

Castle Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124091
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340491
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Ball
Headteacher	Christopher Burton
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom was in school for half a day to inspect the safeguarding arrangements. Altogether, seven lessons and all four teachers were observed. Meetings were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, parents, a representative from the local authority and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised policies as well as planning, the tracking of progress made by pupils and assessment information. Questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 39 parents or carers were scrutinised and analysed.

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

- attainment and progress in writing and mathematics
- the arrangements for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how effectively leaders and managers provide direction and manage change
- the use of assessment to meet the needs of all pupils.

Information about the school

This is a small primary school that serves a rural area. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are none who are in the early stages of speaking English. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties is below average, but the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is above that found nationally. Since the last inspection, numbers have fallen; the school will have three classes instead of four from September 2010. A playgroup on the school's site is privately managed. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months, and is currently on long-term absence. The head of a nearby primary school is providing part-time support during his absence; this arrangement was just over two weeks old at the time 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: how good is the school?**4****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****4**

Main 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 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 way in which leaders and managers provide the school with the capacity to manage change and bring about improvements.

Although the school provides an acceptable standard of education and secures satisfactory and sometimes good outcomes for pupils, staff do not share a common purpose or work together well enough, and, as a consequence of inadequate leadership, there has been too little improvement since the school was last inspected. Staff with whole-school responsibilities work largely in isolation and do not contribute sufficiently to whole-school evaluation or the school's development plan. The headteacher who is supporting the school, had not been there long enough to have had any significant impact at the time of inspection.

The school does not use the information that it has well enough to evaluate its effectiveness and diagnose strengths and areas for development. There is no analysis of the performance of different groups, such as boys, girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Outdoor learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, an issue at the last inspection, has not been improved. The governing body is very well intentioned, but does not systematically monitor the progress of the school improvement plan or hold the school to account for pupils' attainment and progress. It does not meet its duties in law to ensure equality of opportunity and has not taken suitable action to strengthen the way in which the school promotes community cohesion.

School leaders have not been proactive enough in managing change. Curriculum planning has not been revised to take account of the mixed key-stage classes planned for September. The school is no longer able to provide short-term programmes to help pupils who are making slow progress. This is because the teaching assistants with the expertise to lead these programmes have left the school and their replacements have yet to be trained.

The pastoral care provided for pupils is good and all pupils feel safe at school. They learn well about how to keep safe and healthy. They eat and drink healthily at school and take plenty of exercise. Almost all parents and carers are pleased with what the school provides, and staff work closely with them to support learning. However, several parents expressed concerns about the absence of the permanent headteacher. There are good links with external agencies so that some pupils get the additional support they need. Across the school, pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points, and

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standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are broadly average, equipping pupils satisfactorily for secondary school. High standards in art and music are evident in the work on display and the quality of performance in brass instrument playing. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in above average attendance. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider communities. Teaching is satisfactory, and pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory. There are some strong features of teaching, such as the good working relationships that staff establish with pupils. However, there are inconsistencies in the way that teachers use assessment information to plan their lessons. In a few lessons, planning is not sufficiently thorough to ensure that all pupils are given work that is challenging enough. At times, some pupils are also provided with additional help when they are capable of working independently.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and staff share common goals and work towards these as a united team
 - all staff and governors contribute to whole-school development planning and self-evaluation
 - assessment information is used effectively to evaluate the impact of provision on the outcomes for all groups of pupils
 - statutory duties are met in relation to equality of opportunity and the promotion of community cohesion.
- To accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards further, improve the provision by:
 - developing curriculum planning so that it reflects the organisation of pupils into the class groupings planned for September
 - making more effective use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils are given challenging tasks in lessons and can be as independent in their learning as possible
 - implementing plans to improve the outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are suitably trained so that they can support pupils' learning by leading small groups.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Although standards vary from year to year, this is partly because cohorts are small. In both 2009 and 2010, standards at both key stages were average. For some years, pupils have done better in English than in mathematics, and much better in reading than in writing. There has been some success in raising standards in writing and mathematics by Year 6, as more pupils have attained the higher Level 5 this year than they did last year. However, no pupils in Key Stage 1 reached Level 3 this year, and the school cannot account for this. Pupils make steady progress and their academic achievement is satisfactory. In lessons, they are generally well motivated. As they mature, they learn to work effectively in pairs and groups. They also become more independent in their learning, although occasionally a few lower-attaining pupils rely too much on adult

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support. Pupils are pleased to talk about their work, and are clear about what they have to do and how to go about it. Older pupils are beginning to use success criteria to evaluate their learning. In a Key Stage 1 art and design lesson, pupils were particularly productive; they selected a design from a choice of three they had found on the internet, chose a colour scheme and then using paints applied their learning to masks they had made previously. No significant differences were noted in the progress made by boys, girls or pupils with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities in lessons although the school does not evaluate this aspect in detail.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are proud of their school and keen to talk about their enjoyment and successes. There are good opportunities for pupils to be rewarded and their achievements recognised this helps them grow in self-esteem. Behaviour is good; pupils are polite and welcoming. They say there is no bullying, and incidents of racist behaviour are very rare. They get on well together and report that new pupils are made welcome and helped to settle in and make friends. They have a well developed understanding of the importance of tolerance in society, and are quick to make suggestions, through the school council, of ways in which they can help others who are less fortunate than themselves. They take responsibilities willingly, as team captains for example, and are pleased to represent the school, by performing at Victoria Hall, for instance. They learn how to work in teams when raising funds for charities. A link with a multi-cultural school in Stoke-on-Trent provides them with opportunities to learn about the cultures and customs of others first-hand, which adds to experiences they have in lessons such as religious education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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 manage pupils well; this means that no time is lost in lessons, particularly during transition from one activity to the next. Assessment is accurate and is used satisfactorily to plan tasks that provide a suitable challenge for most pupils. Teachers cater for the spread of age and ability in classes by grouping pupils of similar ability, varying tasks and providing support. However, there are occasions when there is insufficient challenge. For instance, in a mathematics lesson, lower-attaining pupils were reliant on adult support when they could have solved problems themselves with the right resources to help them. Learning objectives are shared with pupils, but there is usually one objective for the whole class, even though the anticipated outcomes should be different according to prior attainment levels. Suitable use is made of computers and whiteboard technology and pupils enjoy interactive games that help them to consolidate their learning. Marking is satisfactory and helps pupils to improve their work.

The school provides a satisfactory range of learning experiences overall, although those that encourage awareness of safety and healthy living are good. There is a good range of visits and pupils enjoy these; they recall memorable visitors, such as the fire brigade, with enthusiasm. However, the provision for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains a weakness.

Pupils are confident that they can turn to staff if they have a problem. There are suitable arrangements for keeping pupils safe, and governors regularly visit school to check these.

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Staff are always willing to help pupils who are experiencing difficulties by making individual arrangements, such as to encourage a child to develop greater independence or eat a wider variety of foods. However, the school is no longer able to provide additional support to boost the progress of those who are not working at expected levels. When necessary, the school seeks support from external agencies, such as speech or occupational therapists or the autism outreach team. Although the school does not measure the impact of any of this, parents confirm the effectiveness of the school's work with other agencies in improving outcomes for pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership is currently inadequate and leaders do not plan for improvement effectively despite some satisfactory elements. There is a suitable policy to guide staff in their teaching, and regular lesson observations by the headteacher and subject leaders. Some observations have a specific focus, such as implementation of the marking policy. Staff track the progress of pupils in their class but do not then link this, or the findings from observation, to whole-school targets to establish ambition. Leadership has not been quick enough to ensure that new colleagues are equipped to support any pupils who are making slow progress. However, the school does work effectively in partnership with a wide range of agencies to ensure that pupils who need sources of support from other professionals are able to access these.

Staff are not effectively involved in whole-school development or in consistently setting targets for improvement. For instance, some subject leaders have written subject development plans, and others have not. Senior staff were not involved in formulating the school's current development plan and are not aware of key priorities. Similarly, they are not aware of the contents of the school's self-evaluation form. Evaluation is under-developed and consequently inaccurate in part. Although the school has the necessary data, it is not used to secure improvement. Senior leaders have not secured enough improvement since the last inspection.

The governing body has been most supportive of the staff during the headteacher's absence. Under normal circumstances, governors routinely visit and check first-hand on work in classes and health and safety on site. The absence of the headteacher has delayed a presentation to governors, which was intended to provide them with information on standards and progress. The governing body is vigilant in ensuring that requirements for safeguarding are met. There are suitable arrangements for child protection and the safe recruitment of staff. However, requirements for equalities and the promotion of

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community cohesion are not met. The school does not have a disability equality scheme or check the progress made by pupils in different groups. It has not yet audited what is needed to promote community cohesion or drawn up an action plan to show how it will achieve this.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly in the Reception class because of good links with parents and effective strategies that prepare children well for school. Suitable activities are planned across all areas of learning, and there is an appropriate range of activities led by adults or chosen by the children themselves. Teaching is satisfactory and so children make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. Staff have very good relationships with the children, providing them with a sense of safety and security. Children very much enjoy their learning activities, develop independence skills, get on well with one another, and steadily acquire communication and numeracy skills. By the end of Reception, most have reached the goals expected at their age and some exceed them. They are adequately prepared for more formal work in Year 1.

Despite some strengths in the provision, the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate because of weaknesses in leadership and management. Although children's progress is tracked, there is no analysis of the value added by the school, so it is unable to determine whether children are making similar or adequate progress in all areas of learning. Information provided by the local authority on outcomes for children is not used effectively. Although there is an awareness of the fact that boys do not acquire writing skills as quickly as girls, there has not been a concerted effort to promote boys' writing. Outdoor learning has not developed well enough since the last inspection. It is limited for two reasons. Firstly, the outdoor area is not adjacent to the

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Reception class and so children cannot move freely from one to the other. Secondly, the outdoor area has no cover and so outdoor learning is provided in the warmer months and dry weather only. There are suitable plans to move the class this summer, to a classroom adjacent to the playground, which is to be fenced off as a discrete area. There are also plans to refurbish an area indoors for wet and messy activities and provide cover for the outdoor area, but it is uncertain when these will happen. The school has not prepared adequately for the changes in September 2010, when Year 1 pupils will be taught with Reception children; plans have not yet been developed to take account of combining these two year groups.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are pleased with the provision that the school makes for their children. Almost all agree that children enjoy coming to school, that the school keeps parents and carers well informed, especially about pupils' progress, and that children are effectively encouraged to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors endorse their views. A significant minority of parents expressed concerns about the absence of the headteacher, and inspectors recognise that this has slowed development. Similar concerns were expressed about the planned groupings of children into classes from September 2010. Inspectors share parents' concerns because the school has not adjusted its planning to take account of the fact that children from different year groups will be taught together.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Castle 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 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 90 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	64	13	33	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	64	12	31	2	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	54	17	44	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	38	22	56	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	51	18	46	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	41	21	54	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	41	22	56	1	3	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)	17	44	20	51	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	46	18	46	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	41	17	44	4	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	33	22	56	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	15	24	62	5	13	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	54	14	36	2	5	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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.



15 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Primary School, Stoke on Trent, ST7 4NE

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school, especially those of you who spoke to us about your work and school life. We decided that your school needs a 'notice to improve' because it is not led and managed well enough.

These are the good things about your school. Staff work well with your parents, who are very pleased with most of the things about the school. You behave well and attend school better than most children, so well done! You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. You get on well together and take on responsibilities willingly and show concern for those that are less fortunate. You are tolerant and understanding of people who are different. The staff take good care of you and they work with others to make sure that you have extra help if you need it. I am pleased at how much you enjoy school, including the visits and the visitors, such as the fire brigade. The teaching in school is helping you to reach the sort of standards expected at your age, and this means that when you go to secondary school you will be able to manage the work you are given.

Because the school has been given a 'notice to improve', inspectors will visit in the next year to check on the progress made and the school will have another full inspection in about a year. The headteacher, staff and governors have been asked to make some changes to the way they work so that the school is better able to improve. We have also asked that staff adjust their plans so that all pupils are taught the right things in the new classes from September 2010. New staff will be trained so that they can help you make even better progress. There are plans for a new outdoor area for the youngest children too. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge

Lead inspector

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