

Chestnuts Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134680
Local Authority	Haringey
Inspection number	328950
Inspection dates	28-29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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

Type of School	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Sinead McGlacken
Headteacher	Ms Cal Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	Black Boy Lane Tottenham London N15 3AS
Telephone number	020 8800 2362
Fax number	020 8880 1372

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chestnuts is larger than average primary school. It opened in 2004, following the amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in two Reception classes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who do not have English as their first language, is much higher than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special needs, is much higher than average. This includes a group of pupils who have moderate learning needs and a group who have behavioural, emotional and social needs. The number of children entering and leaving school during the year is much higher than average. There has been considerable disruption to staffing in recent years. The school has many awards, including the International Award 2009 for developing international learning and the Activemark 2008 accreditation for the promotion of physical activity.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chestnuts provides a good and rapidly improving standard of education. This is underpinned by the excellent care, guidance and support that are provided for the pupils. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and their overall achievement is good. Parents are overwhelmingly positive and these comments sum up the views of many: 'We feel very lucky to have Chestnuts as our local primary and my son is very proud of his school'; and 'Wonderful improvements.'

Central to the improved success of the school is its outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher is inspirational. Together with her deputy, she has been instrumental in significant gains in the progress of underachieving groups, and improvements in attendance and pupils' behaviour. Leaders at all levels have worked particularly well together to secure these improvements quickly and improve the outcomes for pupils. There is a real sense of togetherness among all staff in providing an exciting and stimulating environment for the pupils. Governors know the school very well and have been instrumental in shaping the direction of the school to drive improvements. They support and challenge the school in a most positive way.

From well below average starting points on entry, pupils reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. All pupils, regardless of ability or background, make good progress throughout the school because of the focused support they receive from the teachers and teaching assistants. The curriculum is outstanding. It is tailored particularly well to the needs and interests of all the pupils, who come from a wide range of backgrounds. Pupils' experiences are used well to boost their confidence and to enhance the learning of others.

Teaching has improved greatly since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons, which they describe as 'fun and exciting'. Lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils respond well to the good levels of challenge. However, there is not yet consistency in the use of specialist subject vocabulary in English, mathematics and science, and this means that the rate of progress of some pupils is not as fast as it might be.

Pupils have excellent relationships with their teachers; they behave extremely well and work very well together in class. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of being healthy. They feel safe and, know that their opinions and views are highly valued. They rate behaviour as '8 out of 10' and say that they really look after each other. They welcome the opportunity to take on responsibilities. For example, they enjoy helping others through initiatives such as the 'Peer Mediators', where they offer counselling for their peers, and in the setting-up and running of the school tuck shop. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities and said how much they enjoyed the happy and safe school. When asked to describe the school, one pupil said, 'It's fun - when in class you don't get tired because the teachers are lively.'

Leaders at all levels are very well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although many of the school's strategies have already led to major improvements, the school recognises that it is important to embed and sustain all its strategies to maximise their effect on further raising pupils' achievement. The fact that the school has achieved so much in a time of major disruption to staffing indicates that its capacity to improve further is excellent.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception classes are well managed. The stimulating environment both indoors and outdoors is used imaginatively to build firm foundations for children's learning. As one parent commented, 'The outdoor area is a visual treat.' As a result of effective teaching, from starting points that are well below those expected, children make good progress. However, although improving year-on-year, standards are generally below average by the end of Reception. Children's personal, social, emotional and physical development is promoted particularly well, and in this area they reach standards broadly typical of the age group.

Parents are especially appreciative of the very high-quality care taken of their children, exemplified by well-established routines. Teaching and learning are good. In particular, resources are thoughtfully organised to help children to select things for themselves, sustain concentration and develop independence, confidence and self-esteem. There is a good balance between teacher-directed activities and those that children choose for themselves. A strong partnership with parents and external agencies, such as speech therapists, ensures that children with specific needs are given the help that they need. Many activities promote speaking and listening and children's creative development. For example, when playing in the 'Veterinary Surgery' role play area, children were helped by adults to develop their vocabulary. Staff take every opportunity to talk to children, including those who are learning English as an additional language. Systematic teaching of letters and sounds is helping children to develop early reading and writing skills. However, these lessons are usually taken by the teacher with the whole class, which does not offer enough opportunities for all children to participate fully. There is scope for the skilled teaching assistants to take small groups to help pitch this work at different levels and to allow more individual involvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed all the new initiatives to sustain and maximise their effect on raising pupils' achievement.
- Ensure consistent use of specialist subject vocabulary to accelerate pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From starting points on entry to Reception that are well below those typical for their age most pupils make good progress and attain standards that are average by the end of Year 6. Although standards have fluctuated over the past two years, due to the increasingly high number of pupils entering and leaving the school during the year, progress has improved greatly and is good throughout the school. The 2008 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that standards had risen rapidly to become broadly average and were particularly strong in writing. This was due to an increased focus on writing through the creative topic-based curriculum. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those who have English as an additional language and those who are vulnerable are supported extremely well. This helps them to overcome possible barriers to learning and achieve well in relation to their individual targets. The progress of these pupils has improved considerably since the last inspection. There is reliable evidence to show that the more time the pupils spend in school, the higher their achievement is.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and behave very well. They watch out for one another and contribute to the happy, purposeful ambience. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is evident in their strong awareness and understanding of their own and others' beliefs and the atmosphere of mutual respect that permeates the school. Pupils develop an excellent knowledge and understanding of different cultures. They spoke enthusiastically about the value of working and playing alongside children from other cultural backgrounds. They know their views are valued and have helped to improve the school. They are proud of their roles as playground leaders and peer mediators. Pupils enthusiastically take part in local debates such as the annual Haringey Pupil Voice Conference. They are keenly aware of how to keep themselves safe and the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Pupils gain a good economic awareness. For example, they select and sell items for the snack shop and grow their own vegetables. They were active in the design ideas for the redevelopment of the park opposite the school. These experiences, together with pupils' increasing skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) provide a good base for their future education. The many initiatives to raise attendance, such as the increased involvement of parents in their children's education, are having a significant impact.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Enthusiastic teaching is exemplified in the pupil comment, 'Teachers make lessons fun.' This, together with the excellent relationships between pupils and teachers, results in the pupils being keen to learn. Lessons have good pace, and the imaginative use of ICT promotes effective learning. The work is well matched to the pupils' abilities and there are good opportunities for pupils to share ideas. Teaching assistants know and understand the learning needs of their pupils well and so help the groups they work with to be involved successfully in lessons. Teachers usually explain to the pupils what they should be achieving by end of the lesson. However, sometimes the expected outcomes of lessons are not made clear enough, limiting the opportunities for the pupils to be effectively involved in assessing their own learning. Literacy is used well across the curriculum, but there are inconsistencies in the use of specialist subject vocabulary. However, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson the teacher's use of words such as 'deduce' and 'infer' greatly enhanced pupils' understanding and their problem-solving skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Parents are most appreciative of how well the curriculum helps to motivate the children to learn and enjoy. This is captured in the view, 'I have been impressed by the commitment to both creativity and stimulation for the children.' It offers both variety and opportunity, by providing lessons that relate well to pupils' cultural background and build upon the full range of their interests. Excellent partnerships have been developed in modern languages with local secondary schools. Community languages are supported well and the school hosts a 'language of the month' initiative. The breadth of interesting and engaging strategies offered in day-to-day learning and the school's focus on social and emotional learning make the curriculum outstanding in its contribution to behaviour, well-being and progress relative to starting points. There are numerous after school clubs with high participation. Swimming is just one of many aspects of provision that assist physical development and have led to the award of Active Mark. Pupils grow their own produce in school allotments and are particularly proud of having their own chickens on site.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Support for the happiness and well-being of learners is at the heart of school life. Pupils say that they are always able to confide in an adult if they need to, 'because there's always someone to talk to'. The school's strong commitment to inclusion is evident in the outstanding care for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support for pupils both in lessons and through individual and small group work is managed exceptionally well and means pupils make good and sometimes exceptional progress. The same is true of the exemplary way that pupils at an early stage of learning English are supported. The languages spoken by staff include Polish, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish and Turkish. New children are often partnered with a willing classmate who speaks their home language. Support for vulnerable pupils is outstanding. Staff know their pupils very well and take great care to nurture individuals. Most pupils know their targets well and what they need to do to improve their work. Any underachievement is systematically and successfully tackled through well thought out initiatives that support and guide the pupils well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher has provided the school with a very clear vision and direction that is rapidly coming to fruition. She has reorganised staffing and has made some very good appointments that are resulting in many significant improvements. All staff share a clear commitment to raising standards. Team spirit is robust and everyone's contribution is valued. The school clearly knows its strengths very well and what to do to improve academic achievement. The needs of the pupils remain at the heart of everything the school does. Links with parents have vastly improved since the last inspection. For example, the school offers weekly meetings with parents and pupils for whom English is not their first language. This has greatly helped groups such as Turkish and Somali pupils to improve their progress. The very effective partnerships with other organisations, such as a group of neighbouring schools, have played a major part in the school's improvements. The strong impact of the school's sensitive evaluation of the needs of its multicultural community is one of the reasons that community cohesion is outstanding. Many very strong links with local and international communities, reflected in the school's recent international award, allow pupils to develop a secure understanding of different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Governors are very well informed and both support and challenge the school effectively in its drive towards further improvement in pupils' achievement.

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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?	2
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?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or 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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

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	2
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	2
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.

12 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chestnuts Primary School, London, N15 3AS

We would like to thank you for making us feel most welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing all the interesting things that you do.

We agree with your teachers that your school is a good one. You behave very well and you are most polite. You look after each other well, in roles such as Peer Mediators. You really enjoy coming to school and you are very keen to learn. Your teachers make your lessons exciting and listen carefully to your ideas. The adults in school make sure that you are very safe and well cared for. You enjoy the many opportunities that the school offers, both in lessons and the interesting visits and clubs. We were very impressed by your school garden and by the 'Chestnut chickens'.

Here are two things that we have asked the school to look at to help you do even better than you do at present.

- Keep using all the new and exciting ideas the school has.
- Help your understanding of subjects by stressing the use of specialist words in lessons.

We would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Alison Thomson
Lead Inspector

