

Chalton Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109487
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	310003
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Philip Mann HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	44
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Debbie Charman
Headteacher	Miss Elizabeth Noble
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Luton Road Chalton Bedford Bedfordshire LU4 9UJ
Telephone number	01525 872354
Fax number	01525 872354

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chalton Lower School is a smaller than average school in the village of Chalton, near Luton. There are 44 pupils on roll, including 11 children within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Reception. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Pupils are mostly from white British backgrounds, with a small number from minority ethnic groups. A very small number are from families whose home language is not English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The number of pupils who either join or leave the school other than at the normal times of admission is well above average. Attainment on entry fluctuates year-on-year, due to the small size of year groups. The school has recently been through a period of staffing instability and is being led and managed by an acting headteacher on secondment. Some staff have been very recently appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Chalton Lower School provides satisfactory levels of effectiveness. Issues related to staffing have been addressed successfully and the school is now entering a phase of growth and development. This view is reflected in the school's latest assessment of itself. A positive climate for learning now exists because of the range of initiatives implemented successfully by the acting headteacher this term. This is valued greatly by the parents who wish to see the school succeed for the benefit of the whole community. Comments such as, 'The school in my view has made a complete turnaround. My child is happy and is learning.' support this view.

Pupils attain average standards by the time they leave the school at the age of nine. However, rates of achievement have been inconsistent in the recent past and this is particularly so in writing where standards are currently well below average for pupils in Year 2. Quick identification of this issue has resulted in a stronger focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy this term and progress is now satisfactory.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. All pupils are responding well to the positive ethos that has been established. They feel safe and secure at school. Pupils display a thirst for learning and are proud to share their achievements with others. Citizenship skills are developed well through activities of the school council and pupils value being part of the school community.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features developing. Teachers work hard to ensure lessons are planned effectively. However, sometimes, time and resources are not always used to best advantage to ensure that lessons are always good and that all pupils make at least good progress. The curriculum is appropriate and a range of interesting activities provide good levels of enrichment. Pupils are well cared for and safeguarding arrangements are robust. Their progress is monitored carefully and teachers provide effective levels of guidance to pupils through their careful marking.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, clear direction with a stronger focus on learning is now evident in the recent good level of improvement in many aspects of the school. Governors are enthusiastic and supportive. Previously they have played little part in monitoring the school's work but are now keen to play an active role in the future development of the school. Teamwork is now a strong feature amongst the staff and much has already been achieved. Capacity for future improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start in the Reception year the term after their fourth birthday at levels which vary year-on-year, but which are currently below that expected. This is particularly so in communication, language and literacy. Provision is satisfactory overall with a number of developing features, such as children's personal development, which is now good. All staff working with children of Reception age work effectively as a team. Planning is detailed and covers all the areas of learning for children in the EYFS. The quality of teaching in the long-term has been satisfactory, although during inspection, good teaching was observed. Leadership and management of provision is satisfactory. Staff display a strong sense of teamwork and demonstrate good levels of care for the children. An appropriate focus is being placed on the teaching of phonics and early literacy skills. Good use is made of the outdoor area to enhance

learning and link it to work done in the classrooms. Procedures for the ongoing monitoring and assessment of the children's development are detailed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in pupils' writing across the school.
- Ensure teaching and learning are consistently good or better.
- Use self-evaluation effectively to monitor the school's work and raise standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils make generally satisfactory progress to attain average levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 4. However, standards have fluctuated because of factors such as the high proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school, low numbers of pupils in each year group and a period of staffing instability. These variations are particularly noticeable in writing at Key Stage 1 where pupils lack the necessary phonic skills to help them write new words. Such inconsistencies are being rectified with improvements already noticeable in the pupils' work. Pupils who need extra help with their learning and those who speak English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress. Provision for those pupils who are more able make similar progress because learning activities provide them with sufficient levels of challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupil's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is average. Pupils feel safe and secure. They feel very well supported by staff if they need help. All pupils respond well to good opportunities for them to develop a healthy lifestyle. For, instance when participating in the healthy eating programme at breaktimes and aerobic sessions at the start of the school day. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors. Relationships between pupils and staff, and pupils themselves are positive. Behaviour around the school and in the playground is good because activities in the classrooms are interesting, the play areas provide opportunities for creative play and pupils are responding well to the 'Values' initiative to improve personal and social skills. The School Council encourages the children to have a 'voice' within the school. This has been instrumental in making changes to the way the lunchtime play session is organised.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Planning for lessons currently is detailed and learning is effectively matched to the needs of individuals in each class. Lessons are carefully organised and resources such as interactive whiteboards are used well to make learning interesting for the pupils. When good teaching is evident, learning moves along at a pace and teachers provide good levels of challenge for pupils of all abilities. When time is not

used as effectively as possible, opportunities are missed to fully engage pupils in their own learning and teaching is less successful. However, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection.

The good relationships between staff and pupils are an emerging strength fully recognised by many parents. Classroom assistants make an important contribution to lessons by providing effective levels of support to those pupils with additional needs and those needing extra support and care. Marking is developing well following a revision of procedures. Teachers provide good levels of guidance to pupils in what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision is satisfactory. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy whilst ensuring that sufficient opportunities are planned for all other subjects. Pupils' personal development and enjoyment are promoted well through a good range of additional activities and visitors to the school. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils new to the school, pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties enjoy full access to the curriculum. Enrichment activities such as learning French make lessons interesting and enjoyable.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for by staff. Robust child protection procedures exist and all staff are vetted effectively. Procedures for monitoring health and safety are adequate and the necessary risk assessments are regularly made. The needs of pupils who find learning difficult are identified and support plans quickly implemented. The academic tracking of pupil progress is thorough and the monitoring of both personal and curriculum progress is detailed. Pupils are aware of their targets and these are regularly shared with parents. Pupils say that adults are approachable if they need help and that they get good support and guidance in their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting head teacher is providing good leadership and clear direction for the school's work. She has quickly established a positive and inclusive climate for learning and set clear targets for improvement. Teamwork is becoming a strong feature and responsibilities are being distributed effectively amongst staff to raise standards. Governance is satisfactory overall and improving. Although in the past, governors have played little part in monitoring and evaluating the school, this position is being rectified with help from the local authority. The acting headteacher has made a good start in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning this term. The revised plan for school improvement includes appropriate areas for action with a strong focus on raising standards. A satisfactory start has been made to improve levels of community cohesion.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Chalton Lower School, Chalton, Bedfordshire, LU4 9UJ

I would like to thank you all for making me feel so welcome during my visit. It is very clear to me, that you all enjoy being at school and find learning fun. I saw good behaviour wherever I went and couldn't help but notice that you all get on well with each other. Many of you told me that the school is a happy place in which to learn and I agree with you.

Miss Noble is doing a good job to lead and manage the school and she is building up a good team of teachers and support staff around her. They all work hard together to allow you to do your best while you are at school. However, many of you are not writing as well as you could and this is something the staff are going to work at. You can play your part by writing accurately and trying to use interesting words in your sentences.

The teachers use the interactive whiteboards well to make your lessons interesting and provide opportunities for you to work together with your friends. Sometimes parts of lessons are not always as successful because too much time is spent on some activities. This is something that the teachers are going to try improve on to ensure all lessons in the future are good.

The staff provide good levels of care and support for you all; always taking the time and trouble to listen to your concerns. The governors are keen for the school to improve and they will be working more closely with Miss Noble and the staff to plan what to do next to make it better.

Once again, thank you very much for making me feel so welcome in your school and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector