

Chalfont St Giles Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110214
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310221
Inspection dates	7 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Storey (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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	184
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Raf McDonnell
Headteacher	Mrs Elen Peal
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	
School address	School Lane Chalfont St Giles HP8 4JJ
Telephone number	01494 872 160
Fax number	01494 870 560

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and focused particularly on the progress pupils make and the standards they reach, the quality of the provision for reading and writing and how effective the curriculum and other activities are in meeting the needs of all learners. The inspectors attended an assembly, observed teaching and learning in all classes, met groups of pupils, held discussions with the headteacher, the chair of governors and other staff, and looked at a range of documents and at the questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Chalfont St Giles Infant School and Nursery is a slightly smaller than average school. It has a 37 place Nursery as part of its Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); children attend on a part-time basis, with new entrants joining at the beginning of each term as the older children move into the Reception class. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. About 1 in 20 pupils are from White background other than British; very few pupils speak English as an additional language and none is at an early stage of acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much lower than seen nationally and there are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational need.

The school has a number of awards including Healthy School status, Quality Mark, Activemark and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parents frequently use the word 'fantastic' to describe this school and inspectors agree that it is indeed outstanding. Excellent leadership ensures a commitment from all staff to providing exciting learning opportunities, high quality care and very good guidance that, together, result in pupils receiving an extremely good, all round education. As one parent said, 'My son has been thoroughly nurtured, loved, challenged and excited by the nursery and infant school'.

Pupils' personal skills and their social, moral and spiritual development are outstanding. Quite simply the headteacher and her staff firmly believe that happy children are successful children and, from the very beginning, there is a strong focus on caring for them and developing their personal, emotional and social skills. From Nursery onwards they are encouraged to think about how they are feeling and why, and they are sensitively supported to deal with those occasions when they may be sad or angry. This helps to remove any barriers to learning and makes an important contribution to the exemplary behaviour seen. Pupils feel very safe in school. The excellent curriculum ensures they understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and have regular opportunities for physical exercise. A school council has been introduced since the last inspection and pupils are now actively involved in making important decisions about the school, for example the provision of more games equipment for the playground. Older pupils in particular have opportunities to take responsibility within school, for example some are trained as playground leaders. As a school, pupils make an important contribution to their local community through activities such as maypole dancing and harvest festival. The school works hard to develop pupils' understanding of other cultures beyond their own, for example through learning about different festivals, and this aspect of its work is good.

The curriculum and opportunities for learning are seen as something well beyond individual subjects or the confines of the four walls of a classroom. The outdoor environment is highly valued as an important learning resource, particularly in the Nursery and Reception classes where the outside play areas are very much part of the classroom, children go on bear hunt walks in the local area and spend whole sessions at the nearby Forest school. The school is creatively and actively pursuing ways to develop its grounds to extend the opportunities for pupils of all ages to learn outside more often. Visits further afield enhance pupils' learning and understanding. For example, the visit to the National Gallery has resulted in what is, for seven-year olds, an amazing depth of knowledge of paintings and artists. The school capitalises on its links to really bring learning to life, from inviting Olympic rowers into school to forging links with, and raising money for, a school in South Africa through a member of staff and her family. A wide range of clubs at lunchtime and after school enable children to pursue particular interests or to receive additional support. All in all, the wealth of experiences pupils have during their time at this school is highly successful in developing a breadth of skills and knowledge and fostering an enjoyment of learning.

The pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and the teaching that they receive is consistently good or better. The implementation of the creative curriculum and the focus on active and practical learning means that an increasing number of lessons are outstanding. There is a real sense of a purposeful learning journey. Teachers share with pupils what they want them to learn in lessons, encourage them to see the links with their previous learning and share the next steps with them to show how it will help them in the future. Meaningful links are made between subjects. Ongoing assessment means that teachers know all of the pupils really well. The very good use of targets, and marking and feedback, helps pupils to know what they are aiming for and how they can improve. Consequently, overall pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress during their time at the school. There are some variations from year to year in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels at age seven; this is either because some groups have a number of pupils with lower levels of skills on entry or because some children have transferred to their next school early. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 2 standards are consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that together with their excellent communication and social skills pupils are really well equipped for the next stage in their learning and beyond.

Staff, parents and governors speak very highly of the headteacher. As they say, she 'leads from the front' and has been a key factor in bringing about improvement since the last inspection. Not only have all the suggestions for improvement made then been addressed, but she has taken the school to the next level through a determined focus on enhancing pupils' personal development and well-being and daring to do things differently with the curriculum. Rigorous systems have been put in place to regularly assess how well pupils are doing and senior staff track their progress towards

ambitious targets. Those pupils needing extra challenge or help are quickly identified to ensure they are getting the support they need to help them reach their potential. As a result those pupils who are higher attainers and those with learning difficulties make the same good progress as everyone else.

The governing body are extremely well informed and provide exactly the right balance of advice, support and challenge to continue to move the school forward. Staff at all levels are encouraged to take responsibility, contribute to reviewing practice and put forward ideas which cultivates a real sense of common purpose and teamwork. In fact, the adults enjoy being at the school as much as the children do! Whilst the school is rightly proud of its achievements since the last inspection, there is certainly no sense of complacency. Through accurate self-evaluation senior staff know the school extremely well and are committed to exploring ways to do things differently for the pupils' benefit. In particular, they are ambitious to ensure that even more lessons are outstanding. Their plans for the future, together with the successful changes so far, demonstrate that the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Parents are quite rightly delighted with their children's introduction to education. The EYFS is very well led, all the new welfare requirements are fully met and the Nursery and Reception classes epitomise the school's strong commitment to producing rounded, happy children who love to learn. They give every child the best possible start by nurturing their personal and social skills as well as promoting all areas of their learning. As a result they make good progress overall. In some areas of learning, such as creative development, children's progress is outstanding.

Staff make sure they know children and their parents well before they join the Nursery by visiting every child at home. The stimulating learning environments, both indoors and outside, capture children's interest which means they happily leave their parents or carers on arrival and engage purposefully in the many and varied activities on offer. As a result, children settle exceptionally well, develop very good attitudes to school from a very early age and form positive relationships with both staff and each other. Of particular note is the opportunity all children have in their last term in Nursery to spend one session a week at the local Forest school; an environmental classroom that gives children the opportunity to apply their skills to real outdoor experiences. When children first start, their attainments are usually in line with expectations for their age, although the range is wide with some children more advanced and, increasingly, some less well developed, particularly in their personal and communication skills. Staff understand the way young children learn and provide an excellent balance of directed activities and opportunities for children to choose for themselves. The team know how to develop children's understanding through skilful questioning and use frequent observations and assessments of the children very well to inform the next steps in children's learning. Because they know the children so well they are very good at providing the support the less articulate and less mature need to develop, as well as ensuring that those who are further ahead are given suitable challenges. As a result, children develop a broad range of skills across all the areas of learning and an enthusiasm for learning that stands them in very good stead for the move to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement planned strategies to further enhance teaching and learning.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are the children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

¹ Grade 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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

20 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chalfont St Giles Infant School and Nursery, Chalfont St Giles, HP8 4JJ

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when I visited your school recently with Mr Littlejohn. We really enjoyed our time at your school! It was a very busy day for us but we managed to see lessons in every class and playtimes, as well as talk to teachers, governors and groups of pupils. It is very important that we know how good you think your school is so we are particularly grateful to the Year 2 pupils who met Mr Littlejohn at lunchtime and the School Council who talked to him in the afternoon.

You obviously really like your school and lots of your parents are really glad you are there. We can see why! We think it is excellent because the all the staff want the very best for you. They really care for you, make sure you have exciting opportunities, like the Forest school and trips to the National Gallery and help you to understand how you can improve your work. All this helps you make good progress in your learning.

It is a real challenge to make things that are so good even better, but before we left we talked to your headteacher, with some of the teachers and the Chair of Governors about how they could do this. They agree that although all the lessons are good or better, there are always ways to improve. They already have plans to do this and I am sure you will help by continuing to be very well behaved and having such good attitudes to your learning.

Yours sincerely

Alison Storey
Her Majesty's Inspector

