

Castor C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110824
Local Authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	356820
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Morris
Headteacher	Fiona Perkins
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons, two observed jointly with senior leaders, and saw seven teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, performance data, monitoring and self-evaluation records, and documents indicating how well the school safeguards its pupils. They analysed 90 parental questionnaires, 17 responses from members of staff and 80 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors considered whether all groups of pupils, especially boys and those who are more able, are making as much progress as they should.
- They looked at how well teachers use information about pupils' prior attainment to match tasks to their differing needs and inform them on how to improve their work.
- They reviewed how effectively senior and middle leaders drive improvement and whether systems introduced over the past year have already had a positive effect on the school's effectiveness.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average but varies significantly from year to year. In 2009 and the beginning of 2010, the school experienced leadership difficulties and there were several staff changes. An interim headteacher joined the school in April 2010 and her position was made permanent in November 2010. In addition, an assistant headteacher and a senior teacher have been appointed to the senior leadership team. The school has National Healthy Schools Status and the Eco-Schools Bronze Award.

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. Although it has been through a period of change, there has been an upward trend in pupils' achievement since the last inspection and the school has made rapid improvement over the past year. The appointment of a very experienced headteacher and strengthening of the senior leadership team have been crucial in moving the school forward. The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are highly committed to making provision as good as possible and there is a strong drive for improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school is well placed to improve further.

Achievement is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They make good progress from starting points that are slightly above average. Pupils' attainment over the last three years has been above average overall and it is currently high in Years 2 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. It is broadly average in other subjects. Exceptionally close collaboration between senior leaders, the governing body and the local authority has minimised the adverse effect of staffing changes on achievement. Leaders have worked well to raise attainment in the core subjects of English and mathematics at a time when the school was under pressure. Developing provision and leadership in the non-core subjects, and extending opportunities for pupils with particular gifts and talents have, rightly, been identified as the next priorities. These aspects of the school's work are satisfactory at present.

Over the last year, senior leaders have established clear structures and put in place rigorous systems that are essential to effective teaching and learning. Leaders analyse performance data very thoroughly and track progress carefully to identify any pupils who are not making as much progress as they should. A great deal of monitoring has contributed to improvement in the quality of learning, and teachers are being held to account for the progress of pupils in their class. Lesson observations, pupils' work and progress data indicate that teaching is now good but not consistently so. This is mainly because teachers do not always use what they know about pupils' prior attainment to match tasks to their different needs. Some marking is highly detailed and informative but pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work.

Parents and carers are generally supportive but staffing changes have left some unsure or dissatisfied with aspects of the school's work, especially where their children are in classes that have had changes in teachers. The school gathers the views of parents and carers frequently and the weekly newsletter makes sure that they are made aware of what is going on. Procedures for informing parents and carers about their children's learning and progress are satisfactory, but there are some missed opportunities to involve them, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Senior leaders have given priority to improving assessment and its use and raising pupils' achievement. They are just beginning to turn their attention to developing the partnership with parents and carers in order to

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make better use of their obvious interest in their children's education. The promotion of community cohesion is good in the school and local area, but national and global links are more limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement, increase their understanding and deepen their enjoyment by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently match tasks to the prior attainment of different groups of pupils and inform them on how to improve their work
 - developing subject leadership and curricular provision in the non-core subjects
 - extending enrichment opportunities for pupils with particular gifts and talents
 - broadening pupils' awareness of life in contrasting parts of the United Kingdom and overseas.
- Strengthen the partnership with parents and carers by:
 - keeping them more closely informed about their children's progress
 - establishing systems for engaging parents and carers more actively in school improvement
 - involving those with children in the Reception class more closely in the assessment and learning of their children.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

There has been a systematic rise in achievement over the last three years and attainment in Years 2 and 6 is higher than it was in 2010. In Year 2, standards are high for girls and boys in writing and mathematics; in reading, they are high for girls and above average for boys. In Year 6, the attainment of girls is high in English and mathematics, and that of boys is above average. This marks an improvement for boys and more-able pupils throughout the school. The gap between girls' and boys' performance is narrowing because the school has improved its use of assessment information and has put in place strategies to increase the motivation of boys.

Pupils of minority ethnic heritage make good progress and the very few pupils for whom English is an additional language also do well. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Good support by teaching assistants frequently enables these pupils to make good gains in lessons. In a lesson in English at Key Stage 2, a teaching assistant's high expectations and skilful questioning ensured that a pupil with a statement of special educational needs worked purposefully and made good progress. In mathematics lessons throughout the school, the use of practical resources helps to make new concepts accessible to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. On occasions where teaching is satisfactory, lower attaining pupils and those who are more able make satisfactory rather than good progress when work is not matched closely enough to their learning needs. However, data shows that there is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils.

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Pupils are confident, enthusiastic learners who say that they enjoy school. They are articulate in expressing their ideas, as seen in an art lesson in Year 2 where they talked eagerly and animatedly about the work of Henri Rousseau. From an early age, pupils work well independently and in pairs. Most say that they feel safe and behaviour is good, sometimes exceptionally so. This helps to support pupils' learning and ensures that lessons can proceed at a good pace. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong but at times a very few pupils, usually boys, show lack of consideration for others in the playground. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and take part in a wide range of physical activities. They make a good contribution to the school and local community and enjoy getting involved in activities that support the environment. Pupils respond well to opportunities to find out about other cultures and they have an unusually good understanding, for their age, of different faiths. However, opportunities to contribute to the wider community are more limited.

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	2
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	2
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?

Lessons are generally well planned and teachers share learning objectives and success criteria with pupils. Tasks are varied and pupils have good opportunities to discuss new ideas with their 'talking partners'. Skilful questioning probes pupils' thinking well and in the best lessons, teachers' expectations are high. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, the teacher used her excellent subject knowledge to inspire pupils so that both boys and girls

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produced sensitive pieces of written work on the theme of 'The Ghetto'. In less successful lessons, teachers do not meet the full range of needs in their classes either because they provide too little challenge for the more able and/or because work is too difficult for lower attainers. In these lessons, planning generally identifies how different needs are to be met but the work set does not fully reflect this. Pupils often receive good verbal feedback in lessons and they have increasing opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work. They are sometimes encouraged to write notes in their books in response to teachers' comments but pupils are not all clear about their targets.

The school provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. They also make good use of their writing skills when recording ideas and information across the curriculum. The school promotes pupils' personal development well and learning is extended by a good range of clubs and visits. There are some special events, such as 'arts week' and 'history week', but other opportunities to make the curriculum more exciting are missed and provision in the non-core subjects is only satisfactory. The school has begun to revise its curriculum planning to remedy this. Pupils receive good care, guidance and support. They are well known as individuals in this small school, and staff work well with other agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Through establishing a clear policy that is shared with parents and carers and the introduction of awards for regular attendance, the school has been successful in significantly increasing the rate of attendance. Whereas the school's promotion of good behaviour is successful with the vast majority of pupils, procedures for dealing with the very few pupils who show lack of consideration for others are not consistently clear and firm.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection despite going through a period of turbulence. This is because the headteacher was very quick to identify its strengths and weaknesses and took decisive action to remedy its shortcomings. Management systems have been comprehensively reviewed and revised since April 2010. Teachers are being held to account through regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress and the effectiveness of this is already evident in rising standards in English and mathematics. In these subjects, leadership is good, whereas subject leadership is satisfactory in the non-core subjects. A great deal of very detailed data analysis takes place in English and mathematics, which informs self-evaluation and allows leaders to monitor pupils' progress precisely. This has contributed to improvement in boys' achievement and is increasing the number of more-able pupils reaching higher levels. The

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effectiveness with which leaders are tackling any variations in achievement means that the promotion of equal opportunities is now good.

Governance is good. The governing body has taken a strategic role in school improvement and several of its members regularly come in to check the school's work. They have a good understanding of its effectiveness and they and the headteacher have high expectations for the school. The school exceeds statutory requirements in the way it safeguards pupils. It has good systems and provides clear guidance to staff on child protection. Policies are informative and up to date and health and safety are monitored closely by the well-trained governing body. The school has a good understanding of its local community and there have been past links with schools overseas but staff changes mean that this work has not been continued. The school has, rightly, identified as a priority forging links with schools in contrasting circumstances in this country and globally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the school with skills that are slightly above national expectations for their age and move up from the Reception class with attainment that is at least above average. They make good progress, especially in communication, language and literacy, in personal, social and emotional development and in numeracy. They have good opportunities to develop their skills through activities where they receive focused teaching, for instance, on letters and sounds. They are also able to make regular choices for themselves and play well together, discussing and negotiating amongst themselves. Interactions between adults and children promote their language skills well, giving them plenty of opportunities to talk about their ideas and experiences. The outdoor area is an integral part of the learning environment. Staff keep very thorough assessment records, regularly observe children's development and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader

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carefully tracks children's progress. Good transition arrangements when children join the school include home-school visits and liaison with the local pre-school. Parents and carers are given access to their children's records but they are not encouraged to contribute as fully as they could to assessment or to learning at home. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader, who took over the role a year ago, has been quick to improve systems and provides good direction for improvement. Staff and volunteers work well as a team and roles are clearly defined for the benefit of the children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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	2

Views of parents and carers

A comparatively high proportion of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Of these, a very large majority are satisfied with most aspects of the school's work. The unusually high proportion who wrote detailed letters to accompany their response to the questionnaire revealed their strong interest in their children's education. Almost all respondents said that their children enjoy school, and believe that it keeps them safe and helps them to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors endorse these positive views. The parents and carers who criticised aspects of the school's work frequently linked this to changes in staffing. This has contributed to a feeling that their children's needs are not always met, that the school does not communicate with them as well as they would like or take their suggestions into account. Inspectors found that partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. The school is at the planning stage in finding ways to involve them more fully in the drive for school improvement. It does not inform them as closely as it could about how their children are doing or have comprehensive systems to help them to support their children's learning at home. Most significant in the questionnaire was the number of parents and carers who expressed concern about the way behaviour is managed. Inspectors explored this and found that behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Records suggest that there are few serious behavioural incidents, though a few older boys at times show lack of consideration for others in the playground. When this occurs, the school does not always have sufficiently robust systems in place to address inappropriate behaviour. Parents' and carers' discontent with this situation has been passed on to school leaders so that they can take the necessary action.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Castor C of E 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 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	40	50	56	2	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	47	52	39	43	4	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	13	14	59	66	11	12	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	14	60	67	8	9	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	20	22	54	60	13	14	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	21	47	52	19	21	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	31	53	59	5	6	1	1
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)	11	12	63	70	6	7	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	19	51	57	12	13	6	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	11	37	41	25	28	10	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	13	54	60	17	19	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	17	19	53	59	12	13	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	20	56	62	14	16	1	1

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



16 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castor C of E Primary School, Peterborough, PE5 7AY

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent talking to you, visiting your lessons, looking at your work and seeing all the things you do. You told us a lot about the school and this has helped in writing the report.

We found that you go to a good school that has improved a lot over the last year. You told us that you find learning fun because teachers give you interesting things to do. You behave well in lessons and this helps you to concentrate and learn. You are making good progress in English and mathematics and satisfactory progress in other subjects. The staff make sure you are well cared for and they work well with other agencies to support those of you who need extra help.

Although there have been a lot of changes in the last year, the headteacher is working very well with the staff, governing body and local authority to make the school better for you. We have asked them to:

- make sure that tasks are always matched to the next steps in your learning and check that you all know how to improve your work
- support those teachers who lead subjects other than English and mathematics so that these subjects become good
- provide more opportunities for those of you with particular gifts and talents
- make you more aware of life in other parts of the United Kingdom and overseas
- work more closely with your parents and carers and involve them in school improvement.

You can help by working hard and all behaving well in class and in the playground.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild

Lead inspector

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