

Chard School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	933/6165
Unique Reference Number	123927
Inspection number	316923
Inspection dates	02-03 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Inspection of day care was carried out under the Children Act 1989: Part XA (as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000) and, where funded nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Chard is an independent co-educational preparatory day school for pupils from two to 11. The school has a Christian foundation and occupies a series of listed buildings in the town's main street. There has been a school on the site since May 1671. The 110 boys and girls are mainly from homes locally although some are from much further away. Few of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities and none presently has a statement of special educational need. Children start in the nursery and progress through reception, either part or full time, to the main school. The school ethos focuses firmly on the traditional values of hard work, good manners and discipline, within a happy and caring environment. This ethos is reflected in the school's stated aims which include; *"a happy, caring atmosphere, which encourages the pursuit of excellence and enables each pupil to develop his or her skills, whilst being both educationally stimulated and challenged."*

Evaluation of the school

This is a good school with a number of outstanding features. The quality of education provided is good with outstanding features. For example, the quality of teaching, is consistently very good, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school benefits from staff who are dedicated, enthusiastic and work together with a consistent approach. This has a positive impact on the progress pupils make in their academic, sporting and personal development which is excellent. The quality of care is satisfactory. The school meets most of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. Curriculum policies are clear, and are based on National Curriculum requirements at both key stages. The curriculum for young children in the Foundation Stage is good. The school places an appropriately high emphasis on developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics, which results in excellent standards in these subjects by the end of Year 6. The basic curriculum is effectively supplemented by a very good range of additional subjects, including French from Nursery upwards and, more recently, Spanish. All pupils have a good amount of regular opportunities to be coached in a wide range of physical education, dance and sporting activities, including weekly swimming lessons. In addition, there

is a wide range of extra activities that pupils can take part in voluntarily, such as learning to play a musical instrument or taking karate. Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties. However, as this tends to be at the same time each week for each pupil, it can cut into their access to other subjects such as information and communication technology (ICT), scripture or hockey. Pupils' personal development is planned for very effectively.

The quality of teaching is consistently at least good and regularly outstanding, leading to pupils making outstanding gains in their learning overall. The very good knowledge that all staff have of the subjects they teach underpins the high quality of teaching and learning that take place. Daily lessons promote pupils' basic skills very well and staff use a range of resources, such as interactive white boards to help pupils engage in learning effectively. As a result of the high quality of teaching, pupils gain in confidence and acquire a good range of skills including literacy and numeracy to a high standard. ICT is also used effectively to promote pupils' learning; for example pupils use computers to write instructions or create repeating patterns.

Pupils have access to specialist teaching in a number of areas including French, Spanish, swimming, cricket and hockey. Teachers in Key Stage 2 in particular, teach their subject specialism and this results in an enthusiasm for each subject which is quickly transferred to pupils. Pupils are adamant, for example that "art is fun" and that science lessons are one of the highpoints of their school week. Throughout the school, pupils' behaviour is managed skilfully. This is as a result of the consistently high expectations and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils.

Because classes are so small, teachers know pupils well and can offer support and extra challenge as appropriate. The school carries out an assessment of pupils' attainment on admission, including screening for progress in curriculum areas and in their personal and social development. This information is used well to provide individualised teaching for those who need it. Outcomes from monitoring are used to inform reports to parents and when planning further work. Records are well organised and the school has started to use a computer system of software to track progress and achievement in all subjects. As yet, however, there is little accumulated data to monitor progress or indicate trends.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is good overall. It is outstanding for moral and social development. Pupils say that because the school is small everyone knows each other well and boys and girls get on together well irrespective of age. As a result, pupils are confident and happy and apply themselves to their work and play wholeheartedly. Their behaviour and the attitudes they have towards their work are outstanding and they have very good relationships with teachers and peers. Attendance rates are very high and those pupils who spoke with inspectors said they enjoy being at school, and appreciate the many and varied opportunities on offer.

Pupils' achievements in and outside class are recognised and celebrated, which has a positive impact on developing their self-esteem. The regular monitoring and awards of merits for effort and achievement helps the pupils to appreciate their personal successes and that of others. There is no formal set of sanctions, because these are not needed. Staff are consistent in reinforcing a range of rules that safeguard the pupils and encourage their personal well-being throughout their time at the school. The school effectively promotes aspects of healthy living. It promotes the importance of taking regular exercise extremely well. There are opportunities for older pupils to become involved in decision-making activities and to take responsibilities, but this is underdeveloped across the whole school. There is no school council or pupil forum, so pupils do not have opportunities such as learning to set agendas, minute meetings or lead discussions. However, pupils are generally confident and articulate in expressing their views when asked.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has made appropriate and satisfactory arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. It is a safe place for them to work and learn in. Satisfactory care is taken to implement the sound policies for child protection, although the child protection co-ordinator has not attended recent updates of her training. There are effective systems for prevention of bullying, and ensuring visits outside school, such as the weekly walk to the swimming pool are safe. The teaching of healthy eating and hygiene is undertaken effectively and pupils have a good knowledge of how to make wise choices if they wish to, such as in their diet, as a result. Supervision within the buildings and the playground is good. Children are happy and confident and know that they can ask teachers and other helpers if they need help. Attendance registers are maintained well, however the school's admission register does not fully meet requirements. In addition, as yet, the school has not produced a plan to indicate how it would cater educationally for any pupils who were disabled.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Clearance is obtained from the Criminal Records Bureau for all staff prior to the confirmation of their appointment in accordance with current requirements. These checks have also been undertaken for the proprietors of the school. However the records the school maintains of the checks it has carried out in order to ascertain the suitability of staff to work with children are inadequate. Although the school does undertake checks on staff, records do not indicate that, in all cases, staff have been required to show evidence of their professional qualifications prior to confirmation of their appointment. Medical fitness checks are not routinely undertaken for prospective staff. The school does not have in place a single central register of staffing details that meets the current requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies premises that are Grade II listed and which have formed a significant feature of the town of Chard since the seventeenth century. Despite the restrictions imposed by the building it provides a stimulating environment in which pupils can learn. The premises are maintained well and pupils' work is celebrated in many lively wall displays. Pupils have access to a good ICT suite. Although the site is restricted in space the school has provided a good all-weather surface on which pupils play games and undertake physical education lessons. Other specialist facilities include a science laboratory a library and a modern extension to the nursery.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a wide range of information for parents through its prospectus. This is detailed and provides a good picture of the school for parents of prospective pupils. In addition, comprehensive information is available on the school's website. The website draws attention to a wide range of policies which may be accessed through contact with the headteacher.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clear policy which sets out procedures for complaints. The policy includes responsibilities for dealing with complaints and is clearly displayed for all to see. Its procedures fully meet the requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- Ensure that regular updated training is provided for the named child protection officer (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- Maintain the admission register to meet requirements (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff ensure that all required checks on identity, qualification and fitness are carried out and that

the information is kept by the proprietor with the required details (paragraphs 4(2)a, 4c(2 and 3), 4c(4 and 5), 4c(6 and 7)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Providing a wider forum for pupils to develop their skills and responsibility for community life.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Broad, balanced planning and practitioners' good knowledge of their children and the Foundation Stage curriculum ensures children make good progress across the six areas of learning. Planning is flexible and incorporates children's interests, such as discussions stemming from a child bringing in a rabbit's skull. The play environments are interesting and exciting and the wealth of high-quality resources supports children's development.

The strong emphasis on learning through topic work and planned, purposeful activities means that children are well motivated to learn. Children are given clear direction by practitioners, for instance, children are encouraged to reflect on their past experiences and build on these to enhance learning, for example, autumnal pictures and cooking activities.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children have a strong sense of self; they show respect and have a positive disposition to learning. They behave exceptionally well which has a significant impact on their learning. They are clear on routines and boundaries and listen attentively to instructions, for instance, within the nursery children finish their activities when they hear the bell and are keen to help to tidy away ready for the gym.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are well-informed about the provision and their children's achievements through daily discussions, parent consultations and written reports.

The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is good. Within each unit practitioners have established excellent teamwork. However, there is little liaison between the nursery and reception classes to ensure consistency in the use of observations and the sharing of expertise, such as the completion of assessments using an IT programme in order to ensure children's next steps in learning are addressed.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of the nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- develop consistency in ensuring observations of the six areas of learning are used effectively to support children's progression towards the early learning goals.
- develop opportunities for liaison between practitioners to ensure consistency within the Foundation Stage and the sharing of good practices.

School details

Name of school	Chard School		
DCSF number	933/6165		
Unique reference number	123927		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY255492		
Type of school	Preparatory Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	July 1968		
Age range of pupils	2-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 34	Girls: 46	Total: 80
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 16	Girls: 14	Total: 30
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 15	Girls: 11	Total: 26
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4380		
Address of school	Monmouth House Fore Street Chard Somerset TA20 1QA		
Telephone number	01460 63234		
Fax number	01460 68988		
Email address	headmaster@chardschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr J G Stotesbury		
Proprietor	Board of Trustees		
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes AI		
Childcare inspector	Rachael Williams CCI		
Dates of inspection	2-3 October 2007		