

Chater Infant School

Southsea Avenue, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 7NJ

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and leadership team are accomplished experts in education. They have exceptionally high ambitions for their staff and pupils and have delivered impressive improvements to the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and improving. Leaders ensure that they sustain practice where it is strong and bring about improvements where it is not.
- Leaders have created an inclusive school that works very well with the local community.
- The broad and balanced curriculum that leaders have created ensures that pupils, regardless of background, are ready for the next steps in their education.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. The use of support assistants is highly effective.
- Governors provide excellent support and challenge to leaders and hold them clearly to account.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders have ensured that staff are alert to the risks and signs of harm and act effectively when concerns arise.
- Skilful teaching of mathematics leads to exceedingly strong outcomes. Pupils apply their sophisticated understanding of mathematics to real situations very well. Consequently, outcomes in mathematics are very strong.
- Pupils' writing across the curriculum is strong, with excellent handwriting, presentation and sophisticated use of language.
- Pupils work hard in lessons. They are well behaved and take responsibility in their learning, at playtime and while moving about the school.
- Teachers do not always provide enough challenge in subjects other than writing and mathematics. This limits some pupils from taking next steps in their learning, including the most able, and occasionally results in distracted behaviour.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points. Although rising, attainment in the early years is not yet in line with national expectations. Occasionally, children are not given enough challenge to ensure that they make the progress they should.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations for the degree of difficulty in the work they set to sustain pupils' interest and focus
 - the most able pupils are challenged consistently across the curriculum so that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve the effectiveness of early years provision by:
 - raising attainment so that it is in line with or better than the national average
 - ensuring that children are provided with activities that consistently challenge them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders have substantially improved all aspects of the school since the last inspection. Leaders have created a 'no excuses' culture at the school where staff and pupils are expected to be successful in achieving high standards academically and in their personal development. Staff share the same goal of providing an exceptional standard of education within the school's well-established ethos of care and respect. Pupils demonstrate the same high ambition and value their learning as well as the strong relationships they have with adults.
- Leaders have created a strong 'can do' ethos where teachers have the courage to innovate their teaching. Teachers research and implement the most effective practices they can find. After careful evaluation, they share their work with others across the school. Innovations in mathematics, for example, contributed towards the improved attainment of pupils by the end of Year 2. All members of staff who completed Ofsted's online staff questionnaire say that they are trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for the pupils.
- Leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They use high-quality professional development so that all staff perform in accordance with leaders' high expectations. Teachers and teaching assistants value the strong team ethos along with the effective training they receive to support them to improve their work. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment are improving quickly and substantially.
- Leaders carefully evaluate the progress of each pupil and put effective improvement plans in place to enable them to improve their learning. Pupils' progress and attainment has improved markedly because leaders effectively target resources, including skilled teaching assistants, to support pupils' learning.
- Leaders have put pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at the centre of what the school does. Fundamental to the work of the school is serving as a beacon of social harmony within the community. The school's stimulating displays in every corridor, classroom and public space make clear statements about social cohesion and the value of the diversity within their community. British values are very well understood by pupils. Pupils speak articulately about the importance of respecting the rights of others and show that the school's award as a 'Rights Respecting' school is well deserved.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have the opportunities and skills they need to achieve well in school. Leaders carefully plan support for these pupils and evaluate its effectiveness to make changes when support is not producing the desired effect. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress and attain highly in comparison with other pupils nationally.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND is effective. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) uses meticulously detailed analyses of the needs of pupils with SEND to create bespoke support for each pupil. Where certain pupils present needs unfamiliar to staff, the SENCo swiftly brings in specialists who

provide support and training for teachers and teaching assistants. This ensures that staff are very well trained to provide for each pupil with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND make excellent progress from their different starting points.

- Leaders have been successful in using the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium wisely. Leaders have increased the number of pupils engaged in regular physical activities while enriching pupils' learning in PE and sport. Leaders carefully check the club registers and encourage those pupils not taking part to do so. In 2019, leaders added 90 more club places in extra PE or sports clubs than in 2018. Pupils speak very highly of the clubs at the school and make better progress in developing their sports skills because of the provision.
- The broad and balanced curriculum devised by leaders connects pupils' learning in school to the wider world very well. Recognising that many of their pupils speak English as an additional language, leaders have created a 'language-rich' curriculum that ensures that pupils are challenged to develop their use of language accurately and with sophistication. As a result, leaders have been successful in improving attainment in many subjects. Leaders have not yet refined the curriculum and teaching well enough to ensure that the most able are excelling in all subjects, including the key skill of reading.
- Pupils value and benefit from the many trips they take to enrich their learning at school. This is particularly evident in their writing, where pupils apply very well their learning from outside the classroom. Leaders have shaped a curriculum that ensures that pupils learn a wide range of knowledge and skills that make them ready for the next steps in their education. Leaders have not yet successfully developed the curriculum so that in all subjects every pupil, including the most able, advance their use of subject-specific knowledge and skills beyond basic levels. This is particularly the case in reading, a fundamental skill for pupils.
- Leaders have the overwhelming support of parents. Parents are proud of their school and grateful for the substantial improvements that have taken place since the previous inspection. On Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, most parents reported that the school is well led and managed. One parent shared the sentiment of many by commenting that, 'the best decision I made was to send my child here.'

Governance of the school

- The governing body has high expectations of leaders, staff and pupils and works with determination to ensure that leaders aim for the highest quality of education for pupils. Governors are well informed and are not afraid to challenge leaders about the quality of education while also providing effective support.
- Governors evaluate well leaders' use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND to ensure that the money leads to strong progress for these pupils. Governors also make sure that the PE and sport premium is well spent.
- The governing body, through regular skills audits, identifies training needs and ensures that governors have an appropriate balance of skills and experiences. Using this information, they undertake training so that all governors have the skills needed to play their part in continuing the school's impressive improvement work.

- Governors check safeguarding arrangements at the school effectively. They are aware of local safeguarding risks and keep up to date with national safeguarding issues. Their close attention to detail and in-depth understanding of safeguarding allows them to ensure that leaders have effective policies and procedures in place and that they are implemented consistently.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All adults at the school are well trained and vigilant for signs of abuse and neglect. The regular discussions staff have about national and local safeguarding issues ensure that keeping children safe is the top priority at the school. All adults at the school understand what to do if concerns arise about a pupil.
- Recruitment checks on staff are compliant with current regulations to ensure that all adults at the school are suitable to work with children. Leaders ensure that the recruitment of new staff is carried out rigorously. Governors and the local authority carefully and regularly check that leaders maintain these records and procedures effectively and this ensures that they are fit for purpose.
- Leaders work very well with external agencies to provide support for pupils and families who need it. Leaders keep exceptionally well-detailed records that ensure that support is tracked and delivered effectively as agreed with parents and the range of relevant agencies.
- Parents and pupils are confident that pupils are kept safe in school. Teachers make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, whether in school, at home or online. Leaders provide useful information to help parents keep their children safe. All pupils reported that they felt safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The strong relationships between teachers and pupils help to create positive learning environments around the school. Pupils enjoy learning, work hard and commit to achieving their best.
- Teachers question pupils well to develop their thinking and expect pupils to respond using sophisticated language. As a part of the 'language-rich' curriculum, staff use good spoken language and insist that pupils learn rich vocabulary to develop their speaking and writing. As a result, pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, develop their speech and writing well.
- Teachers provide many opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to practise extended writing. Inspectors saw in mathematics, for example, pupils learning how to write paragraphs about their mathematical thinking with great success.
- Pupils take care with their writing and show exceptionally high standards of handwriting and presentation because they are expected to. Pupils learn very well how to write in a range of styles and use techniques learned in lessons effectively. Teachers have high expectations of pupils when they write and carefully show pupils how to write well. Pupils make strong progress in writing.

- In mathematics, teachers support pupils to investigate numbers and develop pupils' curiosity about how mathematics works. Pupils learn how to reason with sophistication and demonstrate that they enjoy mathematics. Work in books shows that they apply their understanding of mathematics exceptionally well in real-world situations across the curriculum.
- Pupils act upon the precise feedback that teachers provide for them. They are not afraid to make mistakes and use the feedback to improve their learning. Pupils speak accurately and optimistically about what they need to do to improve their learning. They show confidence in their abilities to be successful and trust the adults around them to help if necessary. As a result, pupils make considerable progress from their starting points.
- Teachers and support assistants provide timely and effective support for pupils that fall behind in their learning. This support ensures that pupils fill any gaps in their learning so that they make the progress they should.
- Teachers effectively keep parents informed about how well their children are doing in school. Leaders regularly review their communication with parents to ensure that they receive and understand the information sent from school. This ensures that parents can support the school as well as possible. Most parents that responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire reported that they receive valuable information from the school about their children's progress.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. This enables them to teach confidently and effectively so that pupils are interested in what they are learning. Some teachers occasionally do not check pupils' responses to learning activities with enough precision. As a result, they do not reshape tasks as required so pupils do not take next steps in their learning in a timely fashion. This results in some pupils not making the progress they should or becoming distracted in their learning.
- The teaching of subjects across the curriculum is improving, but teaching in some subjects, including reading, has not yet reached the same high levels of effectiveness as subjects such as writing and mathematics. Teachers do not always stretch pupils' thinking in these subjects, particularly the most able, so that they move beyond a basic understanding of the knowledge and skills required to be fully proficient.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are exceptionally curious and show a love of learning that enables them to be very successful learners. They enjoy learning about a wide range of subjects and are very keen to know more. They share their curiosity with those around them and work well in groups, developing whatever they happen to be learning particularly well.
- The school focuses very strongly on developing community cohesion. Leaders, governors and staff very much want all members of the school community to share a sense of commonality while valuing cultural differences. Pupils live up to the school's expectation that they respect the rights of others and value the diversity that is integral

to the school's community. They talk openly and with interest about each other's cultural backgrounds.

- Leaders have ensured that pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs are supported very well. Leaders provide exceptionally effective preventive measures, including teaching pupils how to look after their own well-being. On the very rare occasions when pupils experience social, emotional and mental health challenges, leaders ensure that issues are quickly addressed.
- Pupils feel safe from bullying and know that staff will help them if they are concerned about the actions of others. Pupils feel well supported by the adults around them whenever they have concerns. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is very rare, and most parents agreed that the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe at school and home. Leaders' focus on e-safety within the curriculum has prepared pupils well for using devices online. Pupils have a strong understanding of the risks online and know how to stay safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are friendly, polite and well mannered. They treat each other, staff and visitors with respect. There are few incidents of poor behaviour, and low-level disruption is rare.
- Pupils conduct themselves well on the playground and while moving around the school. Pupils reported to inspectors that pupils play well together. When disagreements occur between pupils, they often resolve issues without needing adult support.
- During lessons, pupils show determination to learn well, whether independently or in groups. On occasion, when teachers do not provide enough challenge for their learning, some pupils become distracted.
- While attendance has been lower than the national average, leaders have made clear that attending school is important and have worked closely with families to ensure that pupils maintain regular attendance at school. Because of leaders' actions, the proportion of pupils that do not attend school regularly is just below the national average. Overall rates of attendance, though still just below the national average, have improved substantially over recent years.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- As a result of excellent leadership and improved teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' achievement has improved markedly. End of Year 2 results in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018 show that the proportions of Year 2 pupils reaching the expected standard were higher than national averages. Year 2 results in 2018 were also much higher than the school's results in 2016, which were all below the national averages.
- In all year groups, in reading, writing and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are making

good progress. Leaders carefully evaluate the progress of these pupils and provide effective support should they fall behind. For example, leaders have invested in specialist provision for those pupils in need of help with the development of language skills.

- Pupils with SEND make good progress. Adult support outside the classroom leads to particularly good progress in the areas of learning addressed during these special sessions.
- Because pupils are well taught, they read capably and enjoy reading. For example, pupils in Year 1 achieved higher results in phonics than the national average in 2017 and 2018. Most pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to read unfamiliar words. Many pupils report that they enjoy reading at home and show that they value the library by using it well throughout the school day.
- Most-able pupils do well in many subjects. In 2018, the proportions of pupils that reached greater depth in writing and the higher standard in mathematics were above the national average in those subjects. Teachers do not, however, push the most-able readers to take next steps in their learning by reading texts with enough challenge. As a result, these pupils do not have enough opportunity to deepen their skills and understanding of reading. The proportion of pupils that reached the greater depth standard in reading in 2018 was below the national average.
- In subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics, pupils develop strong subject knowledge, skills and understanding. In these subjects, however, some teachers do not always provide the most able with opportunities to do harder work that makes them think more deeply about the subject.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders are ambitious and have set high goals for staff and children in the early years. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and are working effectively to ensure that the quality of the provision matches their ambitions. In 2017, for example, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception rose sharply and continued to rise in 2018, though it remains below the national average.
- Children show great pleasure in their learning. In both Nursery and Reception children learn well and demonstrate that have great fun doing so. Children are curious and enjoy investigating the world around them. For example, inspectors watched a group of children in Reception delighted and fascinated by the challenge of programming robots to move in predetermined directions.
- Leaders recognised the need to improve the learning environments in the early years. They sought and acted upon the advice of external experts to create effective learning spaces. Children now benefit from high-quality learning environments, both indoors and outdoors. Leaders, however, are ambitious to make even further improvements.
- In partnership with parents, leaders carefully consider the needs of the children when they join the school, whether they start in the nursery or Reception. When required, leaders access external expertise so that they can identify needs and create bespoke learning plans for the children. As a result, children with SEND are quickly identified, supported to learn well and make good progress from their starting points.

- Leaders have effective measures in place to support the many children that start in Nursery and Reception knowing very little English. Children acquire language skills quickly in the early years because of the effective support they receive from staff. This ensures that they are ready for the next steps in their education.
- Staff work well with parents to ensure that children make the best start to their education. Parents are regularly sent examples of work home along with activities they can do to help their child make strong progress in their learning. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work in the early years and said to inspectors that staff are easily available for discussions.
- Staff ensure that children feel safe and are kept safe in the early years. All staff in the early years observe children carefully for signs of harm and understand safeguarding procedures if they have concerns. Leaders ensure that staff regularly assess risks in the provision. Children have learned how to assess risk well so that when they play they can keep themselves safe.
- Children are well behaved and understand class routines. They can sustain their concentration over long periods of time and listen well to each other and staff. At times, however, children are not sufficiently challenged through questioning and activities that make them think deeply about their learning. On such occasions, the quality of behaviour declines, as does the progress the children make.

School details

Unique reference number	117159
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053037

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Lamb
Headteacher	Amrit Bal-Richards
Telephone number	01923 221060
Website	www.chaterinfants.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@chaterinfants.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2018

Information about this school

- Chater Infant School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The senior leadership team is made up of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher, who is also the SENCo.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average and the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is slightly higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENCo and subject leaders. They also held meetings with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed lessons across the school and a scrutiny of pupils' books was carried out jointly by one inspector and the headteacher. An inspector listened to a small number of pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and analysed 92 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and 87 free-text responses.
- Inspectors spoke to teachers, support staff and pupils throughout the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of information, including the school's website, development plan, assessment information about pupils' learning and leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, as well as minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lou Nelson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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