

Caslon Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103801
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	376967
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	Charalambos Loizou HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephanie Sellers
Headteacher	Adrian Pembleton
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2007
School address	Beeches View Avenue Halesowen B63 2ES
Telephone number	01384 818875
Fax number	01384 818876
Email address	info@caslon.dudley.sch.uk

Registered childcare provision	Beecher Bear Day Care – EY442448
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	11
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	N/A

Age group	3-11
Inspection date(s)	25–26 January 2012
Inspection number	376967



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Introduction

Inspection team

Charalambos Loizou

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Bailey

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 17 lessons and observed nine teachers and some teaching assistants. Inspectors heard pupils read and scrutinised their workbooks. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils, and inspectors spoke to some parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and evaluated questionnaire responses from 93 parents and carers, as well as 95 responses from pupils in Key Stage 2 and 24 from staff. Inspectors scrutinised the arrangements to safeguard pupils. They also looked at the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation, as well as assessment data that teachers use to monitor pupils' progress. The registered childcare provision was inspected.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The governing body manages the on-site registered childcare provision for 11 children aged two during term time. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. Others come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are represented by pupils of Yemeni, Pakistani or African heritage. The percentage of pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language is well above the national average. A high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and a significant number join or leave the school at different times each school year. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above that of most schools. The main areas of additional need include moderate or specific learning difficulties, such as speech and language, or emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The school does not meet the current government floor standards for primary schools, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has a number of national awards, including the Eco Schools silver award and Healthy Schools' status.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the achievement of pupils in English and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2, and to the consistency and pace of pupils' learning across the school to sustain a rise in attainment.

- The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate because there remain pockets of underachievement. Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics has declined since the previous inspection and has been too low for a number of years.
- Children's attainment is rising sharply in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, reflecting improvements to the teaching.
- Teaching is satisfactory and an increasing amount is good or outstanding in both key stages. Some strong teaching, particularly in Year 6, is boosting pupils' progress so the school is well placed to meet government floor standards this year. Despite these improvements, pupils' achievement remains uneven as many whose attainment was previously too low are still catching up on lost ground, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Provision and outcomes for children in the registered childcare and the school's Early Years Foundation Stage are good. These lay secure foundations for children's acquisition of early literacy skills and their personal development.
- Pupils behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. There is strong pastoral support and very effective nurture programmes for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. This also reflects the school's good provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- The leadership team has the capacity to improve the school. Well-devised initiatives and training are improving the teaching. However, leaders have not set themselves clear milestones in the improvement plan to evaluate pupils' progress and staff performance in order to eradicate all underachievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement consistently across the school in English and mathematics by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to read and write more extensively to improve their core literacy skills
 - providing more opportunities for pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, to edit their work and improve the accuracy of their handwriting, spelling and punctuation
 - building on the good start children make learning letters and sounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to sustain the rise in attainment in reading and writing in all classes
 - providing pupils with opportunities in all lessons to use and apply calculation skills to more challenging and varied problem solving tasks in mathematics lessons.

- Improve teaching in order to accelerate the pace of learning and sustain a rise in pupils' attainment by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessments of pupils' progress more robustly to plan tasks that are better matched to the abilities of all pupils
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to reflect and assess their own and others' learning, and time to consolidate and deepen their understanding
 - providing more ambitious learning targets for all pupils which help them to understand the next steps towards achieving higher levels.

- Improve the impact of leadership on the quality of teaching and learning in all classes and ensure that:
 - there are clear milestones and stages in the school's improvement plan which specify who manages, monitors and evaluates pupils' progress and teachers' performance
 - teaching in all classes has a consistently good impact on pupils' learning and progress by January 2013
 - teachers take more responsibility for checking pupils' learning and assessments in order to intervene sooner if pupils are not making enough progress towards their targets.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The latest national test results for pupils in Year 6 confirm that attainment in English and mathematics declined compared with previous years. With the exception of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, pupils made inadequate progress, particularly in English, although there is also underachievement in mathematics. The improving profile of the teaching is showing encouraging signs as attainment is rising, but there are still too many pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6, that are either catching up on significant lost ground, or are not making enough progress. Consequently, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 is well below average.

The majority of children join the Nursery or Reception class with skills and abilities that are well below those expected of three- and four-year-olds. They make good progress in their social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy. Although below average, an increasing proportion of children are reaching age-related levels by the time they start Year 1. In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress, which was reflected in last year's assessments. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 is rising sharply and continues to edge closer to the national average. The good foundations laid for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage when learning letters and sounds (phonics) are bearing fruit in Year 1 and Year 2 as, with increasing consistency, pupils improve their skills and confidence when reading aloud or writing independently.

Pupils with disabilities or who have learning difficulties do better than other pupils because they are well supported. The interventions planned for them through group work and one-to-one support are having a positive impact on improving their core literacy and number skills.

In lessons pupils show initiative and have opportunities to work independently and share ideas. For example, some children in the Reception class and in Year 1 worked together as a group when sounding out letters. They checked each other's spellings to see if they could help those who made mistakes. Stronger and more consistent teaching is helping the current Year 6 pupils towards reaching the government floor standards. However, across the school there are inconsistencies, as pupils' workbooks show irregularities in the quality of their writing and the development of their understanding of calculation and number in mathematics. This pattern is also a characteristic of the progress made by pupils learning English as an additional language or those known to be eligible for free school meals. In lessons, pupils are increasingly expected to read and write independently, but some make common spelling errors and the form and structure of their writing is not consistent. In mathematics, pupils are able to apply calculation skills to solve problems, although some make mistakes when deciding which form of calculation to use as there are gaps in their knowledge of number operations that hinder their progress.

The responses from parents and carers indicate generally positive views although a significant minority rightly feel that some of their children could achieve better in the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

Quality of teaching

The large majority of parents and carers who returned inspection questionnaires or were spoken to by an inspector hold positive views about the teaching. Some rightly pay tribute to the good support, care and attention that adults provide for their children. The teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall and, increasingly, there is good or outstanding teaching. Teachers have reviewed their planning and, with increasing consistency, are using assessments to tailor work to meet pupils' individual learning needs and to accommodate those who join the school at different times of each school year. However, the pace of learning is not consistent across the school as pupils are not always given enough time to read and

write more extensively, or to practise and consolidate what they have learned. Pupils' writing is marked regularly but some teachers are more vigilant than others when correcting pupils' work. In some cases pupils write without any assistance but make too many errors before an adult intervenes to correct their writing. In mathematics, most teachers are diligent when marking calculations, but occasionally work is marked as correct when it is clearly not.

The strongest teaching responds well to pupils' needs, but less effective or inadequate teaching is not ambitious or responsive enough to pupils' different abilities. This is also evident in some workbooks where the quality and accuracy of pupils' writing has not improved sufficiently over time and lessons miss opportunities to explain the next steps needed for pupils to reach higher levels.

There is a positive climate for learning reflecting the school's good commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The most effective teaching enables pupils to benefit from opportunities to work with others to solve problems or generate ideas. This was seen to excellent effect when pupils in Year 3 constructed well-punctuated sentences to compose interview questions about characters. In Year 6, pupils were able to quiz each others' understanding of shapes, demonstrating well their understanding of the properties of shape. Both examples illustrate how teachers are increasingly providing opportunities for pupils to assess their own and others' work, but this is not regular or consistent enough in all lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because there are effective assessments of their progress that result in targeted interventions to support them.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy school, which is reflected in above-average attendance rates and good punctuality. The large majority of parents and carers, pupils and staff that responded to questionnaires rightly believe that behaviour is good in the school and that pupils are safe and well cared for. Pupils behave well in lessons and at other times throughout each school day. Effective mentoring and weekly nurture sessions have a positive effect on the most vulnerable pupils, including those who have emotional or behavioural difficulties, or who are finding it difficult to settle if they join from other schools. Pupils respect each other's views and are usually attentive, responsive and keen to ask questions in most lessons, although some lose their concentration if the teaching is not demanding enough of them.

The school's records and pupils' views confirm that pupils are usually well behaved. Pupils spoke with confidence about the 'red' and 'yellow' card warning system and confirmed that this is of great benefit to them both in and out of lessons as one pupil stated, 'It really works you know, and we can do a lot more work in lessons because everyone understands what the cards are for.' Pupils feel safe and many have stated that they trust that adults will deal effectively with any rare incidents of bullying. School councillors and monitors are given the responsibility of seeking or representing the views of other pupils. For example, the editorial team of 'reporters' include pupils' work and views in their termly issue of the 'Caslon Chronicle'.

Leadership and management

Leadership has been strengthened since the appointment of the headteacher just over a year ago and, very recently, the deputy headteacher. The school's leaders are providing an effective range of professional development for teaching and support staff. This is improving the quality and consistency of the teaching, although there is still more to do to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. The headteacher's ambition and positive approach to leading the school have galvanised the staff to focus more sharply on raising pupils' attainment. Accurate evaluations of teaching are undertaken to iron out inconsistencies in pupils' learning. This demonstrates that the school has the capacity to sustain improvements and, although there remains underachievement by some groups and individuals, an increasing proportion of pupils are reaching the expected levels for their age and the quality of teaching is improving.

The governing body supports and scrutinises the work of the school but has yet to formalise a systematic process of monitoring visits. The governors' committees include appropriate links between the school's team leaders and individual governors which are helping to challenge the performance of the school. A start has been made in setting out a detailed structure to improvement planning and monitoring, but the plans do not include staged milestones or quantifiable measures of success from which leaders and governors can evaluate how well the school is doing. Half-termly checks by teachers have helped to measure the pace of learning in each year group. However, there remain inconsistencies in pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics, because teachers' marking, reviews and checks are not robust enough to ensure that all pupils reach their learning targets.

The curriculum provides practical topics that combine different subjects and include an extensive range of visits and visitors. Booster work and effective interventions support those who find learning difficult. For example, the early morning information and communication technology sessions offer mathematical challenges that broaden pupils' understanding and improve their self-confidence and learning. There is a commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity, reflected most in the strong pastoral support and care provided for pupils. Pupils also benefit from their direct experience and understanding of the diversity of ethnic and cultural traditions in the local and wider area. Many participate in a good range of sports and activities which improve their health and well-being. There is a strong community spirit fostered by school leaders which is evident in the many visits and visitors that are organised, including stimulating opportunities to meet authors and illustrators of published children's literature. There are good links with other schools in the learning network that provide opportunities for pupils to learn about children's lives in Gambia or to visit places of interest.

At the time of the inspection all safeguarding requirements were being met and, as well as being in line with statutory requirements, there are robust risk assessments of all school activities and resources.

The Early Years Foundation Stage delivered in the registered childcare provision

The registered childcare provision is located next to the school’s Nursery class and shares the same entrance. There is an effective self-registration process, which is supervised well by key workers and improves the children’s independence. Secure procedures ensure a safe hand over of children to their parents or carers. Parents and carers have expressed very good levels of satisfaction and there are warm and trusting relationships between children and with adults. The two-year-olds integrate well with older children in the school’s Nursery and Reception class, for example during stimulating music sessions. Children use the varied indoor and outdoor spaces and resources well to learn through exploration. They cooperate well with other children, although they get restless when time is wasted when children enter the setting after outdoor play. The staff provide good one-to-one and group support at snack times. Snacks are healthy and children are able to select from a range of fruits. Children express themselves well and talk and listen to others, improving their language and creative skills. The children are able to count out items or describe colours when selecting materials to stick on to a picture, and this enhances their understanding of shape and extends their early language skills. Regular observations and assessments of children’s development are collated and communicated to parents and carers using well-devised records compiled as ‘Learning Journeys’. The setting is managed well and provides a secure environment for the children. Self-evaluation and robust risk assessments ensure that the children learn and play in a hygienic and safe environment. There are good links with families which are enhanced by home visits and special workshops.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage of the registered childcare provision, inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage for the registered provision	2

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Caslon Primary School, Halesowen, B63 2ES

Thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. Many thanks also to those of you who completed the inspection questionnaires. The inspectors enjoyed meeting and talking to many of you, as well as observing some of your lessons.

The inspectors were pleased to see that you behave well and try hard in lessons. Your attendance at school has improved and is now above average compared with other schools. Well done to you and your parents and carers for improving this. The children in the registered childcare provision, and the Nursery and the Reception class are doing well, especially learning their letters, sounds and numbers.

While there are many positive things, the school is not doing enough to help you all do as well as you can in reading, writing and mathematics. The inspectors have judged that the school needs a 'notice to improve' and have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to make some urgent improvements. This means that another inspector will visit the school to check that it is making enough progress. In particular, we have asked that your teachers make sure that you continue to reach higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics and to build on the satisfactory start already made in most classes. We have asked that lessons provide you with more opportunities to read and write and to make sure that teachers check your work more carefully to help you all improve your skills and learning. Some of you are capable of writing much better, that is, without making too many spelling mistakes and with well-formed handwriting and accurate punctuation. Some pupils are not doing as well as they should in mathematics so inspectors have asked that you have more challenging problem-solving tasks as well as time to check your own work. This will help you understand how to get the correct answers. These things are starting to improve so we have asked your headteacher and the governors to make more careful and timely checks on how well you are all doing.

You can all help too by carrying on trying hard and keeping up your much improved attendance.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

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