

Chard School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	933/6165
Unique Reference Number (URN)	123927
URN for registered childcare and social care	EY368421
Inspection number	348796
Inspection dates	16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Chard School is an independent preparatory day school for boys and girls aged between two and 11 years of age. The school has a Christian foundation and occupies a series of listed buildings in the centre of Chard, Somerset. A school has existed on the site since 1671 and the present school was established in 1972. Currently 113 pupils are on roll with 36 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, of whom 18 are aged three or under. There are 22 who have their places funded under the nursery grant scheme. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs, although a few have learning difficulties associated with the acquisition of numeracy and literacy skills. The school operates a before- and after-school facility solely for children who attend the school or nursery.

The school aims to provide 'a happy, caring atmosphere, which encourages the pursuit of excellence and enables each pupil to develop his or her skills, whilst being both educationally stimulated and challenged'. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2007 and the Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected by Ofsted's Children's directorate in March 2009.

Evaluation of the school

Chard School provides an outstanding quality of education and is very successful in meeting its central aims. A stimulating curriculum and outstanding teaching ensure pupils enjoy learning, behave extremely well and make excellent progress. The good Early Years Foundation Stage provision ensures children make a good start to their education. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory, although the

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

school's procedures for the recruitment of staff do not meet all the regulations. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, particularly in developing the accommodation, and meets almost all the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and outstanding overall. In accordance with its aims the school provides a stimulating curriculum which includes all subjects of the National Curriculum. A strong focus on the systematic teaching of numeracy and literacy skills is supplemented by a broad range of subjects, uniquely including two modern foreign languages and regular singing. Appropriate policies and plans are in place for all subjects. Specialist classrooms and equipment enhance the provision for music, art, science, information and communication technology and physical education. Additionally, the school makes good use of community facilities, for example to provide additional opportunities for swimming and sports. An appropriate citizenship and personal and social education policy is in place which includes relevant topics, for example the rights and duties of individuals, keeping safe and forming positive relationships. This work is supported by an annual visit from the health education service and several themes are taught in subjects across the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched through, for example, a school orchestra, drama productions, sports events and a good range of after-school clubs.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall and good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers use their considerable subject expertise to set high expectations and to ensure all pupils are challenged. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and display very positive attitudes towards school. Classroom routines are well established and pupils settle quickly to their work. Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils are evident in lessons across the school. Pupils report that they appreciate the small class sizes because they 'get more help from teachers'. They participate very well in lessons and are able to discuss topics in a mature fashion, for example when eagerly giving their views about a set text in English. Teaching and learning is supported by a good range of resources. The school is particularly successful in engaging specialist part-time staff to extend pupils' learning, for example in art and music.

Marking occurs regularly and it often gives pupils helpful suggestions for improvement which are followed up. Also, teachers frequently discuss pupils' work with them so they understand how they are progressing. However, there is some inconsistency between subjects in marking which leads to varying standards in the presentation of pupils' work. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning, but a system is not in place for sharing best practice across the school. Homework is set in almost all subjects and complements work in lessons.

The school assesses pupils' progress regularly and checks their attainment against National Curriculum levels. Pupils make excellent progress and a large number gain the highest levels in English, mathematics and science in national tests at the end of Year 6. Pupils who are experiencing difficulties with basic numeracy and literacy are identified quickly and are given extra help, which is organised by a specialist teacher. As a result, they make considerable gains and almost all catch up with their peers by the time they leave the school. Pupils also make considerable gains in developing their skills in art and music, as demonstrated by the high quality of artwork on display and the excellent school choir.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. Spiritual awareness is promoted through prayer and reflection time in assembly and in singing sessions for the whole school, which engender a collective feeling of self-worth and achievement. Pupils really enjoy lessons because they feel they are interesting and challenging. As one commented, 'Teachers make work fun.' Enjoyment of school is demonstrated by the high level of attendance. The school is particularly successful in raising pupils' self-esteem through encouraging and recognising success. Pupils earn house points and merit awards for achievement, which is celebrated at weekly assemblies.

Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong and display this in their excellent behaviour both in lessons and around the school. They demonstrate a high level of maturity and are pleased to talk to visitors about their work and life at school. Pupils take responsibility around the school, for example by serving on the school council or by acting as house captains and monitors to help younger children. They learn about community services through a range of topics and experience democracy by taking part in school elections for positions of responsibility. Pupils are involved in the wider community by raising funds for various charities, which are chosen following a presentation by Year 6 pupils.

Pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures is satisfactory. The school is a very tolerant community and pupils demonstrate respect for each other's views and differences. Pupils develop an awareness of other cultures in the world through, for example, the study of topics in geography. They also have an understanding of the Christian faith which is supported by links with local churches. However, the school does not have in place a planned programme, supported by visits to places of religious and cultural interest, to ensure comprehensive coverage of the different faiths and cultures in the United Kingdom.

Pupils' preparation for their future lives and education is excellent. They become very confident and independent learners able to discuss issues and to explain their views to others. They also leave school with very high levels of skill in numeracy and literacy.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety in the Early Years Foundation Stage and across the school is good. Pupils report they feel safe and there is an absence of bullying. In the words of one parent, 'Children are polite and are taught to look after each other – you definitely sense it is a happy environment.' Parents hold overwhelmingly positive views about the school, although a few feel the school could take more account of their suggestions and concerns.

Pupils take regular exercise through participating in games and weekly swimming sessions. They have ready access to drinking water and also develop a good understanding of healthy eating through studying topics on food and by eating the healthy lunches.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory. A clear policy is in place and staff have received recent training in child protection procedures. Staff have been subject to clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure they are suitable to work with children and a single register is held to record checks that have taken place prior to a new appointment. However, the school does not always confirm a candidate's employment history or seek references as required and does not keep a register to record checks on the suitability of the proprietors. Detailed health and safety policies are in place, which cover all aspects of the school's work. Fire drills are held regularly and fire-fighting equipment is checked by a specialist company.

The school has a plan for increasing access to the site which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for children under three years of age is good and fully meets the requirements of the Early Years register. The provision and outcomes for children in the Nursery and Reception classes are good. Children get off to a positive start and they make good progress in all areas of learning and enter Key Stage 1 with skills and knowledge above that seen nationally. Good leadership and management ensures that the children are well cared for and helped to settle quickly. The welfare of all the children, including the under threes, is very well met – staff know the children well and are very responsive to their needs. Children achieve particularly well in communication and personal and social development. They learn to cooperate, share and take turns, for example during snack time when the youngest children in the Nursery cut up and eat fruit. The children get on extremely well with adults and with each other; their behaviour is excellent. Through daily phonics sessions the children are enabled to develop confident reading and spelling skills. Most reception children are able to write their names and create short stories which they have produced as books. All children transfer to Year 1 as confident readers due to the school's strong promotion of this key skill. Effective teaching helps the children to learn successfully. Children work with sustained interest, lots of enjoyment and perseverance, for example when they decorate gingerbread men as presents for

'Father's Day'. Assessments are regular and enable staff to keep close checks on the children's learning and development. However, staff from the Nursery and Reception classes lack the opportunity to moderate one another's assessments through first-hand observation or to share best practice. The provision is good with suitable resources for all areas of the curriculum. The indoor environment is satisfactory with purpose-built facilities in the Nursery for creative play. There is free access to an exciting outdoor play space, although, due to its location, Reception children need to be accompanied to use it. The partnership with parents is very strong and makes a valuable contribution to children's learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of Governor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff carry out appropriate checks to confirm previous employment history and seek character references (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure members of the Governing body have received a CRB check and their identity has been confirmed (paragraph 4B(4) and (5))
- in relation to each member of the body of persons named as the proprietor, keep a register to show whether a check was made of: his/her identity and whether an enhanced CRB check was carried out and a certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(6) and (7)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- sharpen the monitoring of teaching and assessment, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to ensure that best practice is shared across the school
- extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different cultures and religious traditions in the United Kingdom.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?		✓		
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		✓		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?		✓		
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		✓		

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	Chard School		
DCSF number	933/6165		
Unique Reference Number (URN)	123927		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY255492		
Type of school	Preparatory Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	July 1968		
Age range of pupils	2–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 44	Girls: 42	Total: 86
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 13	Total: 27
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys:	Girls: 6	Total: 16
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,965		
Annual fees (childcare)	£1,380–£1,515 (per term)		
Address of school	Monmouth House Fore Street Chard Somerset TA20 1QA		
Telephone number	01460 63234		
Fax number	01460 68988		
Email address	headmaster@chardschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr J G Stotesbury		
Proprietor	Board of Governors		
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI		
Dates of inspection	16 June 2010		