



Chater Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117159
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 279998
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. David Jones LI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Southsea Avenue
School category	Community		WD18 7NJ
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01923 221060
Number on roll	211	Fax number	01923 481300
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Neil Hart
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Meena Modi

Age group 3 to 7	Inspection dates 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	Inspection number 279998
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one HMI and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Chater Infant school is situated close to the centre of Watford, Hertfordshire. The pupils live locally and represent a wide range of social backgrounds. The school is similar in size to most infant schools, although the number of pupils on roll is rising. The proportion of children from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average as is the number learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is greater than in most schools. Attainment on entry is low. Pupil mobility is high.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives good value for money. Self-evaluation is outstanding, although the school's view is more modest than the judgements given by HMI in this report. The school has correctly identified the aspects of provision, for example in writing, numeracy and information, communication technology, which require further development. Standards are below those found nationally but pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress from low beginnings. The quality of provision and the standards achieved in the Foundation Stage are good. The personal development of the pupils is good and their behaviour is outstanding. The relationships between pupils and with adults in the school are very good. Attendance is good. Pupils are happy to come to school; they enjoy their lessons and feel secure. They are well cared for and display very good attitudes to learning. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The quality of teaching is good; marking and the use of assessment to monitor pupil progress is very good. Leadership and management are outstanding; the headteacher and senior staff have raised achievement and provided outstanding support for all learners. Governance is good and valued by staff. Accommodation is cramped and most teaching areas are too small for the pupil numbers. The school has made very good progress following a period of instability and the capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards, especially in writing and number work, by further developing the curriculum review recently initiated - continue to develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support literacy and sequencing skills - seek the support of the local authority to improve accommodation in order to meet the needs of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below average but have risen significantly in the last three years. Inspectors agree with the school that attainment on entry is low and most pupils enter the school with limited language and communication skills. Pupils make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes; this continues in Years 1 and 2 as their command of English develops. The unvalidated results of the 2005 Key Stage 1 assessments were below average in reading and well below average in writing and mathematics. Pupils learning English as an additional language made good progress. However, the standard of boys' writing was well below that of the girls whose performance was close to the local authority average. Overall, two-thirds of pupils made above average progress and the achievement of some pupils was outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities made good progress. In lessons, high quality teaching helps pupils make good progress. A scrutiny of the pupils' work in Year 2 confirms the results of the school's recent assessment indicating that two out of three pupils are making

above average progress. The school sets challenging targets. Although not always successful, it is consistently striving to raise standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are good with some outstanding features. The children love coming to school, they feel valued and enjoy the exciting range of learning opportunities provided. Pupil behaviour is exemplary; happy, polite pupils speak confidently with adults about their work. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the pupils listened intently and knew exactly when to contribute. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children learn to think quietly about life and the world around them. They develop a very clear sense of right and wrong. The pupils learn to respect the wide variety of cultures represented in the school and in the local community. Year 2 children are asked their views about school before they leave and plans for a school council are well advanced. Although most pupils arrive in school with limited communication skills they make good and often outstanding progress toward the skills needed for adult life. Pupils develop a good understanding of the need for healthy eating. The school cook works closely with staff on dietary matters; lunch is a calm and happy experience. Attendance has improved significantly during the last twelve months and attendance targets have been exceeded. Lateness to school has almost been eliminated.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judged teaching and learning to be satisfactory but inspectors found it to be better than this. Pupils make good progress because lessons are well planned, challenging and fun. Strategies for managing the class were very good. The teachers' subject knowledge was often good; lesson objectives were made clear and revisited to gauge success. Outstanding teaching was seen where carefully directed questions and guidance consistently sought to build language fluency and understanding. Most teaching assistants made valuable contributions to the lessons; they were well briefed and had clear roles when working with groups or individuals. A number of teachers and support staff are able to provide direction and guidance in a range of community languages. This important asset is used very well to develop the pupils' command of English. In lessons that were satisfactory overall, there were areas for development. Some tasks lacked pace or failed to engage some pupils' attention; consequently learning outcomes, although acceptable, were not as positive as on other occasions. The use of assessment information to inform teaching and learning is very good. Pupil progress is monitored rigorously and targets are revised regularly. The information generates much debate and informs new initiatives.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school considers the curriculum satisfactory; inspectors believe it meets the needs of the children and judge it to be good. There is well balanced access to the National Curriculum, planning is well structured and the range of topics meets the needs of a culturally diverse community very well. Although there is a strong emphasis on language development, senior managers have identified the need to create further opportunities for literacy and numeracy through other areas of the curriculum. The governors have received dispensation from the statutory requirement to provide broadly Christian worship. Acts of worship are drawn from all major faiths and their common message clearly emphasised. Provision for spiritual development is outstanding. During an assembly about Diwali taken by the headteacher, there was a moment of awe and wonder as candles were lit; a Hindu chant played as the children sat in quiet contemplation. The suite of computers is used well but although electronic whiteboards are being introduced, the accommodation limits the provision of computers and other technology in the classroom. Many classroom spaces are too small for the number of children in the year groups; this limits the range of curriculum experiences teachers can provide.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school believed the level of care, support and guidance to be good but inspectors found it to be outstanding. The role models provided by the adults are exceptionally good. There are outstanding levels of support provided for children with special educational needs. Close monitoring and analysis of pupil performance provides very good information for teachers which are used effectively to plan lessons and individual support. The quality of marking provided in the pupils' books is among some of the best seen by inspectors. Highly relevant comments and notes for improvement are made and followed up the next day. Children are set targets and these provide a basis for the assessment of the progress they make. Year 2 pupils are taught how to judge the quality of some of their own work. The quality of communication with parents is very good and was used to good effect as part of the drive to improve attendance and punctuality. The focus on pupil safety is very good; systems to monitor racism, bullying and child protection meet current statutory requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher has built a strong senior management group in the relatively short period of time that she has been in post. She has delegated responsibility, provided support and held them to account. The monitoring, evaluation and development of performance is outstanding, if a little modest. Senior managers set clear directions that have helped raise standards and promoted high quality care and provision. The quality of teaching is monitored

rigorously and evaluated carefully; support and guidance has been provided by the school's strongest staff and advanced skills teachers. Senior managers have a very strong focus on standards of achievement. The use of assessment information to inform management decisions, teaching and learning is outstanding. As a direct result, the promotion of equality of opportunity is excellent and has helped all pupils to achieve as well as they can. Inspectors judge all major areas of the school's provision to be good or better. The headteacher and governing body have worked hard to achieve financial stability and resources are used well. However, the school's accommodation does not provide sufficient space and flexibility for the demands of the curriculum. Some teaching areas are too small for the number of pupils on roll in this increasingly popular school. The governors know the school well; they visit regularly and call on this first hand experience when making decisions. Teachers value the support and challenge provided by the governing body. The core subject coordinators form a strong group appropriately focussed on curriculum development and standards of achievement. The responses received to the parental questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. The school has made very good progress since the local authority inspection of March 2004, just after the appointment of the headteacher. The school's capacity to improve is good.

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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	1	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	4	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	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

I would like to start by saying a big thank you to everyone for being so nice to us when we visited your school recently. We know you like coming to school and think it is a good place to learn and we agree with you. These are the things we liked about your school: We think you all behave really well and we like the way you look after each other and are kind to each other when someone is feeling sad. We think your teachers plan interesting things for you to do in lessons. You are trying hard with your reading and number work but you could do more to improve your writing. All the people working at your school really care about you. They work very hard to keep you safe and help you get better at your work. Your teachers already know how to use the computers to help you learn. But to make your school even better we think it would be good if the teachers were able to use the computers even more to help you learn. Some of your classrooms are small and you need more space to work in. Many of your parents wrote to us and said how much they liked your school. Please thank them for me. I hope to meet you all again one day.