

Castledown Primary School

Priory Road, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 3QT

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils are keen to learn, and achieve well. They make good progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics, throughout the school.
- School leaders have succeeded in improving the quality of teaching so that it is now consistently good, with examples of outstanding practice.
- As a result, the standards reached by pupils by the time they leave have risen significantly over the past few years.
- Teachers include a good range of activities in their lessons and match tasks carefully to pupils' interests and different levels of ability.
- Pupils behave sensibly in lessons and around the school. They have few concerns about bullying because they say that adults deal with any occurrences quickly and effectively.
- Leaders work well together and have high expectations of the staff and of pupils. They make sure that teachers understand the school's goals for improvement and that they receive good support to help them to reach their targets.
- Governors know their school well, including the quality of teaching and the extent of pupils' achievement. They hold leaders rigorously to account for making sure that any relative weaknesses in the school's performance are promptly and successfully addressed.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, and makes sure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always adapt tasks during lessons effectively enough to ensure that all pupils remain fully engaged in tasks and are able to make rapid progress.
- Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities in lessons to learn for themselves and from one another.
- Teachers do not, at present, have enough chances to share examples of outstanding practice.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons, three of them together with school leaders, observing all the classes in the school and all the teachers who were present during the inspection at least once. They also made shorter visits to a number of other lessons and other activities, looked at pupils' written work, listened to pupils read, attended an assembly, and visited the school's breakfast and after-school club.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and members of staff. They held informal discussions with a number of parents. The lead inspector also spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress, and data on attendance. They examined safeguarding procedures and records of the school's own lesson observations, as well as the school's self-evaluation, performance management and planning documents.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of 65 responses to the Ofsted online survey Parent View which were submitted before or during the inspection. They also considered a letter received from a parent, and 36 questionnaires completed by members of the teaching and support staff.

Inspection team

Robin Gaff, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Vicky Turner

Additional Inspector

Roger Fenwick

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Almost two thirds of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is just above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is just below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school during the course of their primary education is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school operates a breakfast and after-school club for its pupils.
- It has undertaken a major rebuilding programme since its inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To ensure that pupils make rapid progress and are always fully engaged in their learning, make sure that teachers always:
 - adapt tasks during lessons, when pupils find them easier or harder than teachers had anticipated, so that pupils always learn at a fast enough pace
 - give pupils enough opportunities to learn independently by reflecting on and assessing their own and each other's work.
- Raise the quality of teaching by increasing the amount of opportunities teachers have to share examples of outstanding practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the school in either the Nursery or Reception classes with levels of skills and knowledge which, for many of them, are well below those normally expected for their age. They make a good start to their learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school, reaching standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 which are broadly average. This represents good achievement.
- In recent years, pupils' overall levels of attainment have risen at a faster rate than found nationally, and provisional results for the Year 6 national tests in 2013 indicate that this trend has continued. The increased proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 also shows that the school has succeeded in raising the standards reached by its more able pupils.
- Pupils, including those who have found reading difficult, read fluently and accurately, and talk readily about the range of books they have enjoyed reading. They gain a good grasp, at an early stage, of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) because staff teach this skill in a well-planned and systematic way, and to good effect. Pupils' writing, together with their grasp of spelling and grammar, develops in accuracy and sophistication as they progress through the school.
- Teachers give pupils good opportunities to learn and to practise techniques such as calculation and problem solving. As a result, they becoming increasingly confident and successful in applying mathematical techniques, including in real-life situations, such as planning expenditure for a special event such as budgeting for supplies for the newly opened café.
- The skills pupils gain and the levels of attainment they reach ensure that they are well prepared for secondary education.
- The standards reached in both English and mathematics in the 2012 national tests by those pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium were just above those of other pupils in the school. Their results indicated that they were about half a term behind all pupils nationally in both English and mathematics, although they were a term ahead of similar pupils nationally. They also showed that these pupils had made faster progress from their starting points than similar pupils nationally. The provisional results for 2013 show a similar picture.
- This demonstrates how well the school is using the additional pupil premium funding to narrow the gap in attainment between eligible pupils and that of other pupils, and thus in promoting equality of opportunity.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress because teachers plan tasks for them which are well adapted to their needs, and because teaching assistants ensure make sure that these pupils are fully included in classroom activities.
- The school ensures that the relatively large number of pupils who join at other than the normal times settle quickly and are helped to make up any lost ground. As a result, these pupils also achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy learning and make good progress in a range of subjects, including history and science. When progress in lessons is slower, this is generally because some pupils find tasks too easy or too difficult and teachers do not adjust activities quickly enough to remedy this.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of both work and behaviour. They know their subjects well and provide pupils with a variety of activities which are well matched to their different abilities, and which engage and maintain their interest.
- Teachers usually ensure that pupils learn at a good pace, by carefully checking the progress they are making and adapting tasks if they prove to be too demanding or not challenging enough.

However, this is not always the case.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and give them written comments which help them to understand what they have done well, as well as the next steps to take in order to make their work even better. Teachers also expect pupils to respond to these comments, so that they can check that pupils have understood and acted upon them.
- Occasionally, however, teachers do not give pupils enough chances to improve their work by reflecting on and assessing its quality, and comparing it with what others have done.
- Small-group and one-to-one teaching by teachers and teaching assistants, some of it paid for by the pupil premium money, makes a very good contribution to the learning and progress of eligible pupils, and to that of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils understand and support the school's simple and straightforward 'Golden Rules', which they have helped to develop. As a result, the school is a happy and harmonious community in which pupils from different backgrounds relate well to one another. The school is quick to tackle any potential discrimination.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children quickly learn how to work and play harmoniously and safely together, and to listen attentively to adults and to each other in small-group and whole-class activities.
- Pupils throughout the school are keen to participate in classroom activities. This helps lessons to proceed at a good pace. Pupils are proud of their work and are eager to show examples of it to visitors.
- On rare occasions, pupils' behaviour in lessons requires improvement because a few become distracted and do not concentrate sufficiently on their work. This is usually because teachers have not made sure that tasks are demanding enough to maintain all the pupils' interest.
- In the playground and around the school, pupils relate well to and show consideration for one another. Pupil play-leaders develop their social and leadership skills well by organising games and helping to resolve any minor disagreements.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, such as persistent name-calling and cyber-bullying. They say they have few concerns about bullying, however, because they know what to do if it happens and are confident that adults will quickly resolve any problems. They know how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential hazards, for example on the road and in case of fire.
- The school has been very successful in improving the behaviour of the small number of pupils whose conduct has hampered their own and others' learning and well-being. As a result, disruption to lessons is rare. Leaders have also taken effective measures to improve the attendance of the small minority of pupils whose persistent absence has impeded their progress.
- The very large majority of the parents who responded to the Parent View survey, as well as those who spoke or wrote to the inspectors, agreed that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved and that their children feel safe there. Very few registered any concern about bullying.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, working closely with the deputy headteacher, is passionately committed to ensuring that the school provides the best possible education for its pupils. Together, they have successfully addressed the areas for improvement highlighted by the previous inspection and have made sure that the staff share their ambition and drive for improvement.
- Leaders who are responsible for particular areas of the school, some of whom are relatively new to their posts, are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and are having an increasingly positive impact on the quality of teaching in the areas for which they are responsible, and thereby on pupils' achievement.

- Leaders set teachers clear targets which relate closely to improving pupils' achievement. Leaders' accurate understanding of what constitutes good and outstanding teaching helps them to identify any relative weaknesses. Teachers confirm that they have been given very good training and support by leaders to help them to improve their practice. Leaders have acted firmly and decisively to eradicate any inadequate teaching.
- Leaders recognise, however, that teachers do not have enough opportunities to share with one another examples of outstanding practice which already exist within the school.
- The school's curriculum is enriched by special events such as science, ecology and sports weeks. It has made good use of the links it has established with schools in Sierra Leone and Ghana to enhance pupils' understanding of different cultures and lifestyles. Each class in the school is named after a modern artist, about whose work pupils learn during the course of the year, thus developing their knowledge and appreciation of different artistic styles and methods. This makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural awareness.
- Pupils have good opportunities to learn to play musical instruments and to take part in musical events. They also take part in a good variety of sporting activities: the school has increased rates of participation in sport, helping pupils to develop healthy lifestyles. Leaders have drawn up detailed and appropriate plans for the use of the additional sport premium funding and how they will measure its impact.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide pupils with a secure and stimulating environment. The newly developed café, which pupils help to run, gives parents good opportunities to talk informally with teachers and other adults.
- As part of its rebuilding programme, the school has significantly improved its facilities for outdoor learning and play, from which children in the Nursery and Reception classes are benefiting a great deal.
- The local authority provides effective, light-touch support for the school, recognising, correctly, that it has the capacity to improve without extra help.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors share the school's leaders' commitment to improvement, as well as their ambition for the school. They are well informed about the school's performance and how it compares with that of other schools, and the quality of teaching. This is because governors visit the school often and receive regular, detailed reports from the headteacher and other school leaders, which they examine closely and are prepared to challenge, in order to be sure that any relative weaknesses are being firmly tackled.
 - Governors understand and support the ways in which leaders manage and improve the staff's performance, and how leaders require any pay increases for staff to be explicitly linked to the quality of teaching, and to the achievement of individual and school targets. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance.
 - Governors closely monitor the use of the school's finances and ensure that its resources are well used for the benefit of all the pupils, including those who qualify for pupil premium funding. They also make sure that the school meets all government requirements for safeguarding children.

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	114474
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	426433

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	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Pleasants
Headteacher	Neil Small
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 November 2011
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