

Carswell Community Primary School

Bostock Road, Abingdon, OX14 1DP

Inspection dates		20–21 N	May 2015		
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Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:		Good		2
	This inspection:		Good		2
Leadership and management		Good	2	2	
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2	2	
Quality of teaching		Good	2	2	
Achievement of pupils			Good	2	2
Early years provision			Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Her relentless determination to ensure all pupils do as well as they can is a powerful force for change in this improving school.
- School leaders, managers and governors have a strong impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They have created a culture of high expectations.
- From starting points below those typical for their age, children make good progress in the early years and are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Pupils continue to make good headway as they move through the school and reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

- All groups of pupils achieve well because the teaching engages and generally challenges them, and the curriculum sparks their interest and enthusiasm.
- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds get on very well together. They feel safe, behave well, enjoy learning and try hard.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. They are confident that their children are cared for and are kept safe.
- The curriculum successfully develops pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. From an early age, pupils learn how to play and work happily together.
- Pupils understand their rights and responsibilities, and are mutually respectful. They are well prepared for secondary education and life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- In Year 1 some tasks do not challenge pupils enough.
- Planning for the foundation subjects, such as history and geography, does not routinely include opportunities for pupils to study in depth or to use their literacy skills in different contexts.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 22 lessons and parts of lessons and looked at a range of pupils' work. They also listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors also met the Chair of the Governing Body and five other members and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's data on pupils' progress and records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- They observed movement around the school at playtime and at lunch breaks and attended assemblies. Displays around school and also in classrooms were scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account the 67 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the results of the most recent questionnaire carried out by the school. They spoke informally with a number of parents and carers.
- The 22 responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector

Barbara Carr

Additional Inspector Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is broadly average in size. The majority of pupils are White British, with around a third from a range of minority ethnic groups. A fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language. Both these proportions are above the national average. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium, is broadly average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children who are looked after and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Around a third of pupils have one or more parents who serve in the armed forces. The school receives additional funding for these pupils.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is around twice the national average. These needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and moderate learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school at different times during the year is well above average.
- Children in the early years attend a Nursery class on a part-time or full-time basis in one of two Reception classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs breakfast and afternoon clubs for pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Year 1 by:
 - ensuring a more effective balance between learning through play and direct teaching
 - ensuring that, when pupils are choosing practical activities, they are aware of what they are meant to be learning
 - ensuring that pupils are appropriately challenged when choosing activities.
- Improve planning in the foundation subjects so that pupils have opportunities to deepen their understanding and to practise, consolidate and extend their literacy skills.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are uncompromisingly committed to the raising of pupils' achievement and have maintained consistent improvement since the last inspection. Their vision for the school, expressed in its motto 'Happy Together Learning for Life', is shared by the highly effective governing body and the dedicated staff team.
- Any variations in the quality of teaching or achievement are swiftly addressed. This was the case when weaknesses in pupils' numeracy skills emerged. Remedial action, including staff training and the provision of further resources, was swift and effective. Senior staff are aware of some remaining inconsistencies in the teaching.
- Middle leaders, including subject leaders, are effectively driving improvement in their areas, for example by leading training sessions for colleagues. Governors are effectively encouraging them to contribute further to whole-school evaluation and development planning.
- Teachers are held accountable for the progress of pupils in their class through clear criteria for the management of their performance. Salary progression is based on rigorous criteria for pupils' achievement.
- Equal opportunities are central to all that school leaders do. This is evident in the inclusive nature of the school and reflected its strong influence on the well-being of children and their families. This ethos contributes strongly to the creation and maintenance of good relationships and means the school is successful in combating discrimination.
- Pupils' achievement is tracked meticulously and their learning monitored consistently. The information gained from these activities guides improvement priorities and helps to ensure that support for individual pupils and groups, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is timely.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent wisely and effectively, for example, to provide extra support for those who find reading difficult. Very good support is provided to pupils who speak English as an additional language. This is a growing group in the school and school leaders have ensured teachers appreciate the need for specific, high-quality planning.
- The school recognises that the support required for children whose parents serve in the armed forces may differ from that for their peers in school. Additional funding, supplemented by grants from the Ministry of Defence, has been used to appoint a home-school link officer and a mobility coordinator. They provide highly effective support, for example, when pupils move from overseas or when their parents are deployed in conflict zones.
- The curriculum is centred on themes that stimulate pupils' interests. This approach is more successful when pupils have opportunities to develop their literacy skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding; for example, where the work involves pupils using their persuasive writing skills and the most able are engaged in their own research. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils to broaden their understanding and hone their literacy skills in other subjects especially the work centred on themes.
- Frequent educational visits and contributions from visitors add excitement to learning and provide memorable experiences. Children in the early years enjoy their 'forest classroom', learning in the open air. Older pupils talked enthusiastically about their residential visit to South Wales which included canoeing, climbing and various team events.
- The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is carefully planned. For example, Year 6 pupils discuss 'celebrating differences' and 'how to deal with anger'. The sense of a unified community permeates all aspects of school life. British values are fostered successfully through an emphasis on understanding all faiths and cultures. This has a strong impact on pupils' willingness to accept responsibility for their own actions and show initiative. They learn how they can contribute to the local community and the wider society.
- Good use is made of the primary school sport funding to increase the range of opportunities. These include team games, gymnastics and rock climbing. The increased extent to which pupils participate in such activities has a very positive impact on their health and well-being.
- Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet statutory requirements and are effective. For example, comprehensive and easily accessible records are kept of risk assessments and safe recruitment procedures are closely followed.
- The local authority generally gives light touch support and has confidence in the school leadership, but is on hand when needed. For example, when assessment data published last year indicated a possible decline in standards; the local authority provided valuable advice on self-evaluation and target setting.

The governance of the school:

– Governors are extremely effective in carrying out their statutory responsibilities, supporting the school and holding leaders to account. Their insightful questioning of school leaders is based securely on their understanding about the school's performance in relation to national expectations, together with regular visits to the school. Governors ensure that teachers' performance is managed well. They keep a close eye on how school leaders check on the quality of teaching. They seek assurance that any underperformance would be tackled swiftly. Governors keep a close eye on the differences made by the use of funding for disadvantaged pupils and its impact on their progress and on the impact of the additional money for sports. They ensure that current statutory regulations for safeguarding the pupils are fully met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is indicated in the school's records of behaviour and was evident during the inspection.
- Teachers are highly skilled in managing behaviour. Pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties are supported very effectively and this enables lessons to proceed without interruption.
- Pupils listen carefully during lessons and persevere well with challenging work. They have positive attitudes to their learning. They work well together, and enjoy sharing their views with their 'talking partners'. Pupils move seamlessly between activities.
- Pupils take responsibility well, and the school council has led the way in improving play facilities. They are taught about British values, such as democracy. For example, during the recent parliamentary elections, pupils conducted their own campaigns. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain and they understand that it is acceptable for people to hold views different from their own.
- Pupils are keen to talk to visitors to the school. For example, they invited the inspectors to sit with them at lunchtime. Pupils sit in mixed-age groups in the dining room, politely serving one another and enjoying the occasion.
- Pupils arrive punctually to school and their attendance has improved to broadly average levels as a result of the school's efforts to discourage unnecessary absences.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say how very safe they feel in school and parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe. The school site is kept secure and visitors are carefully checked.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They are knowledgeable about how to avoid hazards, for example, when using the internet and mobile phones. Pupils are aware of the dangers posed by the misuse of drugs and alcohol.
- The school's emphasis on rights and responsibilities helps instil a sense of mutual obligation to ensure that all pupils feel secure. Pupils understand the hurt that bullying, including cyber bullying, can cause. They say that bullying does happen occasionally but that staff deal with it well. School records indicate that bullying and any form of harassment are very rare. The number of incidents has declined since the previous inspection.
- Pupils who are vulnerable, bereaved or unhappy receive high-quality personal support. School staff work closely with specialist agencies to ensure pupils receive expert help when this is needed.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a safe haven for pupils. They enjoy mixing informally with their schoolmates as they relax, play games or complete homework tasks.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils make good progress because they are taught well. Very positive relationships between teachers and pupils underpin teaching and learning. Teachers' enthusiasm is picked up by pupils, which means they sustain their concentration and try hard. Teachers plan lessons carefully and use a variety of interesting tasks and activities to engage pupils' interest and ensure they achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge is used to good effect to challenge different groups of pupils, including the most able and those that find learning difficult. In one lesson, for example, the teacher

encouraged pupils to use different approaches to division, suggesting practical or pictorial ways for some and a more abstract approach for the most able.

- Most pupils become confident readers because phonics (the sounds that letters make) is well taught and pupils are successfully encouraged to read a range of books for pleasure. Teachers provide clear guidance on how pupils can improve their writing, including spelling, punctuation and grammar, and most pupils respond well. In a small number of books, pupils' handwriting is sometimes untidy because teachers have not insisted on consistently high standards of presentation.
- There is due emphasis on teaching basic skills in numeracy. For example, teachers frequently reinforce pupils' knowledge of multiplication tables, and how multiplication and division are linked. As a result, most pupils gain confidence in applying what they already know to new problems. For example, one Year 5 pupil exclaimed, 'I can divide 1,000 by 15, so I can have a go at diving 1,000 by 150!'
- In order to ease the transition from the early years, teachers throughout Year 1 provide daily opportunities for pupils to work informally and choose from a range of activities. This is not entirely successful as, occasionally, pupils are not sure what they are meant to be learning and there are missed opportunities for them to make good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- On occasion, teachers across the school do not plan in sufficient depth to ensure pupils practise their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects.
- Sensitive and timely support from teachers and teaching assistants enables disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to complete the same or similar tasks as their peers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from lots of visual prompts, such as word banks linked to a topic. They are given specialist help when needed to fully develop their language skills.
- An innovative approach to homework is proving successful. In consultation with parents, this involves compulsory and optional tasks. As the school website explains, this is in order to 'avoid highly pressurised, irrelevant homework tasks which can lead to children associating learning with boredom'. A large majority of parents felt their children received appropriate homework.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Published assessment data indicate that, over the last two years, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average. The inspection found that pupils are generally making good progress. Figures on the school's performance were skewed by the proportion of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 who were disabled or had special educational needs. For example, over half of the Year 6 pupils in 2014 were in this group. In addition, the high proportion of pupils joining or leaving outside the usual times had an impact on the assessment data. Despite these factors, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading and writing, together with mathematics, closely matched the national average.
- Over the past two years, the school has taken effective action to sustain and improve pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils generally build well on their starting points. Pupils' work over the current academic year clearly indicates that pupils' good rate of progress has been maintained. The school's meticulous records show that the proportion of Year 6 pupils who have made more than the expected progress through Key Stage 2 is greater than recent national averages have indicated, particularly in reading and writing.
- Overall progress in writing is not as rapid as that in reading. This is because pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to extend their writing skills by writing in subjects other than English.
- A renewed emphasis on numeracy has resulted in pupils making better headway in mathematics. Pupils are increasingly using their basic skills and knowledge to generalise and understand the structures of mathematics, as required in the new National Curriculum. This was evident as pupils explored geometrical relationships while studying angles.
- An increasing number of the most able pupils make good progress in all areas. By Year 6, the most able pupils make insightful comments about various authors and maturely discuss their reading preferences. Their spelling and grammar are accurate, with many confidently using devices such as rhetorical questions. Many show considerable creative flair in engaging the reader. One wrote, for example, 'One silent morning, oblivious pedestrians walked the damp, dark alley.'
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points in all year groups because they get appropriate and well-directed support. The effective use of assessment ensures that staff know which pupils need extra support and enables them to pitch activities at appropriate levels.
- Pupils joining the schoolduring the school year, including those with parents in the armed forces, are warmly welcomed and staff are quick to assess their level of attainment. They build well on their starting points, making good progress furing the time they are in the school.

- Pupils at an early stage of learning English soon learn to communicate in English and make good progress.
- Effective use is made of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, for example, to provide specific support for those who find learning to read difficult. This has helped to reduce the gap in attainment between this group and other pupils. The school's records indicate that their rate of progress is at least in line with that of other pupils in the school. In 2013, they outperformed other pupils in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics by around the equivalent of a term. Conversely, in 2014 this group was behind the others in Year 6 in reading and writing and mathematics by a similar margin, and behind all pupils nationally by around two terms. These variations are due to the characteristics of the cohorts as, in 2014, a greater proportion were disabled or had special educational needs.

The early years provision

is good

- Children of all abilities make good progress because the teaching is good. Adults assess children accurately when they start and quickly identify the skills they need to learn. Children arrive with communication, language and number skills at levels below those typical for their age, as well as a range of emotional, social and behavioural needs.
- Adults provide a calm and stimulating environment in which children are happy to play and learn. They benefit from carefully planned lessons and from a wide range of activities both indoors and outdoors. During one morning, for example, the impact on children's learning was clear. Some children were stamping out letter shapes with 'play dough', others were finding numbers hidden in sand and threading them in order, and a small group was sorting objects using magnets while the rest of the class had a phonics lesson with the teacher.
- Children of all abilities generally work and play harmoniously and show perseverance in their activities. Occasionally, learning in the outdoor areas is not effective enough because adults do not intervene swiftly enough when children, particularly boys, are too boisterous and spend too much time on one activity.
- Children behave well and feel extremely safe. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered successfully through encouraging their curiosity about their environment, for example, during the regular 'forest school' sessions where children develop confidence and self-esteem through practical activities in a woodland setting. They are well prepared to begin Year 1 and eagerly look forward to their next step in the school.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. The early years leader, with strong support from staff, has successfully driven forward improvement. Recent changes have included the provision of more practical resources to support early numeracy skills and understanding. Teachers have a good understanding of what remains to be done..

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	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.
		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.

School details

Unique reference number	123080
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	461942

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	260	
Appropriate authority	The governing body	
Chair	Karen Cackett	
Headteacher	Tina Farr	
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 May 2012	
Telephone number	01235 521578	
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