



Chestnut Lane School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110294
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278403
Inspection dates 3 July 2006 to 4 July 2006
Reporting inspector Graham Lee AI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	105 Chestnut Lane
School category	Community		Amersham
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		HP6 6EF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01494 727415
Number on roll	202	Fax number	01494 725969
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr David Begley
Date of previous inspection	9 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Searle

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 3 July 2006 - 4 July 2006	Inspection number 278403
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a popular infant school serving an affluent community. Hardly any pupils are entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a small minority from a variety of other cultural backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Attainment on entry is well above average. The headteacher is currently on long term sick leave.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors and school leaders agree that this is a good school with outstanding features. Pupils achieve well and enjoy everything that the school has to offer. They behave well and have very positive attitudes to learning. The school takes good care of its pupils. This is recognised by most parents who are very supportive of the school and all that it does for their children. A small minority of parents, however, do not find the school welcoming and do not feel that they are listened to sufficiently. The school provides good value for money.

Children make a good start to their learning journey in the Foundation Stage and almost all reach the expected goals because of the good teaching and stimulating environment. In Years 1 and 2 they continue to make good progress because of the good teaching they receive. By the time they leave, pupils reach high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys do not reach quite the same levels as the girls in reading and writing because their starting point is lower. The curriculum is outstandingly creative and innovative and the exciting outside environment is really enjoyed by parents and pupils.

The school has been effectively led by the headteacher for many years. She has established a committed and able staff team who are well supported by a strong governing body. During her absence the deputy headteacher has led the school successfully to maintain the good quality of education and high standards of care. All key issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the school is well placed for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise boys' attainment in reading and writing still further to match that of the girls.
- Improve the partnership with parents so that they feel confident that their views are taken into account.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills and understanding that are wide ranging but well above average overall. Girls often arrive with better skills in communication, language and literacy than the boys. Good teaching and a stimulating learning environment ensure that children quickly become successful and confident learners. By the time they move into Year 1, almost all reach the goals expected for children of that age and many exceed them.

Good teaching and an interesting and creative curriculum ensure that pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 towards the challenging targets that are set for them. When they leave the school they reach standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science that are significantly above average. Girls, however, are doing

better than boys in reading and writing, with more reaching the higher levels, because of their better starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make as much progress as their peers. Similarly, the few pupils learning English as an additional language make rapid progress and are helped to acquire the language quickly which enables them to play a full part in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including the social, moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions, is outstanding. They are enthusiastic about everything school has to offer and particularly enjoy activities that allow them to experiment and try things for themselves. Their attendance is consistently good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and most work hard to improve their work. Their behaviour is good and most are polite and helpful.

Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the school community. The school council take a pride in their work and are confident that their views are listened to and taken into account. At a wider level pupils raise money for a variety of charities. A particularly striking example of pupils' growing awareness of the wider world is the developing link with a school in Kenya. The garden planted with African crops is providing a fascinating focus for this work. This work develops pupils' appreciation of the environment as well as deepening their understanding of global issues and their effect on people in Africa.

Pupils feel secure in school and have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe and what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. One commented, 'I really like this school and teachers help us to keep fit and healthy.' Their good basic skills, confidence with information and communications technology (ICT) and positive attitudes to learning means that they are well prepared for the transfer to junior school and the world beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils reach high standards because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and have high expectations of their work and behaviour. As a result, pupils behave well and have very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers make good use of interactive technology to engage learners effectively and often plan lessons which motivate and inspire them. For example, in a Year 1 literacy lesson, the teacher excited pupils to write through gradually revealing the contents of a 'magic box' whilst generating questions to spark their imagination. Teachers generally plan well to meet the needs of all their pupils. They enjoy a good partnership with teaching assistants who make a valuable contribution to the quality of education, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Whilst

teachers generally cater well for the needs of the more able, in a few lessons there is insufficient challenge for these pupils to allow them to achieve as well as they might. Teachers are using performance data increasingly effectively to set targets for improvement and to identify pupils who need extra support. Marking and feedback give pupils a clear idea of what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It caters extremely well for pupils' academic needs as well as allowing them to be creative and enjoy their education. Provision for basic skills is strong and ensures that pupils reach high standards. The school is working on a range of initiatives to develop boys' reading and writing even further. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and the few learning English as an additional language are very well supported. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage effectively provides for children's personal and academic development. The school has done much to make the curriculum interesting and relevant to pupils. Some subjects are taught in discrete blocks for a day or more. This allows pupils to focus on them intensively and deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils talk enthusiastically about the recent science and design and technology days. The work produced as a result is of an impressive quality. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection and it is now used effectively to support learning in other subjects. The curriculum is also enriched through regular visitors and additional activities such as yoga, football and music. The school has developed its grounds and gardens very well to support pupils' understanding and appreciation of the environment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils is good with outstanding features. It enables pupils to feel very secure and cared for within a community where they are fully included and valued. Health and safety procedures are regularly reviewed and potential risks carefully assessed. Arrangements for the safeguarding of children are good. Pupils are taught how to take care of themselves and to make healthy and safe choices, for example through the very successful walk to school initiative. Teachers and other adults give learners confidence and enable them to enjoy all aspects of school life. Pupils' academic and personal progress is carefully monitored. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and the few at the early stages of learning English are well provided for. A nurture group effectively supports vulnerable pupils with social and emotional needs. The school has a generally positive partnership with parents who feel that their children are very safe, well cared for and that they make good progress. One commented 'Chestnut Lane is a very happy place and my child simply loves school. Teachers are kind and caring and offer an excellent range of educational activities.' However, a small minority do not feel confident in approaching the school and do not feel that sufficient account is taken of their views.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. This ensures that pupils learn within a supportive environment where every child is valued. As a result, pupils' personal development is outstanding and they achieve well. The headteacher has led the school effectively for many years. She has established a committed and able staff team. During her temporary absence, the deputy headteacher has picked up the reins very successfully to ensure that pupils continue to receive a good quality of education. This is acknowledged by several parents. Governors are committed and enthusiastic and offer a good balance of support and challenge to the school. Key issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the school is well placed to improve still further.

Through rigorous monitoring of its work, school leaders are aware of the strengths of the school and have put in place strategies to bring about improvement when weaknesses are identified. Subject leaders are fully involved in this process and monitor provision in their subjects very effectively in their areas. The need to improve boys' reading and writing still further has been identified and is being tackled through a range of innovative approaches. The school is well aware that further work needs to be done as the impact has not yet been seen in terms of bringing standards of boys' reading and writing in to line with that of the girls. Governors consult parents about school improvement through an annual questionnaire and on a range of other issues although not all are confident that their views are taken fully into account.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to your school a few days ago. We really enjoyed our time at Chestnut Lane and you all helped us by being friendly and keen to talk to us. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

You are very proud of your school and you are right to be because it is a good school. You really enjoy everything you do at school and feel safe and happy because all the adults look after you so well. We thought your behaviour was good and you all seemed to enjoy your lessons and work hard. You get on well at school because the teachers and other adults help you to learn and there are lots of fun things for you to do. Those of you who find things a little more difficult are given plenty of help. You get better and better with your reading, writing and mathematics before you move on to junior school.

We were sorry that we were not able to meet your headteacher who has led the school well for a long time. Your deputy headteacher is doing a very good job with the help of all the staff to make sure that the school is still working well. We have asked them to help some of you, particularly the boys, to do even better with your reading and writing. You can help with lots of practice. All the staff are keen to make the school even better and we want them to work with your parents so that can happen.

Yours truly,

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector