

Caslon Primary School

Beeches View Avenue, Halesowen, B63 2ES

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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

- Pupils make better progress in English than they do in mathematics. Nevertheless, achievement requires improvement in both subjects because some pupils do not make enough progress. This is because the quality of teaching over time requires improvement.
- Not all teachers have sufficient skills to teach mathematics as effectively as they do English. They do not always give pupils work that matches their ability.
- Teachers do not always check how well pupils are learning in lessons or move them on to harder work quickly enough.
- Pupils do not use their calculation skills well to solve mathematical problems. This is because they are not given sufficient opportunities to do so.
- Leadership requires improvement because not all subject leaders are as skilled as the best in checking the quality of teaching in their subject. These leaders do not give teachers guidance on how to teach the subject well.
- Senior leaders do not always check whether actions have improved the achievement of some groups of pupils. As a result, there are still gaps in the achievement of different groups in some classes.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards are rising and the rate of progress made by pupils is improving, particularly in English.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well. They give pupils clear guidance on how to improve. This helps pupils to know how well they are doing and think about what they need to do next.
- The school is successfully closing the gaps in achievement between some groups of pupils.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They enjoy taking responsibility and are keen to care for each other as 'Learning Ambassadors' or 'Nurture Ambassadors'.
- Senior leaders have set up systems to hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make. As a result, teaching is improving. Governors provide a high level of support and challenge.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine different teachers, and carried out two short walks to look at aspects of the school's work. Three of the lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and talked to other pupils in lessons, in the playground and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books during lessons and also scrutinised a range of work with the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors heard some pupils read in Key Stage 1 and talked to other pupils about their reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other school staff, members of the governing body and the School Improvement Partner from the local authority. Inspectors spoke informally to other members of staff.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to enable inspectors to consider these. Inspectors spoke to parents as they collected their children from school at the end of the day. The questionnaires completed by 22 members of staff were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including: the school's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers are set targets to improve pupils' progress; records of observations of the quality of teaching; minutes of the meetings of the governing body; the school's information about pupils' progress over time and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sandra Hayes, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Terry Mortimer

Additional Inspector

Full report

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.

Information about this school

- Caslon is similar to the average-sized primary school.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and so supported by the pupil premium (extra funding from the government) is high. There is a small number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority for whom the school also receives pupil premium.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is well above the national figure. The proportion who need specialist support or who have a statement of special educational needs has risen over recent years and is now high. The pupils' needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and specific difficulties with learning.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and pupils whose first language is not English is higher than the national average for primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part way through the school year is higher than in most schools.
- At the time of the inspection, two teachers were on maternity leave and one teacher was on long-term sick leave.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is good or better, particularly in mathematics but also in English, by making sure that teachers:
 - set more ambitious targets for pupils who need them
 - plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils of all abilities
 - keep a close check on what pupils are learning in all lessons and move them on to harder work as soon as they are ready.
- Speed up rates of pupils' progress in mathematics by:
 - checking that all teachers have the skills they need to teach specific aspects of mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils regularly use their knowledge of number to solve mathematical problems in a range of subjects.
- Increase the impact of leadership on pupils' achievement by making sure that:
 - all subject leaders have the necessary skills and understanding to tackle issues in their own subject
 - subject leaders are held to account for the achievement of pupils in their subject
 - senior leaders, including governors, focus more sharply on how much their actions are improving the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Some pupils do not make good progress. Progress is better in English than mathematics. Even in English, progress is not good as it varies between classes.
- Many children start Nursery with skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. A few are working at higher levels. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Most are ready to start the National Curriculum when they join Year 1.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 now make better progress than previously. Standards are improving and are currently average. Some pupils in these year groups make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but not all. Pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) has improved. Most pupils now use phonics when reading and spelling new words.
- Over the past few years, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have not achieved well in English and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 6 are average, but few pupils reach the higher levels in these subjects. Many pupils in these year groups now make good progress in reading and writing. Some still do not. Fewer pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils write confidently in different subjects. They use mathematical skills less well because they have few opportunities to solve problems or use their knowledge of number outside mathematics lessons.
- Extra help given to pupils who need it helps disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to others. The progress of minority ethnic pupils and those who join the school partway through their primary education also mirrors that of their classmates. This means the progress of these groups is also variable and that they make better progress in English than in mathematics.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals (therefore supported by the pupil premium) were the equivalent of around six months behind their classmates in reading by the end of Year 6 in 2012. Their results were similar to other pupils in writing and mathematics. The gaps between their English and mathematics scores and those of other pupils were smaller than the previous year.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not good or better in all classes, explaining why pupils' progress is variable. Teaching is not as good in mathematics as it is in English because some teachers lack necessary skills and knowledge to teach this subject effectively.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons where the teacher keeps a careful check on their learning and gives them harder work as soon as they are ready. In some lessons observed, teachers did not move middle- and higher-ability pupils on quickly enough. These pupils spent too long repeating what they could already do. Pupils' books indicate this happens more often in mathematics and explains why fewer pupils make good progress than in English.
- In less successful lessons, some pupils are not challenged at the right level. The work is too easy or too hard, so pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Sometimes, when this happens, a few pupils become restless and the teacher has to spend time reminding them to

focus on their work. This slows down the learning for all pupils.

- In some lessons, pupils are not given enough time to talk about their learning so cannot answer the teacher's questions or explain their thinking. When this happens, pupils do not develop good understanding of what they are learning and so do not make much progress.
- Occasionally, particularly in mathematics lessons, the materials used do not support pupils' learning as well as they could. Pupils spend too much time focusing on skills that do not link to the intended learning, such as drawing accurately when they are meant to be learning how to continue a pattern.

In better lessons, teachers expertly build pupils' understanding. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher used drama skilfully to help pupils understand both sides of a dilemma. Pupils used convincing arguments to persuade a classmate either to stay on or leave a desert island. Finally, pupils had to write a letter and decide what was needed to make the letter as good as possible. Some of this writing was exceptional.

- Teaching has improved and now has some notable strengths. An atmosphere of trust gives pupils confidence to attempt harder work when asked. Teachers link learning to real-life situations, making it meaningful. All teachers mark pupils' work well, showing how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in early reading, writing and number because teachers plan a wide range of experiences and make the most of every opportunity to help them learn well. Children learn how to be healthy, for example by washing their hands before handling food, and how to stay safe. During the inspection, some used saws and drills to make marks in small logs, handling this equipment carefully and safely.
- The well-organised Nursery and Reception classrooms support children in their learning. This is not as effective in the outdoor area, as teachers miss opportunities to make the space support children's understanding of reading, writing and mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents say children are well cared for, safe and happy. The school devotes significant effort to achieving this. One pupil told an inspector, 'I smile this much because this is a wonderful school.'
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility. Some older pupils are trained 'Nurture Ambassadors' or 'Learning Ambassadors', giving help and support to younger pupils who find it difficult to settle into school or who are struggling with learning. This contributes well to pupils' social development. The pupil council helped review rewards for good behaviour and consequences for unacceptable behaviour. Older 'Playground Buddies' help younger pupils play happily and safely at playtime. Pupils also take responsibility for other aspects of school life, such as the library.
- The school keeps close checks on pupils' absence and punctuality, quickly following up any concerns. Consequently, most pupils attend frequently and are rarely late for school. Overall attendance rates have improved and are now average.
- Pupils say they understand about bullying and told an inspector about different ways people can be bullied. They say there used to be name-calling in school but it has stopped now. They explained how a focus on respect led to pupils treating one another more respectfully. One pupil said the school is, 'One big happy family.'

- Effective systems help pupils manage their own behaviour. Teachers follow the agreed policy consistently. Parents agree behaviour is managed well. Behaviour has improved. There are now few occasions where it is unacceptable.
- Pupils' good behaviour in lessons shows they are keen to learn. A few occasionally become restless and noisy in lessons where the work is too hard or too easy and have to be reminded to get on with their task.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders share a strong commitment to making the school a place where all pupils learn well. Pupils are nurtured in order to help them succeed. Nevertheless, they do not all achieve well.
- Leaders' view of what the school does well is, generally, accurate. For example, they know which pupils could make better progress, such as those supported by the pupil premium. They plan improvements carefully, showing how they will judge if actions are being carried out. However, records show that leaders do not always focus on whether actions are making enough difference to the achievement of these pupils.
- The dynamic senior leadership team of headteacher and deputy headteacher have used their combined strengths to set up a coaching programme to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders observe lessons regularly, setting teachers targets linked broadly to pupils' achievement. However, their lesson observations and subsequent discussions about pupils' progress do not focus sufficiently on the learning of different groups in each class. Consequently, some teachers do not pay enough attention to making sure that all pupils achieve as well as they can.
- The headteacher takes appropriate decisions about teachers' salaries based on pupils' achievement. Teachers who oversee the work of more than one class have targets linked to all pupils in that phase. Subject leaders' targets are not focused enough on how well pupils achieve in their area of responsibility. Consequently, these leaders do not always concentrate enough on the quality of teaching in their subject. Subject leaders observe lessons and give teachers advice to improve their teaching, but do not explain how to teach specific aspects of their subject well; for example, how to help pupils grasp particular mathematical ideas more easily.
- Teachers plan experiences that support all pupils to develop history, geography, science, personal and social skills and to understand other cultures. Pupils use writing skills in many different subjects but have fewer opportunities to use calculation skills in lessons other than mathematics. This is one reason why achievement in English has improved at a faster rate than in mathematics.
- Parents feel that the school has improved. They say the headteacher keeps them well informed about what is happening and is always available if they have questions or concerns. Staff like working at the school and believe leaders are doing a good job.
- The school feels well supported by the local authority. The Early Years Adviser and an experienced manager from a local school have provided effective guidance to the Early Years Foundation Stage staff during the maternity leave of the permanent post holder. Governors value the challenge and external view brought by the School Improvement Partner's termly monitoring visits.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors support and challenge well, holding the school to account for the performance of pupils. They know where stronger and weaker teaching exists. Governors recently asked the school to improve the quality of information about achievement of different groups of pupils. They know this will help them to focus more sharply on whether gaps are closing for different groups when they make decisions about using pupil premium funding or about teachers' salary increases. Committees effectively carry out statutory responsibilities and they have ensured that procedures for safeguarding meet requirements.

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	103801
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	399638

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	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephanie Sellers and Moammer Nasser
Headteacher	Adrian Pembleton
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2012
Telephone number	01384 818875
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