

The Castle Primary School

Barrington Street, Tiverton , Devon, EX16 6QR

Inspection dates 18–19 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to bring about good achievement for all pupils in reading and writing.
- Across the school, the progress in reading and writing made by boys and pupils in receipt of the pupil premium is too variable.
- Teachers do not always check in all lessons that pupils fully understand the teaching. The pace of learning then slows.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to explore their own ideas and develop skills of writing in relevant ways, across a range of subjects.
- School leaders have detailed information about how well pupils are performing in all subjects but this has not yet been used to plan clearly to close gaps in achievement.
- Positive changes have been made to the ways in which reading and writing are taught but they are not yet planned into a fully developed and interesting curriculum so their impact on achievement is inconsistent.

The school has the following strengths

- The ambition and shared vision of the newly appointed headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body have given confidence to parents and carers, pupils and staff.
- The progress made by Key Stage 2 pupils in mathematics in 2012 was better than that made by pupils nationally because of good leadership in the subject.
- Strong leadership of the unit for pupils with communication needs has brought about their full inclusion in school life and their good achievement.
- Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. They feel safe in school. Those who have had challenging behaviour in the past have improved under skilful management.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documents which the school provided, including the school’s information on the progress that pupils are making.
- Inspectors visited 22 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 14 teachers, and several observations were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- They listened to pupils from Year 1 reading and held discussions with a group of pupils from across Key Stage 2. Meetings were held with members of the governing body and a telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work of the pupils in Key Stage 2 and Year 2. They looked at the work of pupils in Year 1 while visiting lessons.
- Inspectors took account of 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the letter from one parent and comments from parents and carers at the start and end of the school day.
- They also took account of 25 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Wendy Marriott, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jenny Taylor	Additional inspector
Terry Payne	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It has a resource base currently supporting eight pupils with difficulties in communication and interaction.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to extra support through the pupil premium is slightly higher than average. This is additional money allocated to schools by the government for pupils who are looked after by the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or those with parents in the armed services.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has had a period of turbulence in leadership. A new headteacher, the fourth since 2009, took up her post in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - reviewing during lessons what pupils have understood and reshaping the teaching to support their understanding
 - presenting the learning in practical and interesting ways which allows pupils to be active and to make some decisions for themselves.
- Raise achievement in reading and writing, particularly for boys and pupils in receipt of the pupil premium, by:
 - planning opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their reading and writing skills in a range of lessons
 - checking that the new programmes for teaching writing and spelling are leading to improvements for all groups of pupils.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - using the extensive performance data the school now holds to provide extra help for pupils when levels of achievement dip
 - checking that the school's curriculum is relevant, interesting and promotes good achievement, particularly in reading and writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress pupils make across the school in reading and writing, particularly boys and some pupils in receipt of the pupil premium, is too variable. This is not the case in the Reception class where all children make good progress from a starting point where skills are below those expected for their age.
- In 2012, pupils left the school at the end of Key Stage 2 having made exceptionally good progress in mathematics. In English, however, the progress of pupils overall was less strong because the progress of boys and pupils eligible for free school meals was weaker.
- Pupils in the resource base make good progress overall and achieve better than their peers because of the intensive support and guidance they receive. The progress of other pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is at the same level generally as their class group.
- The percentage of pupils reaching the national figures for phonics (the sounds that letters make) in the check at Year 1 was low. The recent more-robust teaching of phonics means that all groups of pupils are making good progress now in lessons and more are at the expected level for their age. Teachers have raised expectations and are robustly tracking the progress pupils are making in this key skill from the Reception classes.
- Attainment at Key Stage 1 has risen and there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3. The standard of reading is broadly average at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and pupils enjoy their reading and can talk confidently about favourite books.
- In the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2012, the attainment in mathematics of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was two terms behind that of other pupils. Nonetheless, most of the pupils reached the expected level for their age. In English, their attainment was five terms behind, and even allowing for a high number of pupils with special educational needs within the group, this gap is too wide. Most of the pupils entitled to free school meals did not reach the expected standard in English.
- The standard of pupils' work in their workbooks shows that there are considerable improvements in progress, particularly in writing, this year. Where writing is based on real experiences and has been built up through good opportunities to talk, pupils are writing at length and making good choices of vocabulary. This encouraging impact of new ways of teaching is having a positive effect on all groups of pupils, including those not previously having the confidence and skills to write.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet typically good enough to help pupils make consistently good progress in their learning, particularly in reading and writing lessons.
- In good lessons, teachers are quick to notice when pupils are having difficulty in understanding the lesson. This happens more often in mathematics lessons. In a Year 6 lesson on dividing decimals, the teacher became aware that because pupils did not have a quick recall of multiplication facts they could not achieve the task they were given. He took time to point out patterns in multiplication tables so that they could tackle the work on decimals more confidently.
- This is not always the case in writing lessons and then the pace of learning slows because teachers have not checked that pupils fully understand the work before they begin the tasks.
- Teaching lacks variety in the way it is presented and so a few pupils, particularly younger boys, become restless. Links between subjects which would make the learning for reading and writing more interesting and relevant are missed.
- When teachers set out to give pupils choices and link reading and writing to learning from other lessons, better progress is made. In a Year 1 lesson, boys worked confidently in groups of three to devise small dramas from a favourite fairy story. Their knowledge of minibests from science

lessons led to exciting sentences, such as 'I am a worm.' 'I am slithering across the bridge.'

- Teaching is good in the resource base for pupils with communication and interaction difficulties, and these pupils are well integrated into main school lessons with support from effective teaching assistants.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to their learning and recent work in their books shows that they try hard in lessons they enjoy.
- Parents, carers and pupils share a belief that the school is a safe place, and they are right. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and if they fall out with friends, teachers help them to put things right. They understand the different types of bullying, such as racist name-calling. All agree that these are not a part of school life. The school has taught them how to stay safe on the internet.
- A few pupils have behaviour which is challenging but this rarely disrupts lessons because school leaders have put in good management plans for them. The plans are shared with all staff and, with good support from teaching assistants, they have helped these pupils to improve their behaviour and take a full part in lessons.
- Attendance is broadly average. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to attend regularly. For those few who are absent more frequently, the school provides a good balance of support and challenge.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The newly appointed headteacher has clearly communicated her vision and ambition for the school. The school community has confidence in the direction she is setting but there is not yet evidence of consistent improvements to teaching and achievement.
- Performance management is fully in place and is making a good contribution to raising expectations. The leadership team makes good use of outside sources of training for teachers, including joining in with other local schools through the Co-operative Trust. These actions lay a good foundation and some teaching has improved as a result.
- The leadership team has collected detailed information about how well the school is doing and has accurately identified where improvements need to be made. Plans to tackle priorities, such as improving the teaching of phonics and writing, are helping more pupils to make progress, particularly in Key Stage 1, but the impact of changes is not yet consistent.
- Learning about cultures different from their own, such as the topic on Africa, broadens pupils' cultural knowledge and the visits within the local environment foster pride in their home town. However, the curriculum is not yet fully planned for interest and to bring about good achievement, particularly in reading and writing.
- The arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and the procedures for protecting vulnerable pupils from harm are strong.
- The attitudes of leaders and all staff are highly inclusive, and the effective integration and achievement of pupils in the resource base demonstrate the commitment the school has to equality of opportunity.
- There is a clear plan of how the pupil premium has been spent with most being used to keep classes smaller and for teaching assistants to support in class. Gaps in achievement remain, particularly in English.
- The local authority has supported the school well during the period of changes in leadership. It recognises that improvements are beginning to take place and is committed to continuing its support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body works closely with the new headteacher but is not afraid to challenge decisions to check they are being made in the best interests of the pupils.

Governors' recent minutes show that they are strongly committed to improving the school. A working party has been formed to look more closely at reasons why pupils have not achieved at the level they should. Governors have a clear picture on standards of teaching and are checking that decisions to move teachers to the higher salary levels are made soundly on the evidence of good and better teaching. Governors have taken part in a range of training and they are now conducting a review of their skills so that they can target their own training to school improvement. The financial management of the school is sound. Governors have begun to plan the spending of the pupil premium again as they recognise that not all their well-intentioned ideas have had the impact that they had hoped for.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113340
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	405465

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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim James
Headteacher	Cathy Noble
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 February 2013
Telephone number	01884 253398
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