

The Castle Primary School

Barrington Street, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 6QR

Inspection dates 16–17 April 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Early years provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Since the last inspection the achievement of pupils by the end of Year 6 has not improved quickly enough in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The basic skills of middle ability pupils have also not been developed quickly enough in the past.
- Pupils achievement in mathematics is not yet as good as that in reading and writing.
- Teachers do not always use teaching assistants to the best effect in their classrooms to support the learning of all groups of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is improving but has not yet sustained the recent improvements seen in the achievement of pupils over time.
- Senior leaders are still developing the skills of teachers so they can deliver high quality lessons, especially in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has been relentless in her efforts to tackle the underperformance of teachers across the school. Through good support provided by members of the senior leadership team, teachers are beginning to be much more effective.
- Leadership at all levels is rapidly improving. There is now a determined pursuit of excellence across the school. Teachers have much higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Children make good progress in the Reception classes and are well prepared to move into Year 1.
- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics has recently improved on previous years. This is demonstrated in the pupils' current work books in most year groups.
- Pupils feel safe in school and their behaviour is good. Good relationships are fostered across the school.
- Pupils in the communication and interaction resource base are taught effectively and are well supported.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 18 lessons and observed an assembly.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. He also held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 5 read, and scrutinised samples of pupils' workbooks.
- The inspectors examined a wide range of documents, including the school's information on pupils' recent progress. They also looked at planning and documentation about checks on teaching, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took into account 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and talked with parents dropping their children off at school. The views of staff were considered through the 26 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| David Hogg, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Deborah Tregellas | Additional Inspector |
| Clive Robson | Additional Inspector |
| Jennifer Cutler | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It has a communication and interaction resource base, currently supporting 11 pupils with difficulties in communication and interaction. All pupils in school attend on a full-time basis.
- The school has two classes in each year from Reception to Year 4, and three mixed Year 5 and Year 6 classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of the pupils in the school receiving support funded by the pupil premium is a little higher than that seen nationally. The pupil premium is funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of children who are not from a White British background is lower than that seen nationally. The proportion of all of the pupils who speak a first language other than English is also below the national average.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a significant amount of turnover among the teaching staff. The current senior leadership team members took on their roles from September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subject areas to develop their basic skills more quickly
 - use the additional classroom support they have more effectively so that the progress of all groups of pupils is accelerated.
- Raise the achievement of all groups of pupils, especially middle ability pupils, by ensuring that their basic skills in reading, writing and especially mathematics, are developed and applied more quickly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's determination to drive through the changes necessary to improve teaching and learning has been a key factor moving the school forward. From September 2014, a very effective senior leadership team has ably supported her. As a result of their actions, teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Consequently, pupils are now making much better progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school than over the past few years.
- Leaders have challenged and successfully eradicated most of the weak and ineffective teaching of the past. Teachers commented on the good level of support offered by the senior leadership team to improve their skills. Teachers have specific targets to work towards related to the achievement of pupils. Their success in reaching these goals links to their opportunities for promotion and salary advancement.
- The school has also drawn on, and benefited from, the expertise provided by the local authority to help improve the quality of teaching. The school continues to use support and now sources it for itself. The school has developed its own link with an outstanding school, to ensure all teaching becomes consistently good. However, this association is very recent and has yet to have a significant impact on the work of the school. The local authority has also worked with the governing body to successfully develop governors' understanding of their roles within the leadership team.
- Middle leaders are involved in the monitoring of the progress different groups of pupils make. They review teachers' planning and suggest improvements when necessary. They then check how effective teaching is by scrutinising the quality of work in the pupils' books. They take action to ensure that pupils who may be struggling or need further challenge receive better support. For example, the most-able pupils in Year 6 are now better supported in their efforts to achieve at the highest levels in mathematics.
- The work of the school is now more effective in accelerating the progress of different groups of pupils than it was in the past. As a result of good use of additional resources, including pupil premium funding, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs is improving. The school works effectively to enable all pupils to succeed and achieve well by having an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The learning activities in different subjects are well organised across the school. The school looks to widen pupils' experiences with visits to places of interest. For example, Year 3 pupils recently visited a science centre in Bristol to support their work on forces and magnets. Pupils of all ages were able to watch the recent solar eclipse safely using devices they themselves had made.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of the pupils is developed well and good relationships between them are fostered. Pupils are able to take on roles of responsibility, for example as playground leaders. Pupils are able to learn about the beliefs and values of other faiths. Those pupils with special educational needs are accepted and integrated into classes very well. The school always tackles any form of discrimination promptly. Pupils understand the values within a modern society; for example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are aware of the forthcoming general election. Assemblies are based on the school's 'Values for Life' that promote mutual respect and acceptance of others' differences. Pupils are well prepared to move on to their next stage in education and life in a democratic Britain.
- The school makes good use of the additional primary physical education and sport premium funding. Professional coaches help pupils develop their skills in a wider range of sports. Lunchtime supervisors have received training and are now very active in promoting play and exercise, including lunchtime dance activities in the playground. Pupils are active and enjoy the organised activities. The school offers those in Year 6 the challenge to take part in the Exmoor Challenge Walk that involves walking 16 miles across Exmoor.
- The school website provides parents with up-to-date information about what is happening in school. An overview of the learning programme in different year groups gives parents a clear picture of the topics the classes are covering each term. Parents who met with the inspection team said they were happy with the school. They felt there had been positive changes since the headteacher had arrived and that their children were now learning well.
- The safeguarding and child protection arrangements in the school are robust and meet statutory requirements. The school is thorough in its monitoring of these procedures. Senior leaders make sure that all staff have the relevant training and that they are very aware of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe and protected from harm.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are much clearer about their roles since the last inspection and now take a more active role within school. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly and meet with key staff. This

gives them an insight into different aspects of the school's work. Governors hold the school to account for the progress made by different groups of pupils. They are better able to assess how well extra resources are used.

- Governors have attended the school improvement meetings over the last two years. They have a clear understanding how the school is tackling underachievement and the steps the school is taking to continue to raise the quality of teaching. Governors understand how the opportunities for salary advancement and promotion for staff link to the achievement of the pupils.
- The governors check the financial position of the school carefully. They also examine how the school uses additional resources, such as the sport funding.
- Governors review the safeguarding and child protection procedures with care to ensure they meet the required standards and that pupils are safe and well looked after when in school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils in the mainstream classes and in the communication and interaction resource base are motivated and work hard. They enjoy their lessons. Pupils take pride in their work, which is generally neat and well presented.
- In lessons, pupils work well in small groups or without the close supervision of adults. They are confident to try tricky problems, and show good levels of resilience and perseverance when faced with challenging tasks.
- Pupils are very polite. They are well mannered and will say 'please' and 'thank you' to each other when sharing resources. At breaktimes they play well together. For example, pupils will quietly queue and wait their turn to use the climbing frames without fussing.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and insist that such acts of unkindness are very rare. Pupils are confident to resolve problems themselves, but know that they can go to adult if they have any particular issues.
- The school has been successful over the last two years in reducing the number of incidents of very challenging behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel the school site is secure and that all of the staff will look after and take care of them.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet or playing games online. The school uses the expertise from groups outside school to provide cycle proficiency training for older pupils.
- The school has worked successfully to improve the pupils' attendance, which is now broadly in line with the national average. The school continues to work with some families to reduce pupil absence still further.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over the last few years, the quality of teaching has not been good enough to enable pupils to achieve as highly as they should. As a result, they have not made sufficient progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher quickly identified weaknesses in teaching as the cause of pupils' underachievement. The headteacher tackled this issue head on and was tenacious in her attempts to improve the quality of teaching through training and providing support to individual teachers. Now, teaching is much better and more effective across the school. The quality of teaching of mathematics in the school still needs further improvement and senior leaders continue to provide good support to help teachers build their skills.
- The school has identified the need to improve further the quality of teaching in order to raise the attainment of pupils and accelerate the progress they make in all subjects. Pupils do not have regular opportunities to apply their mathematical understanding in different subject areas. As a result, they do not develop these skills quickly enough. Teachers have recently created more occasions in which pupils are able to apply their writing skills across a range of topic areas. This is beginning to have an impact in improving the quality of pupils' writing.
- Teachers do not always use the teaching assistants in their class as effectively as they could to support

the learning of all groups of pupils. At times, teaching assistants do not have a clear role and, as a result, are not sufficiently involved in helping pupils learn. When they are used well, pupils' learning is very well supported, but this is not a consistent picture.

- Pupils' work is well marked and the feedback teachers provide helps pupils improve their work further. Pupils are clear about what they have to do to make their work better and generally respond to the guidance they receive and make the necessary alterations. In the best examples, a dialogue between the teacher and the pupil develops as they respond to each other's comments and improvements.
- In the past there was little accountability by individual teachers for the progress pupils made and their expectations of what pupils should achieve was too low. The leadership team has challenged this robustly and rigorously. Staff now make better use of the information they hold on the different groups of pupils in their classes to plan activities that are not too easy or too difficult. This targeted approach now better matches the work to the abilities of the groups of pupils in the class, including the middle ability pupils, increasingly.
- Staff in the communication and interaction resource base support the learning of those pupils with specific needs well. In a mathematics lesson, pupils investigated the price changes if items increased in price. The teaching assistant was able to help improve their understanding and resolve a misconception of the difference between £1.04 and £1.40. Pupils from the resource base integrate into mainstream lessons as much as possible and are provided with good support from teaching assistants.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Over time, the achievement of the pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has been too low, especially for middle ability pupils. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been consistently below national averages and the progress pupils have made between Year 2 and Year 6 has been too slow.
- Evidence from pupils' workbooks in most year groups indicates that pupils of different abilities are now making much better, or good, progress in writing and mathematics. The improvements seen in this academic year for most year groups are more pronounced since December 2014. However, in other year groups some pupils have made slightly less progress over the same period of time.
- The school's own information indicates that a greater proportion of pupils are making or exceeding expected progress. More pupils who are currently in Year 6 are achieving above their target levels.
- Raising standards in mathematics remains a priority which the school is tackling robustly. Weak teaching in the past has left gaps in pupils' understanding and in their confidence to apply their skills to solve problems. Training provided by the senior leaders is improving teachers' subject knowledge and skills. As a result, evidence from pupils' books and information from assessments indicate pupils are making better progress than in the past.
- The school's own information shows that, over the last year and particularly from January 2015, the gaps in the skills and understanding of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in school and other pupils nationally are now closing and these pupils are increasingly achieving well. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 6 lagged behind other pupils in the school by three terms in reading and mathematics and just over two terms in writing. When compared against other pupils nationally, they were behind by four terms in reading and mathematics and three terms in writing.
- In 2014, 10% of pupils attained the highest standards in mathematics, which was in line with the national proportion. The school has reviewed the effectiveness of the additional support provided for the most-able pupils through focused small group work. Adaptations in the way the school provides support to Year 6 pupils in mathematics have ensured their work is challenging. The most-able pupils make better progress than other pupils across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils from different minority ethnic groups and those who do not speak English as their first language generally make good progress, especially as their language skills develop. This is in part due to their positive attitudes to learning as well as the targeted support they receive.
- In the past, the achievement of girls has been better than that of boys in national assessments at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The school has worked hard to make the learning activities more interesting for the boys, to catch their interest more. Although gaps in the attainment of boys and girls remain, they are now closing due to the recent improvements in teaching.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy reading. Younger pupils have a good understanding of the sounds linked to groups of letters (phonics) and apply this knowledge when reading unfamiliar words. Pupils in Year 2 could discuss what was happening in the stories they read and go on to suggest what they would do if they were the main character. Pupils continue to develop their skills as they move up the school. In Year 5, pupils read regularly in school and at home. As a result, they read fluently and with increasing expression.

- The school provides good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They typically make good progress, especially when they are in small groups and supported by the class teacher. Teaching assistants are receiving ongoing training to help them deliver more effective small group intervention sessions. As a result, pupils with additional needs are making better progress than in the past.
- The communication and interaction resource base provides a nurturing environment for the pupils. Pupils' social and academic skills develop well. Pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics, albeit in small steps for some.

The early years provision is good

- Leadership of the early years team is good. The early years leader, who took up post in September 2014, has brought about clear improvements to the setting. Assessments of the children's skills are more reliable than in the past. These judgements ensure activities are planned that will interest and challenge both the most able and those with additional needs, and so move their learning on quickly.
- Children join the Reception classes with skills that are lower than those that are typical for their age, especially in reading, writing and mathematical understanding. In 2014, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was below the national average. Teaching has improved and is now is good. It is more effective in helping children acquire different skills. Current assessments indicate that an increased proportion of children are developing their skills more quickly. More children are now on course to achieve a good level of development by the end of the year than have been in the past . Consequently a greater proportion of them are well prepared for the move into Year 1.
- The school is developing closer links with its main feeder nursery to ensure a smoother entry into school. The school is also developing better procedures to check and ensure greater continuity in the assessments each setting makes.
- Children's behaviour is very good. Children get along well together and support each other. One group of children worked on a task to move water down a series of drain pipes. They collaborated on the task, each sharing their ideas so that no water would be lost and the 'fish' could safely swim down the stream.
- Children have a good understanding of how to behave in the setting. They insisted that an inspector remove her shoes before entering a reading area. Their sense of wonder in a mathematics activity was palpable when they painted dots on one side of a sheet of paper, folded it and saw the pattern had been copied and that the number of dots had doubled.
- The planned activities are rich and varied and lead to secure development of the children's skills and knowledge. Staff observe the progress children make carefully and this is recorded in 'learning journals'. Parents are able to share these books and have opportunities to include activities done at home to be added as part of their child's 'learning journey'. Parents feel welcome to talk to staff about the progress their children make.
- The activities challenge the most able children well. Teachers provide opportunities with reading and writing to extend their skills. Children have the opportunity to tackle Year 1 style activities on occasions.
- Those safeguarding procedures and policies relevant to the early years setting are in place and ensure that children are well cared for and kept safe.
- The early years provision is not yet outstanding as some of the outside activities lack sufficient guidance for the children on what they need to do at the workstations.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 113340 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 462491 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 333 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Warren Doe |
| Headteacher | Catherine Noble |
| Date of previous school inspection | 18–19 April 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01884 253398 |
| Fax number | 01884 252610 |
| Email address | admin@the-castle-primary.devon.sch.uk |

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