

Castle Hill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	133177
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	381482
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2012
Lead inspector	Brian Oppenheim

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorraine Balcombe
Headteacher	Pete Talbot
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2009
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	8–9 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim

Additional inspector

Barry Wood

Additional inspector

Carol Vant

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 29 lessons taught by 13 different teachers and held meetings with pupils, staff and the governing body. They evaluated pupils' achievement over three years, progress in lessons and in pupils' books, and the school's assessment data. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They investigated pupils' attendance, observed the school's work, looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning, and listened to pupils read. Inspectors also analysed 55 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers.

Information about the school

This school is a larger than average-sized primary school and includes a Nursery and a Hearing Impaired Unit. The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school serves an area that has high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. A well above average proportion of pupils start or leave school mid-way through the year. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average and an increasing number start school at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or who have special educational needs is well above average as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. These needs relate to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs as well as Autistic Spectrum Disorder. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the school's Nursery and Reception classes. The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club for pupils. These are run by the governing body and were therefore included as part of the inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

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

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Parents and carers appreciate the way the school cares for and supports their children and listens to and acts on their concerns. Although improving, the school is not good because there are inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' rates of progress.
- Overall, achievement is satisfactory although attainment is below average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, attainment is better in mathematics than in reading and writing. Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall and gain in their confidence and self-esteem because they are supported well. Parents and carers are appreciative of the support their children receive.
- Satisfactory teaching means that most pupils make the expected progress in their academic and personal skills as they move through the school. There is some good teaching. The support provided by teaching assistants is effective. In a few lessons, teachers use questions well to get pupils thinking but this is not consistent. There are also occasions in lessons when the pace of learning is slow and work is not well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is satisfactory. The school provides a safe environment for pupils and works effectively with those pupils who could be classed as potentially vulnerable. Pupils are confident that any type of bullying is dealt with promptly. Attendance remains below average but is improving over a sustained period.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body provide satisfactory leadership which is linked to managing the performance of the school and striving to improve the quality of teaching. They have a clear vision for the school and are overcoming significant challenges. The role of middle leaders in leading teaching and managing performance has improved well since the last inspection. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is presently led and managed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, is satisfactory overall but more effective in the Nursery, where children make a good start to their education.

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Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers set work that meets the needs of all pupils in the class from the less able to the more able
 - the pace of all lessons is brisk so that it extends pupils' learning more quickly
 - teachers use more open-ended questions to extend pupils' learning by getting them to think.
- Improve attendance by:
 - rigorously following up persistent absentees
 - ensuring that all pupils are excited by and enjoy their lessons.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that a member of staff other than the headteacher or deputy headteacher is responsible for leading this area.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the Nursery class with skills and experiences that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in the Nursery where the range of activities and the support of the staff helps children to develop their skills well. In the Reception class, achievement is satisfactory and although children are able to initiate their own activities, opportunities for them to use and develop their vocabulary are more limited. By Year 2, pupils achieve satisfactorily but their attainment is below average, especially in reading and writing. Although parents and carers believe that their children achieve well, pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory. Their attainment remains below average in mathematics and in English, including reading.

Rates of progress are improving and the school is steadily closing the gap in attainment compared to the national average in reading and writing. One of the reasons for this is the school's emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills. Daily phonics sessions are helping to improve their knowledge of sounds and spellings. In addition, effective teaching assistants provide good support for pupils experiencing difficulties in their learning, which helps them to make similar progress to other pupils.

Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall but gain considerably in confidence and self-esteem and have a sense of pride when they complete their work successfully. The high proportion of pupils who start school at different times in the school year are often at

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the early stages of learning to speak English and have little or no experience of education in this country. The school's work with these pupils is closing the gap between their performance and that of other pupils, but their overall attainment remains low.

Learning is usually well structured and pupils are clear about what is expected by the end of lessons. As a result, they are enthusiastic, and keen to do well and to please their teachers. They display good attitudes to their work. For example, in an English lesson, pupils were preparing a set of instructions as part of their 'literacy week'. They worked together sensibly and thoughtfully in pairs to discuss the sequence of instructions and produced good quality work. The pace of learning was brisk because they were excited and interested by the task and were given clear information about what to do. Where the pace of learning is only satisfactory, this is often because the work does not stretch pupils sufficiently. Pupils all try to complete similar work and the pace of their learning is therefore slow.

The teaching of phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) is satisfactory overall and in some cases good. Pupils enjoy reading but many struggle with difficult words and are not always sure how to sound them out. Sometimes they sound letters that are not there, for example 'brought' instead of 'bought'. Handwriting skills are lower than expected but are improving as a result of focused handwriting lessons.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel that teaching in the school is good. Inspectors judge teaching to be satisfactory and improving. Typically, good features include the relationships between teachers and pupils, teachers' subject expertise and the contribution of teaching assistants to the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. In the Nursery, the combination of activities led by adults and those chosen by children promotes effective learning. Teaching is satisfactory in all other year groups. Most teachers use a variety of approaches to engage pupils fully in lessons. In a phonics lesson, for example, the use of individual whiteboards to write sentences that included words beginning with 'wr' and 'r' encouraged pupils to try out ideas and correct mistakes so that they made good progress in constructing sentences.

Teaching remains satisfactory overall because of inconsistencies in the level of challenge for pupils and the pace of lessons. In an English lesson, three different writing tasks were provided for pupils. However, the level of challenge was similar in each task and some pupils found the work too easy while others found it too difficult.

Parents and carers are very appreciative of the support their children receive. One parent noted that all staff 'go the extra mile and it is greatly appreciated'. Teaching and the curriculum promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately, especially where teachers reinforce good behaviour through effective class routines and pupils learn to work together productively.

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Good assessment practice is evident in some classes, where pupils are shown clearly how to improve their work or given opportunities to share their writing with the class by reading it out loud. Pupils talk about their targets sensibly and know what they need to do to improve. In the best lessons, teachers ask pupils to explain their answers and pupils' learning and thinking are extended well. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school.

The teaching and level of support provided for pupils in the Hearing Impaired Unit is good. This, combined with teachers' strong specialist knowledge, ensures that all pupils in the unit are included in the work of the school. Where pupils are included in mainstream classes, they are integrated well, taking a full part in lesson activities and making similar progress to other pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons and around the school, including in the breakfast club, is satisfactory. There are some good features to pupils' behaviour, especially the relationships between pupils and teachers, the way pupils work and play together and their attitudes to learning. In the playground, older pupils act as 'play leaders' and help younger pupils to use the play equipment. A small number of parents and carers were concerned about behaviour and disruption in lessons. Some pupils also felt that lessons were sometimes disrupted but that around the school behaviour was generally good. Inspectors found that there was some low-level disruption but that this occurs only occasionally, particularly with some younger pupils who have less well developed social skills. However, teachers manage behaviour well, especially in lessons, and this ensures that pupils are able to concentrate on learning.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and that bullying hardly ever happens, including physical, cyber and emotional bullying. They are confident that teachers would deal with it quickly and effectively should it occur. Serious misbehaviour is rare. Pupils feel confident to discuss any problems they might have with adults.

Attendance has improved over the past year but it remains below average overall. The school has implemented a range of strategies to improve attendance, including first-day absence calls to parents and carers and rewards for good attendance. These are having a positive impact on attendance. There is evidence that as pupils move up the school, their attendance improves.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are fully committed to raising the effectiveness of the school. Working together, they have evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses and developed a clear vision for school improvement focused on raising achievement, particularly in literacy. The impact of initiatives can be seen in the trend of improvement in pupils' progress and their attendance, which demonstrates the school's capacity for improvement. The school

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ensures that all pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed and does not tolerate discrimination of any type. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are satisfactory. However, this arrangement means that there is not a dedicated person to lead the area and prioritise improvements.

There are a number of strengths in the leadership and management of the school. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching, professional development and external support have ensured that all teaching is at least satisfactory, with a growing proportion of good teaching. There is a strong commitment from all leaders and teachers to overcome the challenges the school faces and to provide extra support and intervention for pupils and families who may face significant difficulties and barriers to learning. Links with parents and carers are strong and the school is successful in engaging many in its work. The governing body knows the school well and holds it to account appropriately. By monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, and understanding its strengths and weaknesses, the governing body ensures that it provides both challenge and support in equal measure. The Hearing Impaired Unit is well led and managed. All safeguarding procedures and checks meet statutory requirements.

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils satisfactorily, giving them enjoyable and memorable experiences. Links between subjects are planned through a curriculum model that captures pupils' imagination and provides opportunities for them to apply their literacy skills to other subject areas. This supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately.

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.



12 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Hill Community Primary School, Folkestone CT19 6HG

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school and helping us with our work. You and your parents and carers told us that you like being at Castle Hill and that you learn a lot. Your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education. You feel safe from any type of bullying but if it did happen, you know who to go to for help. There is a little misbehaviour in a few lessons but this is dealt with well by teachers.

You work hard in your lessons, enjoy your learning and like to do well. You are doing best in mathematics and your reading and writing are improving because teachers are concentrating on phonics and helping you to write at length. You get on very well with your teachers, who you like a lot. You also get a lot of help from all the adults in the school. This helps your learning and behaviour.

Your headteacher and all the staff know what needs improving in school. We have asked your school to improve the following things to keep your school moving in the right direction.

- Make sure that you all make better progress in English and mathematics by giving you work that is not too hard or too easy for you to do.
- Make sure that lessons don't slow down too much and also make sure that the questions teachers ask you in lessons are designed to make you think.
- Improve your attendance at school so that you all have good opportunities to learn.
- Ensure that there is one teacher who is not the headteacher or the deputy headteacher in charge of the Nursery and Reception classes.

Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit to your school. You can help your school to improve by working hard and attending as often as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Brian Oppenheim
Lead inspector

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