However, the high turnover of staff, both among the teachers and in the senior leadership team, has had a negative impact on attempts to raise pupils' academic achievement because the school is unable to maintain a consistent and high quality learning experience.

Teaching and learning are good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The quality of teaching elsewhere in the school is too variable to enable the pupils to make sufficient gains in knowledge and skills. Pace is often too slow and recently introduced assessment systems are not being used well enough by teachers to ensure activities are always matched accurately to pupils' needs and interests. Consequently, in too many lessons, learning is lacklustre and pupils do not put enough effort into finding out more. Marking and target setting are not sufficiently consistent or challenging.

Staff look after the pupils well and make the school a safe and welcoming place. As one pupil told inspectors, 'The school is good at taking care of us.' Pupils learn how to lead healthy and safe lives and they willingly take on jobs around the school, such as house captains and buddies. Parents are generally supportive of the school. One parent commented, 'The staff are very friendly and approachable.'

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching and eliminate inadequate teaching by:
 - ensuring activities and the pace of lessons meet the needs of individual pupils
 - providing marking that consistently gives pupils advice on how they can improve their learning
 - providing learning targets that are focused and manageable.
- Ensure the curriculum promotes effective progress in each subject by:
 - providing work that securely builds on pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - developing the teachers' skills to engage pupils more actively in their learning.
- Take more urgent action to raise pupils' achievement by:
 - rigorously evaluating the impact of provision, particularly teaching on pupils' learning
 - using assessment information accurately to track pupils' progress and ensure that learning activities meet their needs.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

After a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. However, the school's own tracking shows that almost half of pupils in each Key Stage 2 class are currently not making the progress they should. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, because of tailored support out of lessons. Pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Other pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make inadequate progress.

Most pupils listen satisfactorily to their teachers' instructions and do as they are asked. However, when teachers expect too little from the pupils and do not set challenging enough activities, their attention flags and productivity drops. The quality of presentation in exercise books is poor. Pupils, even in Year 6, write in pencil and do not take sufficient pride in producing neat and tidy work. When teachers plan interesting activities that capture the pupils' imagination, such as work interpreting bar graphs in Year 6, pupils acquire knowledge and understanding well. Inspectors agree with a few of the more able pupils who said they would like to have the chance to plan and organise how they learn, rather than wait to be told what to do. Some teachers give useful extra little tasks when marking books, but pupils do not follow these up to reinforce their learning.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. Pupils get on well with their friends and most behave well. A few find it difficult to behave appropriately, but with careful management from staff, very little learning is disrupted. Bullying is rare. If any arises, pupils know who to turn to and trust that it will be dealt with effectively by the adults. Pupils know what to eat to help them keep in good health and are quick to make suggestions about

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improvements to school lunches. They got involved in helping to run the Christmas Fair and contributed to devising the behaviour code. They are learning to be valuable members of their neighbourhood by taking harvest gifts to their local church, singing for the Mayor and giving their views on local regeneration.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

In a few lessons, teachers plan different activities carefully so pupils can progress at the best rate for them. However, on too many occasions, work is undemanding or repeats what has been done before. Now and again, learning moves along at a good pace, with teachers setting time limits for different activities but this is not the norm and learning invariably suffers. Pupils are starting to be encouraged to assess their own or others' work, but this is not sufficiently consistent or urgent. Some teachers mark work regularly and boost pupils' morale with positive comments and a few give productive advice on how pupils can improve their work further. However, when colleagues cover for absent teachers or there is a change of staff mid-term, marking suffers. Most pupils have targets for learning, but the format differs between subjects and classes. Pupils are

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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sometimes confused about whether they are working towards the learning objective for the lesson or the target for longer-term learning.

Recently, the best learning has been in mathematics lessons where pupils are organised into sets according to their ability. Elsewhere, the curriculum is not being planned sufficiently with the particular needs of individuals in mind. An exception is the effective strategy to support pupils who find learning difficult by withdrawing them from lessons into small groups or to 'the Nest' with the special needs coordinator.

The breakfast club provides a positive start to the day for those pupils who attend. Established staff know the pupils well and give good pastoral care to them and their families. Support and guidance are satisfactory. For the majority of pupils, the impact is greater on their personal development than on their learning. However, the school works effectively with outside agencies to steer pupils with learning difficulties towards expected progress. Pupils with physical difficulties in the Opportunities Base are helped to integrate positively with the other pupils because of careful and conscientious support from teaching assistants. One mother commented, 'The staff have always been readily available for help and advice when asked.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and interim deputy headteacher have an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school. Despite this, a lack of urgency and drive has led to insufficient improvement. Subject leaders are enthusiastic but new to their role. They do not have a precise enough grasp of the performance of their subject or how well it is being taught by their colleagues. The school improvement plan has well-organised priorities but fails to give precise, small-step criteria against which the school can measure success. The involvement of outside agencies has not had enough impact on improving progress for the majority of pupils.

Parents receive appropriate information and leaders and managers engage with disinterested parents with some success. Governors ensure the school meets all statutory responsibilities. Safeguarding procedures are good. The school understands its context and fulfils its duty to promote community cohesion. Global links are developing, but pupils have limited knowledge of how people from other backgrounds and cultures live in the United Kingdom. The promotion of equal opportunity is not secure. Although the school knows its pupils well and supports potentially vulnerable pupils effectively,

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not all pupils are being given sufficient chance to extend their academic achievement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Many arrive in the Nursery with skills well below those expected for three year olds. Although they make good progression in all areas of learning and make up some lost ground, they leave with skills that are still below expectations at the age of five. Children settle in very quickly, because parents are welcome to stay to play with their children for a while. Staff are well deployed to give good attention to individual children to help them socialise and behave appropriately, so children make particularly good progress in their personal development.

The leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage is both systematic and passionate about learning. Data analysis is strong. For example, the leader identified that writing and recognition of letters and sounds were the least successful of the learning areas, so this year she has introduced more activities to promote these areas. The children thoroughly enjoyed carrying round clip boards and pens to draw and write on and have special group work to concentrate on sounding out letters. However, a few members of staff use incorrect grammar or miss opportunities to extend vocabulary. Staff track the progress of each child carefully and ensure they receive regular individual attention in their learning. Children from the Opportunities Base are particularly well supported. Staff plan a wide range of exciting activities to cover all learning areas. They ask the children for their ideas when planning for the next week and then cleverly integrate their suggestions into positive learning. The outside area promotes learning well. The learning

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journal is used well as a form of assessment easily accessible by staff, parents and children alike. The children delighted in showing visitors photographs in the journal of what they like doing.

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

Parents who returned questionnaires or spoke to the inspection team are pleased with the way school looks after their children. Most feel they receive sufficient information about what their children are learning at school. However, a significant number consider that their children are not making enough progress and parents of more able pupils think the school is not meeting their children's particular needs. Inspectors agree that the school is a safe and welcoming place. They agree that pupils are not all making the progress they should.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Culvers House 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 367 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	68	22	31	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	54	31	43	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	38	37	51	8	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	33	35	49	10	14	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	31	43	35	49	5	7	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	38	35	49	8	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	42	38	53	1	1	1	3
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	25	36	50	7	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	33	32	44	10	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	35	39	54	6	8	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	32	39	54	8	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	33	40	56	4	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	45	31	43	5	7	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



30 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Culvers House Primary School, Mitcham CR4 4JH

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you very much for helping with the inspection by talking to us and showing us what you can do. We agree with your parents that you are in safe hands and we know that you enjoy school.

You get on well with your teachers and friends. Most of you behave well and we are impressed with the way you have improved your attendance so it is now the same as most primary schools. You know how to lead safe and healthy lives. We think those of you who take on special jobs, such as house captains and buddies, are sensible and helpful.

During the inspection, we found that you do not all make the progress you are capable of in English, mathematics and science. Our main concern is that teaching and the way lessons are organised are not always effective enough to help you. We have put the school into 'special measures,' which means that the headteacher and governors will be given special help to improve your learning.

To make your education better, I have asked your school to do three things:

improve the quality of teaching by:

- setting work which is just the right challenge for you
- making sure marking helps you improve your work
- giving you clear and manageable targets to focus your learning

organise lessons and activities to make sure you build on what you have already learnt and help you make faster progress

regularly check that teaching, lessons and other activities are having a positive effect on improving your learning.

We know that your teachers make your school a special place for you. You can all help by continuing to be positive, behaving well and making the most of your time at Culvers House Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Sarah McDermott

Lead Inspector

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