

Great Casterton CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120185
Local Authority	Rutland
Inspection number	358714
Inspection dates	30 November 2010–1 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Georgina Beasley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Markey
Headteacher	Clare Rowbotham
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2008
School address	Pickworth Road Stamford PE9 4AU
Telephone number	01780 762417
Fax number	0870 1400194
Email address	office@greatcasterton.rutland.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed, taught by four teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at policies and procedures, pupils' work, assessment procedures, lesson and curriculum planning, monitoring reports and the school improvement plan. Thirty questionnaires from parents and carers were received and analysed. The inspection was carried out at the same time as that of its partner school in the Rutland Primary Partners federation.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well do teachers use assessment to target learning and accelerate progress, especially for children in the Reception class, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who join the school in older year groups?
- How well does the curriculum help pupils to develop good literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and investigative skills, and their cultural awareness?
- How well does the shared leadership team implement and monitor improvement?

Information about the school

Nearly all pupils in this small primary school are from White British backgrounds. Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the September following their fourth birthday. An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mostly for moderate learning difficulties. More pupils than usual start the school in year groups other than Reception. The school has received the Activemark award for physical activity, and has been awarded Healthy Schools status. There is a breakfast and after-school care club managed by the governing body.

The school is part of a federation, called Rutland Primary Partners, combining with Empingham C of E Primary School some three and a half miles away. The schools have the same headteacher and share a governing body and subject leadership. Pupils from the two schools work together for some activities.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. The headteacher and whole staff team are extremely clear about the school's successes and have clear and detailed plans for driving through further improvement. The school has successfully tackled those areas identified from the previous inspection and sustained its outstanding features. Shared leadership ensures consistency of practice and procedures across the federation. There is good capacity to improve in the future.

Achievement is good and improving strongly. Regular assessments of pupils' learning are embedded in the school's work. The headteacher and subject leaders measure the success of improvement strategies against pupils' achievement and so are clear about what is working, what needs improving and how. Pupils' pastoral needs are paramount, as reflected in the speedy way staff put support into place if there are any changes in personal or family circumstances. This ensures learning is rarely slowed by external factors. The rich curriculum responds to pupils' interests and so pupils enjoy learning greatly. Attendance is high. Excellent behaviour ensures a positive school ethos where pupils feel extremely safe. Excellent partnerships with its federated school, Sports Partnership, church and other local schools enrich the curriculum and make a very strong contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils make good progress due to effective teaching. Some lessons are outstanding when teachers use assessment information highly effectively to target learning by giving specific individual support or challenge. Teachers' oral feedback to pupils is good but the quality of written comments on pupils' work is inconsistent. As a result, many pupils only have a general idea about how well they are doing and how to improve their work independently. Carefully focused support for individuals ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Similar support enables pupils who join the school at different times to settle in rapidly, so they achieve as well as their classmates.

Children get off to an extremely positive start in the Reception class due to outstanding teaching and the excellent way the curriculum is planned and learning organised. In a very short time, every child has extremely positive attitudes and they all relish learning. They all reach levels typical for their age and a majority exceed these by the end of the year. Teachers work closely together to ensure that planned learning and curriculum activities match pupils' different abilities in Year 1. Despite this, learning is not organised to the same high quality to enable pupils to plan and review learning and to practise skills independently.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen consistency in teachers' marking so that pupils know precisely how well they are doing and how to improve their achievements independently.
- Build learning more effectively through Year 1 by:
 - giving pupils more opportunity to plan and review their own learning
 - organising tasks and activities to give pupils enough time in lessons to practise skills independently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children start in the Reception class with skills and abilities expected for their age. Attainment is above average at the end of Years 2 and 6 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. All pupils reach expected levels and many exceed these. Pupils make good progress from their starting points. Tasks in lessons are usually matched to individual abilities and so enable pupils to achieve well. Pupils who are new to the school make good progress and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress.

Pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn effectively from each other when they work in groups, because they share ideas and challenge each other's thinking. They do this particularly well in mathematics lessons. They tackle problems well and work together very well to agree on a strategy. For example, by talking through the strategy with each other, pupils in Years 5 and 6 understood how finding a common denominator helped them to order fractions by size. By the end of the lesson, they were all more confident to solve a similar problem independently and realised that 'Fractions aren't hard after all'.

Pupils feel safe in school because they are confident that adults 'will always listen to their concerns' and will give them good support if they need it. Pupils take part enthusiastically in a number of physical activities including sport and swimming. They make a good contribution to the school community through the eco-club, fair trade group and school council. Pupils have a deep respect for different religions and beliefs, and have strong moral values. Everyone follows the three school rules to ensure excellent behaviour. Pupils have a good knowledge of different cultures around the world through curriculum topics. They are beginning to learn about different cultures through first-hand experience with developing links with a culturally diverse school in Peterborough and a school in Kenya. Pupils are well-prepared for the future through excellent social skills and good literacy, numeracy, problem solving and information and communication technology skills.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use assessment information well to plan tasks at different levels that largely meet pupils' individual learning needs. Pupils sometimes move to another class for literacy and numeracy and this enables them to work with others who are operating at similar achievement levels. Teaching assistants give very good and targeted support to individuals and groups of pupils in lessons. Teachers' questions help pupils to talk through their learning. This supports their understanding in reading and helps them to solve problems in mathematics. Teachers regularly talk to pupils with whom they are working about their achievements and give clear guidance on how to improve. The quality of written comments when teacher mark work is inconsistent. The best comments tell pupils precisely how well they have done and why, and then give clear pointers as to how to improve. The majority detail only pupils' successes, and are not related closely enough to pupils' individual targets. In some lessons, the teacher does not check quickly enough that pupils understand precisely what they are expected to learn and so concentration wanes.

Pupils enjoy learning and developing key skills in different subjects because they are increasingly involved in choosing and planning topics that are interesting and relevant. Boys' achievement in writing has improved because they are more motivated. The school gives pupils 'opportunities to want to write and not just opportunities to write.' Pupils talk knowledgeably about their learning because they remember the many visits and real-life and practical experiences through which they learn. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils

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recall organising and receiving parents to see their museum of Tudor artefacts. Year 3 and 4 pupils remember vividly what they learned during their visit to Burghley House. Excellent partnerships with Schools Sports Partnership and with its federated and other local schools give pupils good opportunity to participate in competitive team sports despite its small size. Pupils embrace the importance of leading fit and healthy lives, although not all make healthy food choices at breakfast club and at lunchtimes.

The school gives excellent care, support and guidance for pupils' well-being. All staff follow safeguarding procedures conscientiously. The school puts support into place quickly when any change in pupils' circumstances is noted. As a result, pupils usually continue to make good progress despite external influences. The breakfast club and after school care club give pupils a calm and positive start and end to the day. Pupils enjoy the activities offered and enjoy the company of older pupils from the neighbouring school. Parents value the induction arrangements and, as one wrote, are '...impressed with how the school introduces pupils into school'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clearly articulated vision is shared by all staff. The team's drive for success has resulted in everyone across the federation working towards the same goals. Relationships are extremely positive and every member of staff feels involved and that their contribution is valued. School self-evaluation is highly effective and has resulted in continued strong improvement since the previous inspection. The leadership of teaching is good and has resulted in considerable improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the way assessment information is used to plan effective learning throughout the school. A particular strength is the way that the progress of pupils with a specific need is monitored to ensure support is as effective as it needs to be to enable good progress to continue during any challenging periods of their lives.

The governing body gives good support to the school and challenges it to account for its decisions. It continues to develop individual governors' expertise in gathering and using first-hand evidence to inform critical questions. All required policies are in place and regularly reviewed for effectiveness. Safeguarding procedures are robust and ensure pupils' safety. All accidents are recorded in detail and a copy sent to parents.

Excellent partnerships make a strong contribution to pupils' good achievement. Shared curriculum activities with the federated school enrich pupils' learning well. Excellent links with the church promote pupils' spiritual development extremely well. Pupils have good opportunity to challenge any form of discrimination through discussion topics in philosophy

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lessons and in assemblies. The school promotes good equal opportunities by putting effective support into place to enable all pupils to make at least good progress. For example, the school has successfully closed the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in writing. Parents value the school's 'real open-door policy' that enables them to speak to someone about any issues or concerns at any time of the day. The school promotes community cohesion well through its excellent local community partnerships and developing national and international schools' links.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children get an outstanding start to school. As a result of outstanding teaching and an extremely well-planned curriculum, all children make excellent progress and many exceed the expected levels for their age by the time they start in Year 1. They make especially good gains in their personal, social and emotional development and language, literacy and numeracy skills. Learning is matched very closely to individual children's needs based on detailed assessments of learning both in school and at home. The children are involved immediately in planning, carrying out and reviewing their own learning. They all thoroughly enjoy everything they do. For example, they were excited to find large blocks of ice under the snow they were clearing from the top of the sand pit. They chattered excitedly about the size and texture of the ice and guessed how long it would be before it melted, based on the current weather conditions. The children are encouraged to bring in items from home to use as a basis for planning learning. They record their ideas and plan subsequent learning on 'mind maps' which they share with adults, before finding the resources they need independently and completing the planned tasks. The review with an adult during and after the tasks helps them to improve on their endeavours and to develop and apply a range of skills. Particularly impressive was the use of a tally chart,

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used to record learning in an earlier activity, to record how many pieces of fruit were required for snack that day matched to the numbers of children in school.

Leadership and management are outstanding. There has been very strong improvement since the previous inspection. All adults have an excellent understanding of how to organise and lead effective learning. Based on extremely detailed knowledge of every child's specific needs, they provide just the right amount of support and challenge to encourage the children to 'have a go' by themselves and so celebrate their subsequent achievements. Stickers on their 'passports to learning' are collected excitedly. The children recognise that these are an award for good learning and achievement and can also explain what that good learning is. Leaders' work with teachers in the federated school's Reception class has resulted in good improvement in children's learning and development in that school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned a questionnaire or who spoke to inspectors are extremely positive about the school. Inspection evidence matches the positive views that pupils enjoy school, that the school keeps them safe and that parents and carers are well informed about their children's progress. A few parents and carers feel that their suggestions are not always taken into account. The school acknowledges that there is more to be done to raise the profile of its work in this aspect. It sends an annual survey to collect parents' and carers' views and plans to extend the regularity of its parent forums. The few parents who expressed a concern about their child's preparation for the future were mostly concerned about transition to the Year 1 because it was a much bigger class. Inspectors noted that the different way that learning is organised in this class also makes transition more difficult for some pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Casterton CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	70	9	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	73	8	27	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	57	13	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	63	10	33	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	70	8	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	60	11	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	47	12	40	2	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	47	9	30	2	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	57	11	37	0	0	2	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	50	10	33	0	0	2	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	47	10	33	2	7	2	7
The school is led and managed effectively	21	70	6	20	0	0	3	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	73	6	20	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



2 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Casterton CofE Primary School, Stamford, PE9 4AU

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. Thank you to those of you who told us so much about your school.

Great Casterton is a good school that is still improving. You are doing a great deal to help to achieve this. We were impressed with your very good manners and your thoughtful and positive attitudes to school and each other. You told us that behaviour is good for nearly all of the time and that everyone is always considerate of each other's safety and feelings. Pupils who join the school during the year value the support and friendship you give to them. We know you are pleased that the school listens to your views and ideas, and particularly that the two lunch sittings are working so well. Your headteacher agrees with you. Most of you choose healthy items at lunchtime and many of you have grown to enjoy the healthy snacks in the after school club. Your enjoyment of school is reflected in your excellent attendance, even on those cold snowy days when most people want to stay at home. Children in the Reception class already have excellent attitudes to learning.

Teaching and the curriculum are good at your school and help you to make good progress. We have asked your headteacher and teachers to improve two things. When marking work, we have asked teachers to give you more precise feedback about what you have done well and the reasons why, and to detail the small next steps you need to work on to help you to improve. You can all play your part by following your teachers' guidance and making improvements to your work yourselves. We also think you are capable of being more involved in planning and reviewing your own learning in Year 1 and having more time to complete it by yourselves, especially as you all do this so well in the Reception class. You can help by sharing your ideas with your teacher and then showing how much you can do and how you are able to extend your learning yourselves.

Thank you again for your welcome

Yours sincerely

Georgina Beasley

Lead inspector

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