

Chestnut Lane School

105 Chestnut Lane, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, HP6 6EF

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- In the words of one staff member, 'This is a fantastic school and the children who attend here really do thrive.'
- Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are very high compared to those reached by pupils in other schools.
- Children receive a good start to their school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they are taught well by a highly committed team.
- Behaviour is exemplary throughout the school day. Pupils of all ages play and work together harmoniously. They are very friendly and eager to learn at all times.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. All staff work really hard to provide a safe and stimulating environment for the pupils.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work. They appreciate the excellent communication they enjoy with the school.
- The headteacher has considerable ambition for the school and drives a clear focus on improving already high standards.
- A high proportion of teaching is outstanding and it is never less than good. This enables pupils to make quick and sustained progress in all subjects.
- As a result, all groups of pupils, regardless of their level of ability or special educational needs, are doing very well throughout the school.
- Teachers are skilled at planning interesting and challenging activities. The curriculum provides numerous opportunities to enrich learning and this contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.
- Learning support assistants are highly skilled and work closely with teachers in tight knit teaching teams, providing excellent support for the pupils with whom they work.
- Leadership and management at all levels, including governance, are outstanding and have a direct impact on the quality of teaching together with pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They visited 10 lessons, of which six were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons, to two assemblies, looked at pupils' work in books and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with leaders and managers including nine governors, staff and pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met informally with parents at the beginning and end of the school day and took account of the 77 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as individual communications from parents.
- A number of documents were viewed, including the school's own information about pupils' progress, the school's checks on its own effectiveness, the development plan, information regarding checks on teachers' and the school's effectiveness, records of how pupil premium funding is spent and its impact, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding documents.
- The inspectors analysed 20 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Gay Whent, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janis Warren

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Chestnut Lane is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in Nursery and two Reception classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- Only a very small number of pupils are supported through the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by local authorities and children of service families) which is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is also below average.
- The deputy headteacher is currently supporting a local primary school. An acting deputy headteacher has been appointed from the school's staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the existing high-quality practice in marking by allowing all pupils to reflect upon and learn better how to respond to teachers' comments on their next steps for improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Whatever their starting points, pupils' progress is good or better across all age groups from Nursery to the end of Year 2. A large number of pupils make very good progress.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with literacy and numeracy skills which are at the expected level for their age. Children settle well, quickly learn to cooperate and develop good social skills; effective teaching means that all children make at least good progress.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve exceptionally well in reading, writing and mathematics, including the most able, compared to all pupils nationally; this has been the case for the last five consecutive years since the school's last inspection.
- A very small number of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. Their needs are identified accurately and effective support for their particular learning needs is quickly put into place so that they achieve as well as other pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs attain well and most make good or better progress. This is because teachers set their work at just the right level of difficulty and provide highly effective support and guidance whenever it is needed.
- Reading is a high priority in the school. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading. Less able readers, pupils from minority ethnic groups and those learning English as an additional language know how to use their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to pronounce words that are unfamiliar to them. Books are celebrated throughout the school; fostering a joy of reading is evident across all age ranges. Parents show huge interest in their children's education and many attend the Friday morning 'drop in' where the focus is on reading.
- Pupils present their work well and their books show that they take care with their handwriting. They apply what they have learnt across the curriculum very well. One Year 2 pupil wrote how they might feel as an eyewitness to the Great Fire of London. 'I can smell smoke and I'm terrified. I feel scared, frightened and afraid.'
- Teaching engages all abilities and most able pupils are given further challenges, whether this is in reading, writing or mathematics. One child in Reception who recorded that her fruit drink was 'sweet and strawberry' was asked to explain why she liked it, using the word 'because'.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching across the whole school is clearly evident. The quality of teaching over time is never less than good and successfully motivates young learners of every age to succeed and do well. Lessons are well paced and lively.
- Teachers say that the team atmosphere of the school allows all teachers to continually support and reflect on the quality of learning. One said, 'All pupils are seen as important individuals by all members of staff who support and care through every aspect of learning.' It is clearly evident that discrimination is not tolerated and achieving equal opportunities for all pupils are every adult's aim.
- Well-planned lessons meet the needs of all pupils and each boy and girl is encouraged to 'aim high'. Each teacher works with pupils to agree what they must, should or could achieve by the end of the lesson.
- Other adults, such as the learning support assistants, support and question pupils effectively, not only to test their understanding but also to extend their learning.
- All adults take great care in fostering good relationships where every child is important. As a result, disruptive or inattentive behaviour is extremely rare.
- Classrooms are calm, purposeful working environments. Pupils focus well on whatever activity they are undertaking. Their enjoyment of learning is visibly apparent.
- Teachers' marking in pupils' books from the early years onwards is extremely helpful,

concentrating on verbal feedback until pupils are able to read their teacher's comments. Green highlights immediately show where pupils have been successful in their learning. Although next steps are clearly outlined in yellow, not all pupils have the chance to reflect upon and respond to these comments and learn how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- All parents unanimously agree that their child is happy at the school and well looked after. One parent wrote, 'We have found Chestnut Lane to be a caring community and superb learning environment.'
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school has carried out several surveys about behaviour involving pupils, staff, parents and governors. As a result, action plans have been put into place. Where lunchtimes were highlighted as a potential 'flash point', midday supervisors attended training on positive play. This has not since been a cause for any concern.
- Pupils demonstrate many attributes of very good behaviour for learning; they try hard, persevere and show resilience when tasks are difficult.
- At the heart of this exemplary behaviour are the excellent relationships between pupils and adults, which are a real strength of the school. This is seen in lessons, whole-school assemblies, whether they are held inside or outside, or in the dining hall. At all times, behaviour is impeccable.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe in school; they are being taught how to keep safe in a range of situations, including when they use the internet. Pupils know exactly what to do if another child makes them feel uncomfortable in any way. Almost all parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) agree that their children are safe.
- Attendance is consistently above average and yet still improving – pupils' enjoyment of school is clearly evident from first thing in the morning when many skip along, happily meeting their teacher at their class gate right through to the end of the school day. The phased starting time ensures that punctuality is not a problem.
- The school is a very safe and high-quality learning environment. Pupils in Year 2 have compiled their own safety poster where they have written a series of questions which they use as a checklist on a regular basis, as shown by dated comments.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and has a clear vision of how teaching teams working together ensure high-quality teaching and learning. This approach has had a huge impact in creating a culture where teaching, together with pupils' good behaviour, is able to flourish.
- Senior leaders, together with very effective middle managers, focus sharply on ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential, that they have equal opportunities to prosper and that there is no discrimination. This vision is shared throughout the whole school community.
- Learning environments, whether inside or out, are bright, cheerful and attractively presented. Teachers plan using resources which are interesting and highly appealing.
- The school's curriculum successfully promotes and sustains a thirst for knowledge and a genuine love for learning. The school values its Rights Respecting School Award, where pupils are noted as 'being excellent ambassadors for their school'. This is an example of how the school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding beyond Chestnut Lane to include national and global dimensions.
- The primary school sports funding is carefully allocated and used to extend opportunities for pupils, staff training and how to sustain a healthy lifestyle. An action plan has been drawn up and its impact being carefully monitored by governors.

- Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and fully in place.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are overwhelmingly enthusiastic for the school. They are a well-informed team who are exceptionally well organised and highly effective. Governors are keenly aware of the drive to improve the quality of teaching so that is the very best for all learners. They monitor the performance of teachers and ensure that this knowledge is used to reward good teachers, as well as to tackle underperformance if necessary. They understand how well pupils are achieving, compared to all schools nationally. Governors readily ask questions to clarify their understanding and ensure that extra funding, such as the pupil premium, is used effectively. Governors take full advantage of training opportunities which they carry out with teaching staff on a very regular basis. They visit school often and are well known to parents.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110294
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	432077

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Begley
Headteacher	Christine Plimsaul
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2009
Telephone number	01494 727 415
Fax number	01494 725 969
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