

Carswell Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123080
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380590
Inspection dates	28–29 May 2012
Lead inspector	Krishan Sharma

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Cackett
Headteacher	Susan Gore
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma

Additional Inspector

Kerry Rochester

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, or parts of lessons, taught by 8 teachers. Two groups of Years 1 and 2 pupils were heard reading. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders and three groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding records, the school improvement plan, a summary of the school's self-evaluation, pupils' written work and tracking records of pupils' progress in basic skills. The 43 questionnaire responses from parents and carers were analysed, as were those questionnaire responses received from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Carswell Community Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Three quarters of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The remaining quarter come from various minority ethnic groups, notably from other Asian (Nepalese), African and other White backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average. The school provides an after-school club (Carswell School Kids' Club). The school holds Healthy School status, and Eco-School and Sing-Up awards. The school serves a local army barracks. The mobility of pupils remains greater than that found nationally.

The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school, which has improved significantly since its last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory. Its capacity to improve is now much stronger and this has contributed to its success. It is not yet outstanding because not all aspects of teaching, monitoring and evaluation are of the highest possible standard.
- By the time pupils leave the school their attainment is broadly average. Given pupils’ starting points, which are below age-related expectations on entry to school, this represents good progress and achievement and prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve well.
- Teaching is mainly good. Teachers display secure subject knowledge and ask probing questions. They give pupils ample opportunities to work with each other to develop their social skills. When teaching is relatively less effective, teachers do not make it clear what they want pupils to learn. The pace of learning is slow and the work planned does not always meet the needs and interests of the potentially higher attaining pupils.
- Behaviour is usually good in lessons and around the school, although a few concerns have been raised by pupils, particularly about behaviour away from the classrooms. Attendance has improved and is now average. Pupils feel safe at school and enjoy learning.
- Senior and other leaders and the governing body have remained focused on improving pupil outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning. Pupil outcomes routinely inform the performance management of teachers. The current priorities, which are suitably informed by the school’s regular monitoring, are the right ones to ensure that the school continues to improve. Even so, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching in lessons and the scrutiny of pupils’ written work are not always focused on pupils’ progress and achievement, because the monitoring skills of all leaders are infrequently updated.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that all lessons are at least good, and as many as possible are outstanding, by:
 - making sure that teachers' intentions as to what teachers expect pupils to learn are always clear and the planned activities directly contribute to the intended learning
 - accelerating the pace of lessons and making efficient use of available time to maximise opportunities for independent learning
 - setting fine-tuned and challenging targets for learning for the potentially higher attaining pupils so that they always make the best possible progress.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation by:
 - focusing on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress more explicitly during lesson observations and in the scrutiny of pupils' written work
 - regularly refining and updating the monitoring and evaluation skills of all leaders.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge that are usually below those expected for their age, particularly in early literacy and numeracy. From these starting points, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage across all areas of their learning. Pupils continue to make steady progress in their basic skills as they move up through the school; it gathers momentum during Key Stage 2. Consequently, attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6. Their progress compares favourably with all pupils nationally. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave school at the age of 11 is broadly average. Almost all parents and carers believe that their children are making good progress at school. This view matches what the inspectors found.

Most disabled pupils and those with special education needs are achieving well, as are those who speak English as an additional language. Those who join the school other than at the usual times make good progress from their starting points. This means any gaps between their performance and that of other groups in the school and all pupils nationally are being addressed successfully. As the needs of both groups are continually assessed, their new learning progressively builds upon what they have already gained. Occasionally, some of the potentially higher attaining pupils across the school do not make the progress they are capable of because work given to them is insufficiently challenging.

In lessons, pupils practise their reading and writing skills in different subjects. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils were developing a main character as part of their writing task.

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They demonstrated clear awareness of the purpose and the audience for their piece of writing by the range of vocabulary they chose. A scrutiny of pupils' written work showed clear evidence of pupils' application of their reading and writing skills in their topic books. Most can look for and extract the information they need. In numeracy lessons, the application of calculations in solving problems is growing across the school. Pupils can reason and justify the calculation method they use. This is not a consistent picture across the school however.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is typically good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. There are examples of satisfactory and outstanding features across the school. Parents and carers rightly think that the quality of teaching their children receive is good; pupils, too, feel they are taught well. The teaching of reading is regular and the focus on improving pupils' phonic skills (linking letters and sounds) is now well established, although its implementation in practice is not always consistent. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are effectively supported in lessons and through well-planned interventions.

When teaching is at its most effective, teachers have high expectations which are reflected in the tasks they plan. The questions teachers ask persistently probe pupils' understanding. The teaching assistants provide effective targeted support to meet individual pupils' needs. In these lessons, teachers monitor closely and clearly comment on pupils' learning and progress. When lessons are relatively less effective, teachers' intentions for pupils' learning are not always clear and the planned activities do not match the needs and abilities of pupils well. The pace of learning is slow because teachers' introductions and explanations are too long and reduce the time available for pupils to practise skills independently. In some cases, targets set for the potentially higher attaining pupils in lessons are insufficiently clear or challenging and do not maximise their achievement.

The best examples of teaching are characterised by clear identification of pupils' learning needs and the planning of tasks that meet them. During a short session for pupils who spoke English as an additional language, the teacher explained clearly the use of past, present and future tenses, and the small-step activities that followed allowed pupils to practise their understanding. As a result, this group grasped the use of tenses well. In the Nursery, a group of children were enthusiastically engaged in making a flag for their Jubilee celebrations on the day after the inspection. The adults took this opportunity to promote discussion on choices children had to make about colour, size and the arrangement. The adults' questioning, rather than prompting, helped children to succeed in making flags that they felt proud of. Teachers promote pupils' social skills through group and paired work in lessons. The regular provision of personal, social and health education activities enables pupils to reflect on ethical and moral issues. Some of the cross-curricular topics contribute effectively to pupils' understanding of, and respect for, different cultural and religious traditions.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

In lessons, pupils' behaviour has contributed constructively to the quality of pupils' learning over time, resulting in improvements in their achievement in basic skills. Across the school, pupils are courteous towards each other and adults. Different ethnic groups get on well with each other. Pupils are generally positive about behaviour in lessons and around the school. This view matches with what the inspectors themselves observed. Even so, through their responses to the inspection questionnaire, a minority of pupils expressed concerns about behaviour, particularly that which occurs away from the classrooms. During extensive discussions with inspectors, pupils explained that the unacceptable behaviour often relates to disagreements and falling out which is quickly sorted out by themselves or with the help of adults at hand. They also confirmed that the number of cases involved in causing this concern is very small and, although occasionally it makes them feel uneasy, it rarely adversely affects their learning. Pupils also assured inspectors that bullying in any form, including that which is prejudice based, is rare and is firmly dealt with when it occurs.

The very small number of pupils with challenging, and often unpredictable, behaviour are being supported in managing their anger. This helps to calm them down. The school's systems for promoting and managing behaviour are good. Although most parents, carers and all staff feel positive about pupils' behaviour at school, behaviour and safety are judged satisfactory because some concerns have been raised by pupils both through their questionnaires and during discussions with inspectors.

Pupils feel safe at school and almost all their parents and carers agree with them. As a result of the school's persistent efforts, attendance is now average. Pupils are aware of risks, including that of cyber bullying, and are confident enough to approach an adult if they have any concerns.

Leadership and management

Senior and middle leaders and managers and the governing body work together to give the school a clear direction. Action plans are well focused and contribute to the realisation of agreed goals. Since the last inspection barriers to pupils' learning have been substantially overcome by building up teachers' expertise in the teaching of literacy and numeracy through well-planned professional development activities. This indicates that the school has acquired a clear capacity to improve. The systematic tracking of pupils' progress is making a positive impact by alerting senior leaders about pupils who are not making the expected progress. This information rightly forms the basis for discussion with staff on pupils' outcomes in their classes and contributes to the management of their performance.

Monitoring and evaluation procedures involve a good range of activities. Even so, their rigour is compromised because there is not always an explicit focus on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress in lessons and in their written work. As a result, the monitoring of teaching does not always give a

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comprehensive picture of strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders and managers provide practical support to colleagues in their planning. Some of their audits have resulted in deeper and more accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses for planning the next stage of development in their subjects. However, their general monitoring skills, such as observation of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' written work, are not as frequently updated as they should be.

The school's curriculum has a good breadth and balance. The planned activities often require pupils to interact with each other. The provision for pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable is good. As a result, these pupils feel included. A range of enrichment activities enable pupils to use their imagination and creativity through music, art and drama and support the promotion of their spiritual moral, social and cultural development. The after-school club caters well for its small number of pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. The school takes a stand to ensure that no pupil or group is discriminated against: the analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils is a strong feature which enables the school to ensure equal opportunities for all of them.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Carswell Community Primary School, Abingdon OX14 1DP

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school recently. Special thanks are due to those pupils who filled in questionnaires or came to talk to us and share their views about the school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work in lessons. You will be pleased to know that the inspection team judged your school to be good. Here are some of the good things we found out about your school.

- Most of you make good progress as you move up through the school.
- The standards you achieve in English and mathematics by the time you leave school are about average.
- Most of the teaching is good and helps you with your learning in lessons.
- You concentrate on your work in lessons and get on well with each other.
- You say you feel safe at school and your parents and carers agree with you.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have worked hard to improve your school since the last inspection.

To improve your school further, we have asked those in charge to make sure that:

- all lessons are the best they can be, by getting teachers to make it clear what they expect you to learn, by quickening the pace of lessons so that you learn faster and by setting more demanding work for those of you who would benefit from further challenge
- all leaders continue to refine their checking skills so that they are able to judge how teaching is helping you in lessons and through your written work.

All of you can also help by always finishing your work as soon as possible and asking for further work if you find it too easy.

Yours sincerely

Krishan Sharma
Lead inspector

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