

# Castle Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124091
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	363972
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joanne Harvey HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	87
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Susan Ball
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christopher Burton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 July 2010
<b>School address</b>	Mow Cop Road Mow Cop Stoke-on-Trent ST7 4NE
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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	21–22 September 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Seven lessons were observed and three teachers seen. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of pupils, leaders at all levels, teachers, teaching assistants, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at: the school development plan; assessment information; school and local authority monitoring information; lesson plans; and school policies. The team analysed 53 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with questionnaires from staff and a representative sample from pupils.

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

- Have attainment indicators improved securely since the last inspection and are all pupils supported to do as well as they can?
- Are the changes made to all aspects of provision having a secure and rapid impact on improving outcomes for pupils?
- Do school leaders display the necessary strength, drive and determination to secure improvement at an acceptable pace, independently of LA support?
- Are leaders implementing rigorous systems for assessing and tracking children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage? Do they use this tracking data to inform ambitious plans for improved provision and outcomes both indoors and outdoors?

## Information about the school

This is a small primary school. Most pupils are White British and there are none who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The school is organised into three mixed-age classes. Class 3 combines the Early Years Foundation Stage with Year 1. Class 2 combines Years 2 and 3 and Class 1 combines Years 4, 5 and 6. At the last inspection, the school was given a notice to improve. The headteacher began an extended period of absence just prior to the last inspection and returned in the term prior to the subsequent monitoring visit. During this time temporary arrangements for leadership were put in place. The teacher in Class 2, who is also literacy leader, is currently taking an extended period of leave which commenced following the monitoring visit. A privately managed playgroup and breakfast club operate on the school site and are reported on separately.

**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?****3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school has successfully addressed the issues raised at the last inspection and its overall effectiveness is now satisfactory. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average levels of attendance and good behaviour.

Success has been achieved, despite a period of staffing uncertainty, because school leaders, governors and staff have quite rightly pulled together, with the good support of the local authority, to drive improvements in the quality of leadership and management and in teaching and learning. Attainment has been broadly average in recent years in English and mathematics when pupils leave the school. This represents satisfactory progress for most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, as a consequence of the improvements made, evidence in school confirms that for an increasing number of pupils, progress is quickening and attainment is set to rise. Pupils in the current Year 6 and Year 2, for example, are on track for above average attainment. There are more pupils, though still not enough across the school, on track to achieve the highest grade of which they are capable. Pupils' progress sometimes slows in writing because, for example, though satisfactory, the curriculum does not always give them enough opportunities to write at length or practise their skills to a high standard in a range of contexts. In mathematics, they are not always given enough practical activities or opportunities to use their skills to solve problems.

Teaching is improved. It is mostly satisfactory, but the proportion of good teaching has increased. There is not yet enough of this good practice to secure consistently good progress for all pupils. For example, inconsistencies remain in how well teachers plan to meet the needs of pupils of different ability, tackle misconceptions and give them feedback which helps them to improve. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, judged inadequate at the time of the last inspection, strengthened leadership has, in a relatively short time, transformed provision and improved outcomes, which are now satisfactory. Similarly, school leadership at all levels, including governance, were judged inadequate at the time of the last inspection. Leaders have now demonstrated their satisfactory capacity to continue to improve. Statutory duties are now all met suitably. Effective systems for accurately evaluating the work of the school are in place. Resulting action plans for improvement are detailed but lack sufficient focus on pupils' learning and measurable outcomes against clear benchmarks. Everyone is now playing some part in the cycle of self-evaluation,

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strategic planning and staff development. The impact of this work can be seen, for example, in improved achievement in mathematics. However, the full impact of all leaders on the drive for improvement in all focus areas has yet to be seen. Partnerships with parents and carers are satisfactory. Several expressed their satisfaction with the improvements they have seen since the last inspection. However, communication with them does not always give them an accurate and timely insight into the school's work, particularly the success of measures taken to improve its quality, nor does it sufficiently encourage their involvement.

Up to 40% of the 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?**

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning and the rate at which pupils make progress are at least good by:
  - matching work to pupils' needs so all are suitably challenged
  - ensuring that teachers check pupils' understanding during lessons and modify tasks if they are too easy or too hard
  - asking questions to assess understanding and further challenge thinking
  - ensuring that additional adults are well prepared and deployed
  - rigorously applying the marking policy.
- Quicken pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - providing more cross-curricular and creative opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills to a high standard in a range of contexts and to write at length
  - giving pupils more practical and hands-on experiences and opportunities to use and apply their skills to solve problems.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that improvement planning identifies clear measurable outcomes of pupils' learning and interim benchmarks for monitoring success
  - ensuring everyone plays their full part in driving forward school improvement
  - improving communication and engagement with parents and carers.

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

Pupils were seen to be making satisfactory progress in the majority of lessons seen. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Years 2 and 3, pupils made satisfactory progress in their ability to recognise and use number patterns when carrying out addition. While the task built logically on the prior learning of pupils of average ability

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in the class, a similar task was given to pupils of a wider range of ability. Opportunities were missed to tailor more challenging questions or tasks to those who found the task too easy. Also, the misconceptions were not addressed of some pupils who did not fully understand what they had been asked to do or for whom the task was too hard. In contrast, in a lesson for Years 4, 5 and 6, learning about how to use a number line moved on at a good pace. Tasks were provided to meet the needs of the wide range of ability. These were supplemented by further carefully-differentiated questions to check individuals' understanding, provide support and additional challenge. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers in class lessons. Additional intervention programmes to accelerate further the progress these pupils make are currently under review. Where gaps have been identified in the performance of groups, or within basic skills, these are narrowing – for example, through more rigorous teaching of the sounds that letters make, finely differentiated groups for teaching reading skills and special support for the development of motor skills.

Pupils' enjoyment of learning is seen in their above average levels of attendance and the way they maintain interest in activities. They talk convincingly about keeping safe, for example, they know about road safety and how to keep safe on the internet. They understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They are enthusiastic about the sports on offer. They take on responsibilities, such as membership of the school council, though these more meaningful opportunities to contribute to school and community life are mostly limited to the older pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. They show respect and consideration for others – for example, in raising money for charity and delivering harvest baskets. Their understanding of life in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society is relatively less well developed. Examples of good and sometimes exemplary behaviour and manners were seen around school. Pupils' ability to apply their satisfactory basic and personal skills ensures they are prepared suitably for the next stage of their education and lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>

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

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<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers promote extremely positive relationships with pupils who respond with good attitudes to learning. Lesson planning is conscientiously done, but does not always identify clearly enough aspects such as key vocabulary, questions and everyone's role in the lesson so that all can be well prepared to maximise the learning of all pupils in lessons. Consequently, the deployment and impact of additional adults are not always maximised. Lesson planning is usually linked to accurate assessments of pupils' learning needs and in the best lessons work is adapted to meet the needs of different abilities. This is not consistently the case. For example, pupils of different abilities are sometimes given the same task and the more able occasionally complete the same tasks as others before going on to complete a more challenging task; those who find learning difficult are also given the same task but with additional adult support. In one lesson the class teacher fired carefully-chosen and well-directed questions and as a result of pupils' responses seized the opportunity to challenge more-able pupils to develop their higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills. However, not all teachers check pupils' understanding often enough during lessons to enable them to clear up any misunderstandings or challenge pupils further through well-formulated questions and problem-solving activities. Good examples of the successful application of the marking policy were seen which indicated clearly to pupils what they needed to do to improve. This good practice is not applied consistently throughout the school so pupils are not always clear about what they have to do to improve.

There is a plan in place to redesign the curriculum to make it more creative and to ensure a progression of knowledge and skills in all subjects. The current curriculum meets requirements but offers too few opportunities to study interesting themes across a range of subjects. Consequently, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise writing and higher-order skills in mathematics in different contexts across the curriculum. The active, hands-on opportunities children now enjoy in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 are more limited once they enter Year 2. There is a suitable range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including the creative arts and sports. First-hand experiences are offered through educational visits and visitors to school. Plans are in place to promote a greater range of partnerships to extend the experiences available to pupils, particularly the more able.

Care and welfare are satisfactorily promoted and parents and carers say they are particularly appreciative of the friendly and caring atmosphere. Pupils say there is always someone to turn to with any worries or concerns and that they feel well cared for and safe. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are

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ensuring that these pupils do as well as their peers. However, the organisation of additional interventions and the groupings for the teaching of mathematics lacked sufficient rigour at the beginning of this term.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

After a period of uncertainty, leadership roles and responsibilities have been clearly established; though the full impact of leaders at all levels working together effectively has yet to be seen. Expectations have risen because there is more rigour to the collection and analysis of information about how well pupils are doing. Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved but have still to ensure it is consistently good or better. They have a much clearer picture of where teaching is less effective, where to focus additional interventions and set more challenging targets for pupils' attainment. They are now more secure in assessing the performance of different groups of pupils and ensure that where there is potential underperformance, it is addressed promptly to promote equal opportunity for all. Though the increased capacity of leadership has been built with the support of the local authority, it is now sufficiently secure for improvements to continue without the same level of external support. These improvements, along with other details about the school's work are not always communicated clearly enough to parents and carers.

Because systems of self-evaluation have strengthened, the governing body has a more accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This better understanding enables it to be more meaningfully involved in setting the strategic direction of the school and ensuring that, at the time of the inspection, statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding, are met suitably. There is still work to be done. For example, action planning for improvement does not make clear enough the intended outcomes for pupils in a way which can be measured and monitored easily and regularly. There are a few areas where the school has failed to record that aspects of policy, procedure and practice have been carried out, particularly in relation to its assessment of potential health and safety hazards. Governors are ardent supporters of the school and make an important contribution but they are not holding the school sufficiently to account for these shortcomings.

School leaders have carried out the necessary audit and action planning as part of its work to promote community cohesion. They have rightly identified that there is more

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to be done, for example, to engage more effectively with local community partners and to evaluate more rigorously the impact of its work.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle happily into the safe and caring environment. They enter the setting with broadly average levels of attainment, though their ability to use number as labels and for counting is generally stronger. They make satisfactory and, more recently, sometimes better progress. Consequently, they attain at least in line with expectations in most areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1 and more recently they have exceeded this in some areas, for example, in their dispositions and attitudes and in their ability to use language for communication and thinking. They are being given more opportunities to explore and solve problems for themselves and are encouraged, more successfully, to increase their vocabulary and have the confidence to use it accurately. The ability to understand the sounds that letters make and early writing skills are being taught systematically and the impact is reflected in children's earlier development of basic literacy skills.

Progress is at its best when children are working at tasks closely planned and directed by adults who intervene appropriately and encourage them to think and then stand back and let them solve problems for themselves. It occasionally slows when children initiate and get on with their own activities and adults miss opportunities to check that they are meaningfully engaged or to intervene to prompt and move learning on. Detailed information is now conscientiously collected about how well children are achieving. Planning for learning based on this information is more detailed. Children are encouraged to be active and have many more practical hands-on opportunities indoors and outdoors. However, leaders recognise that there

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is still work to be done, for example, to present activities on a much larger scale and include experiences of the natural environment on a regular basis. The better promotion of children's independence and the ability to use and apply their developing knowledge and skills also remain a focus. Children behave well, cooperate, make friends and take care of resources.

Inadequate at the time of the last inspection, the improved leadership is having a transformational effect on provision and outcomes. The leader's determination to drive change has resulted in a more stimulating environment and resources, improving assessment and planning and importantly, more rigorous and accurate self-evaluation and action planning for continued improvement. Leaders also ensure that children's needs are routinely met as are safeguarding requirements.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
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	3

**Views of parents and carers**

A higher proportion of parents and carers than is usual responded to the questionnaire. Of those who responded, the very large majority are happy with their child's experience of school. Some wrote positively to praise the improvements that have been made. The response of one person, which was typical of many, stated, 'The atmosphere in school has changed since the last inspection. The staff appear to now all be working together to create a better learning experience for our children.' Another wrote, 'I feel that the school has improved in many ways since the last Ofsted report.' Inspection evidence confirms this view. A small minority feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour but inspectors found this to be done well. A small minority expressed concerns that the school does not take account of parents' and carers' questions and concerns and inspectors judged that while satisfactory there is more to be done in this regard. A significant minority do not feel that the school is well led and managed and mentioned particularly they did not always find communication helpful. Inspectors judged that there had been considerable improvement to school leaders' capacity to lead and improve the school and that this is now satisfactory. However, inspectors also judged that the quality of communication should be a continued focus for further improvement.

## 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 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 87 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	72	15	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	66	16	30	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	32	27	51	6	11	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	38	24	45	3	6	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	21	40	25	47	4	8	2	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	32	26	49	7	13	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	43	25	47	4	8	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)	18	34	29	55	2	4	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	36	25	47	3	6	3	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	40	20	38	4	8	5	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	34	23	43	6	11	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	21	40	14	26	5	9	8	15
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	45	22	42	3	6	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



23 September 2011

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. I also wish to thank those of you who took time to talk with us and tell us about your school. Thanks also to those of you who completed the questionnaire.

These are some of the things we found out about your school.

- Your school is satisfactory. You make satisfactory and sometimes good progress and reach average and sometimes above average standards.
- You behave well in school, say you feel safe and know how to stay healthy.
- The teaching you receive and the way your school is led and managed are both satisfactory.

We are asking your headteacher, staff and governing body to do three things.

- We want them to help you to improve your writing and mathematics. You can help yourselves by writing longer pieces. We also want you to have more opportunities to solve problems in mathematics and to have the chance to study exciting topic themes which cover a range of subjects at the same time.
- Our second challenge for your school is to ensure that teaching helps you make better progress. We want all of you to be challenged to work at your highest standard by careful planning of set work and with well-pitched questions that make you think. You can help by doing the thinking needed to take your learning forward. Marking and other feedback that you get from your teachers and other adults should tell you what to do next to improve.
- We want all the school's leaders to quicken your rate of learning and progress and to communicate more clearly with your parents and carers.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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