

Castle Cary Community Primary School

Park Street, Castle Cary, BA7 7EH

Inspection dates 25–26 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Attainment in English and mathematics is above average.
- Children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 to 6, including the small numbers of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those supported by the pupil premium, make good progress. The rate of progress is increasingly at a significantly higher rate than is found nationally.
- Good teaching and pupils' very keen desire to learn help pupils achieve well.
- Teachers give excellent feedback to pupils on how well they have done and how they can improve their work further.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they feel exceptionally safe. Pupils are extremely keen to learn, love the many activities which the school provides, and get on exceptionally well together. Attendance is well above average.
- School leaders and governors check the quality of teaching and learning very thoroughly. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved.
- The school runs a very successful outdoor education programme, using its local environment well.
- All staff share leaders' determination to improve the school further.
- Parents are very positive about the school and would strongly recommend it to others. One parent told inspectors, 'The school has given my children not only the keys to the city but the keys to their future.'

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and achievement are not yet outstanding because occasionally pupils, often the more able, do not learn as well as they might in lessons when the work they are given is not difficult enough.
- Although teachers are keen to improve pupils' progress and aim for excellence, they do not have enough opportunities to observe each other and get the benefits of sharing best practice.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons, taught by seven teachers. Three of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited some classes for shorter periods and heard several pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, three governors and pupils. Inspectors also spoke with a number of parents. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 28 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and scrutinised a variety of documentation, including the school’s evaluation of its own performance; the school improvement plan; minutes of the governing body’s meetings; information on pupils’ current progress; records of the leadership team’s checking of teaching and learning; and records relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also looked at examples of pupils’ work.

Inspection team

John Laver, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Robert Arnold

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children with a parent in the armed services, is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action, and the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are both below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Children in Reception (the Early Years Foundation Stage) are taught in two classes, in one alongside Year 1 pupils, and in the other alongside pupils from Years 1 and 2. There is one class comprising Year 2 pupils. There are two classes comprising both Years 3 and 4 pupils and two classes comprising both Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.
- The school operates both before-school and after-school clubs.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2012 and there were other changes to the senior leadership team at that time.
- The school has Green Flag Eco-School status and is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that more of the good teaching becomes outstanding, by:
 - making sure that teachers, early in the lesson, give more able pupils work that is hard enough for them to achieve to their full potential, especially in writing
 - giving teachers even more opportunities to observe and learn from each other the most effective methods of helping all pupils to learn rapidly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join Reception with levels of skill and knowledge in line with those expected for their age. As a result of good teaching, many leave Reception with attainment above what is expected nationally. The good progress continues throughout the rest of the school, with pupils leaving at the age of 11 with attainment above the national average.
- National test results confirm the above average attainment. Pupils' good achievement is also evident from the great majority of lesson observations during the inspection and the school's tracking of how pupils make progress as they move through the school.
- Nearly all pupils, of all backgrounds and abilities, including the most able, are on track to at least meet the school's targets, and many to get well beyond them as these pupils make progress at a faster rate than is usual nationally.
- Achievement is not outstanding because the rate of progress still varies between some classes. However, gaps between how well boys and girls do have narrowed, for example as a result of the school's successful efforts to improve reading.
- In the past, a small number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those supported by pupil premium funding have not done as well as they should. The school has successfully tackled this, for example by providing extra staff support for these pupils. Inspectors saw this support successfully improving the skills of these groups of pupils in developing the full range of reading, writing and mathematical skills. Whereas the few pupils getting extra funding had been a term or more behind other pupils in their English and mathematics, the gap has significantly narrowed or disappeared completely, so that these pupils are now doing as well as other pupils in these subjects.
- Pupils do better in the Year 1 phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) check than is expected nationally. Inspectors heard pupils in classes throughout the school reading clearly and confidently. Particularly in Reception and Year 1, teachers use various methods and resources well so that young children and pupils learn enthusiastically.
- Pupils speak and listen at a better level than expected nationally. Pupils are keen to answer questions and discuss things in class, and they listen well to each other.
- Inspectors saw good, and occasionally outstanding, progress in many lessons. Teachers usually set work at the right level for pupils of different ages and abilities within the same class. An inspector saw this, for example, when older pupils were investigating the properties of thermal insulation in a science lesson. Pupils collaborated enthusiastically as they discussed methods of fair testing, and quickly improved their understanding.
- The rate of progress does sometimes vary. Although there is good progress in writing, it is slightly slower than in reading and in mathematics, partly due to the fact that teachers sometimes miss opportunities to help pupils, especially more-able pupils, further develop their writing skills in some of the topics taught outside literacy lessons. However, the gaps in progress have narrowed. Teachers also make sure that, when necessary, pupils improve the presentation of their work in books.
- Pupils told the inspectors how much they enjoyed their lessons. They know their targets and believe that they are 'doing well'. Parents also believe this and are very positive about their children's progress in school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- School records show that teaching in the school has been typically good since the previous inspection. Good teaching was seen in all year groups. The impact is also evident from pupils' work in books in a range of subjects.
- Teachers expect pupils to present their work neatly and accurately. This is seen not just in books but also in stimulating display work throughout the school, for example in classrooms and

includes many striking examples of pupils' writing.

- Teachers use teaching assistants very well to give extra support to some pupils, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Staff support these pupils both inside and outside classroom lessons and, as a result, they make good progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills. When in lessons, these pupils also have the confidence to share their ideas with the whole class.
- A particular strength in teaching is the way staff give feedback to pupils in a variety of ways. Pupils are shown how well they have done and how they can further improve their work. Pupils have time in lessons to read and respond to teachers' detailed comments in their books. Pupils learn from this, as seen for example in the improved accuracy of their spelling and punctuation.
- All classes take advantage of the excellent outdoor facilities and attractive environment to learn about the natural world and pupils' relationship with it. The school's work in this area has been recognised in its Green Flag Eco-School status.
- Teachers make parents very aware of what pupils are learning. For example, parents are encouraged to comment on Reception children's 'learning journey' files and to take an active interest in homework tasks.
- Occasionally, the quality of teaching varies between classes. This usually happens when, whatever methods the teacher uses to encourage learning, more-able pupils in particular do not get work of sufficient challenge early enough in the lesson to enable them to achieve to their full potential. The leadership team is already working on this aspect in order to raise the quality of teaching to the next level.
- Parents and pupils believe that teaching is good and inspectors agree with them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. It is nearly always exemplary in class, and pupils' exceptional keenness to learn is a significant reason for their good, and occasionally outstanding, achievement.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and all the activities which the school provides, such as the before- and after-school clubs and the visits both locally and further afield to places such as London. The 'Green Team' feels very responsible for looking after the school and encouraging respect for it.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their attendance, which is well above average.
- Pupils love taking on responsibility, for example in the Pupil Voice Council and the newly introduced house system. They talk knowledgeably about the link with a school in Zambia. They very much enjoy newly introduced activities such as 'Wake and Shake' before school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils and parents are made very aware of safety issues such as e-safety and secure use of the internet. Pupils insist that there is no type of bullying in the school.
- Everyone recognises the school as an extremely safe as well as a happy environment. All pupils have an equal opportunity to do well in school, and there is no discrimination. The school has fully earned its Rights Respecting School status. School records confirm this, as well as it being obvious from seeing pupils around the school and talking with pupils and parents. As one parent, typically, commented, 'The children are never left disheartened. The school is a safe, secure and nurturing environment in which to learn.'

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has made several changes since he joined the school. These have improved the rate of pupils' progress. The checking of teaching and learning has become more rigorous and other leaders and managers, including subject leaders, are increasingly taking an active part in this process. Leaders have created a culture in which good teaching and outstanding behaviour are the norm.

- Leaders regularly use assessments and data on pupils' progress to adjust how pupils are taught. For example, following regular staff meetings about progress, school leaders quickly identify pupils in danger of not doing as well as others and give them extra staff support either inside or outside lessons. This has improved some pupils' progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills considerably.
- The leadership team's checking of the school's performance is detailed and accurate. It results in plans for improvement which are focused on the right priorities.
- Other staff share the headteacher's determination to take the school to the next level. This commitment, backed up by evidence of improving attainment and progress, shows that the school is well placed to improve further.
- School leaders use additional funding well to improve attainment and pupils' enjoyment. The pupil premium has funded extra staff support and resources, which have led to improved progress for those pupils eligible for the funding. The school uses primary sports funding to bring in specialist coaching and help staff to develop their expertise, and thereby to raise pupils' levels of performance. The school has a successful record in sports competitions and creates healthy lifestyle initiatives such as 'Wake and Shake'.
- The local authority has a very light touch relationship with the school, because it recognises the school's existing successes and continued improvement.
- The school uses its links with other local schools to provide additional opportunities for staff and pupils. Staff meet with colleagues from other schools to increase their skill at checking pupils' performance. Pupils benefit from opportunities such as taking part in sports festivals at the local secondary school.
- Leaders manage the staff's performance well. All staff understand the school's approach to accountability as part of moving the school forwards. Pay and responsibilities are closely linked to performance and progress.
- The school creates many opportunities to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have opportunities to reflect in assemblies, and the school encourages them to develop a sense of both individual and collective responsibility through activities like raising funds for charity and helping each other in the playground.
- The leadership team is determined to improve teaching further. It has brought in measures to strengthen staff expertise, for example encouraging teachers to observe each other and work in pairs or teams. It recognises that these opportunities should be increased, because some staff have had limited opportunities to observe effective practices both within the school and elsewhere.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works closely with the school leadership, supporting it but also making sure that it justifies its actions. For example, governors have a very good understanding of how different groups of pupils make progress in relation to pupils in other schools. They question leaders about the impact of pupil premium funding and changes in the way various subjects are organised within the school day. The governing body makes sure that the school meets all safeguarding requirements, and the staff's awareness of safety is regularly updated. Governors recognise the strengths in teaching and also which aspects could be improved further. Like the headteacher, governors make sure that staff are accountable and have appropriate targets to aim at. They know how pay rises for staff are linked to their achievement of these targets. Governors are very conscious of their role in both supporting the school and holding it to account. At the same time, they are very active in the school in various ways, including visiting staff and listening to reports from them. They also regularly attend school events and liaise with parents.

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	123640
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	431478

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
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Lennard
Headteacher	Christopher Hansen
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 January 2009
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