

Castletown Primary School

Grange Road, Castletown, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR5 3EQ

Inspection dates

4–5 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leaders have ensured that the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been successfully tackled.
- The close work with a local primary school has supported school developments and led to better outcomes for pupils.
- The vast majority of pupils achieve well and make good progress from their lower-than-average starting points. Pupils' attainment was broadly in line with the national average in key stage 2.
- A small number of pupils, especially the most able in a very small number of classes, do not make the rapid progress in reading of which they are capable.
- The school's approach to teaching phonics is effective. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the phonics screening test has risen and is now above average.
- Leaders' rigorous monitoring of agreed approaches to teaching ensures that they are consistently applied and lead to better progress for almost all pupils.
- In a small number of classes, work is not challenging enough for the most able pupils.
- Differences are diminishing between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in early years and in both key stages.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Leaders have successfully improved attitudes to learning, and the vast majority of pupils aspire to achieve highly.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils who have specific needs are very effectively catered for by additional, specially trained staff.
- Attendance is broadly average and the gaps are closing between the attendance of different groups, including disadvantaged pupils. However, too many parents take their children on unauthorised holidays during school time.
- Children settle quickly into their early years classes due to the excellent relationships staff have developed with them. The focused teaching in reading, writing and mathematics is very effective, but more precise guidance and support in activities outdoors would lead to faster progress.
- Governors have a detailed overview of where strengths and weaknesses lie. They use this to challenge leaders to focus their attention where it is most needed and make the rapid changes necessary.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding in order to ensure that more pupils make better than expected progress by:
 - giving the most able pupils more challenging activities which build strongly on what they already know
 - ensuring that the most able pupils practise their reading skills and develop their skills further in order to accelerate their learning
 - ensuring that teachers in early years provide more guidance and support to accelerate learning in the outdoor activities
 - ensuring that all staff constantly and consistently speak to pupils using correct, formal English.
- Improve the attendance rate by being more rigorous in tackling parents who take their children out of school for holidays in term time.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, effective leaders and a committed and determined staff, has successfully improved the school. The school now provides a very supportive and stimulating environment, which enables pupils to develop academically and emotionally. Staff, pupils and almost every parent who responded to Parent View or spoke to the inspection team recognise how much the school has changed for the better since the previous inspection.
- The school's leaders have very effectively promoted high expectations and positive attitudes to learning. This has been instrumental in improving the school and changing the culture so that there is a greater focus on learning and achieving. Morale is high, and staff, parents and pupils speak of their school with pride and admiration.
- The school has systematically and determinedly developed leadership at all levels, especially with middle leaders. They make a substantial contribution to moving the school forward. Leaders have been successfully trained in gathering and interpreting evidence of the impact of the changes they make. As a consequence, leaders precisely identify where next to focus their work. The rigour with which leaders monitor and evaluate teaching, learning and assessment has helped to improve its quality.
- The school's links with a nearby outstanding school and their cluster schools have strengthened leadership, as the schools have collaborated well. For example, they ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate and they jointly train staff in how to implement changes to the curriculum.
- The approach to assessing pupils' learning ensures that pupils are properly secure in their understanding before they are moved on to the next level. As a result, leaders have a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Leaders use assessments to good effect to track each pupil's progress very carefully and identify pupils who are being left behind. They also use them to determine precisely where there are gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils needing extra help to meet their challenging end-of-year targets receive well-planned support both within class and through extra one-to-one guidance with a dedicated teacher or teaching assistant.
- Well-trained middle leaders provide well-focused and effective support to class teachers and assistants through effective coaching and mentoring. They carefully monitor the impact of additional support, and ensure that additional help rapidly provides pupils with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed.
- The very well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum effectively enables pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of humanities, arts and science subjects. Teachers have successfully developed pupils' ability to use practical experiments to test scientific hypotheses and to critique works of art. This has especially supported the most able. The school's leaders carefully track learning in numeracy and literacy across non-core subjects, and this has assisted pupils in gaining confidence and fluency by practising these key skills in different contexts.
- The subject leader roles have been developed effectively. Leaders use their subject expertise to help teachers plan learning, and sensibly follow this up by monitoring and evaluating the impact of their support on pupils' learning. However, they have not been successful in all classes in ensuring that the most able are constantly challenged and

that all teachers provide helpful written feedback to improve pupils' work in line with the school's policy. Where teaching is less effective, pupils' learning is consequently less strong.

- Leaders and all teachers rigorously check that each disadvantaged pupil receives the package of support needed to surmount any barriers to their success, including emotional and behavioural support. They promote and closely monitor the progress this group of pupils make in writing, reading and mathematics. Where necessary, teachers intervene to improve progress by teaching individuals and small groups of disadvantaged pupils. This has led to disadvantaged pupils making the same strong progress as others in most subjects and in all year groups.
- Leaders have effectively reinforced the importance of treating everyone respectfully and tolerantly. Pupils have embraced this culture and ensure that intolerance and prejudice are robustly challenged. Pupils were emphatic in speaking with an inspector that the British values, presented so well in colourful displays around school, are adhered to by all. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is developed well.
- Pupils benefit from an array of after-school clubs as well as educational visits that broaden their horizons. Sports premium funding has been used effectively to strengthen teachers' skills and increase participation through after-school tournaments that develop pupils' sporting prowess as well as their social skills.

Governance of the school

- Governors are effective. They have a very detailed knowledge of how well the school is doing and make a significant contribution to school improvement.
- Governors have been well trained to use and interpret published information effectively. By attending pupil-progress meetings and participating in the school's analysis of pupils' work, they are able to gain a secure understanding of the progress pupils are making. For example, they can check the impact of additional funding on diminishing differences between disadvantaged pupils and others, and can challenge leaders as to whether most-able pupils are fulfilling their potential.
- Governors also make good use of current information on pupils' progress to evaluate the quality of teaching and satisfy themselves that the school's approach to managing staff performance is robust enough.
- Governors have used insights from this information to challenge leaders and teachers and hold them to account. For example, one astute governor challenged a teacher to explain why a pupil's teacher assessment differed from the test result, and how the teacher would try to ensure that such a difference could not happen next year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders, working closely with governors, have developed this area well. Designated safeguarding leaders work doggedly to ensure that all pupils receive the guidance and help they need. External support, including support from social services, is also provided, although this is not always to the satisfaction of the school.
- An impressive development at Castletown Primary School is the way that leaders and governors have responded very effectively to pupils' mental health needs and have ensured that a trained counsellor is available to work therapeutically with pupils and their parents, if needed. This has helped to keep children safe because pupils are

taught to share and reflect on some of their more negative feelings and learn how to manage them better.

- The headteacher works tenaciously to ensure that all staff undergo thorough safeguarding checks and complete all the required training. She scrupulously follows guidance from Ofsted and other authorities if any issues arise. Leaders show an unswerving vigilance when carrying out their safeguarding duties.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. Changes in staff, with robust monitoring, support and guidance by leaders, have transformed the overall quality of teaching. Teachers are particularly focused on ensuring that pupils who are disadvantaged have their needs fully met, by precisely matching work to their needs and providing additional support where necessary.
- Teachers provide pupils with helpful guidance about the attitudes and approaches which are most conducive to effective learning. Pupils use this well across all their lessons. As a result, there is a high degree of consistency across the school in the quality of pupils' responses to teachers' questions, the discussions pupils have in pairs and small groups, and pupils' ability to learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour are consistent and very high. The established, warm, positive relationships which staff and pupils share make it easy for learning to take place because pupils are very happy in school and think so highly of their staff.
- Pupils write well, confidently applying their grammatical knowledge to ensure that their writing has a powerful impact. Teachers use examples of writing, both from pupils and authors, to good effect. They pose probing questions to pupils about the exemplar writing to ensure that pupils understand how writers create layers of meaning through the language they use. Pupils use this well in their own writing; for instance, in Year 6, pupils were engrossed in an activity to take a bland and uninformative text and transform it using expressive vocabulary such as 'financial and territorial loss', 'harsh restrictions' and 'despised'.
- Teachers generally use assessment to support pupils' learning very well. They know what pupils have achieved in the past and use this information well to ensure that gaps are filled through the use of well-matched work and additional resources.
- Most-able pupils are generally well served because teachers usually plan learning which challenges all pupils and enables them to extend their skills. Occasionally, however, teachers do not match work well enough to meet the needs of the most able pupils. As a result, some work is too easy and does not extend their learning.
- Effective teaching in mathematics has enabled pupils to become more fluent in their understanding of the different methods they can employ to solve a problem. Pupils have the expertise, confidence and mathematical language to analyse and evaluate which methods work best. They share this knowledge confidently with their peers, and this enables pupils to learn well from each other.
- Impressive displays of pupils' work on mastery in mathematics are seen around school, and pupils who spoke to inspectors commented on how much they learn from trying different methods to solve problems and learning from the mistakes they make. This

enables pupils to improve their work as they go along.

- Phonics sessions develop pupils' reading skills well, especially in early years and Year 1. Teachers and assistants make good use of different ways of recapping sounds that have been previously taught before new sounds are introduced. Occasionally, however, the very strong dialect of some teachers and teaching assistants hinders pupils' development of formal spoken English.
- Teaching assistants provide good-quality, knowledgeable help for pupils. For example, during the inspection, a teaching assistant responsible for supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities skilfully and sensitively evaluated pupils' needs and provided precise support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils follow the teachers' instructions carefully and are eager to further their knowledge and skills by working hard on their tasks. Pupils take great pride in their school, their contribution to it and their learning.
- The majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire confirmed that they felt that their children were happy and safe in school.
- The school looks after pupils' emotional health extremely well. The staff quickly spot any signs of concern. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel extremely safe and well looked after. They know that they can speak in confidence to any member of staff if they have any concerns and they will always be taken seriously. One pupil said, 'They are always there for us.'
- The school is also very active in supporting families who need additional help.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of the different forms of bullying. They know that name-calling, inappropriate language or any form of discrimination are not acceptable. They told inspectors that, on the few occasions bullying occurs, staff deal with it quickly. Almost every parent and all staff and pupils talk positively about pupils' behaviour.
- The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take additional responsibilities. Pupils were proud to tell inspectors of their school council and play leader roles, for example. Some of the written applications for the position of head and deputy head boy and girl were stunning and might well make a Member of Parliament swoon.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe, including about being safe around building sites, near water, on roads and when using the internet.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep healthy. Sports funding is providing them with a wide range of physical activities, including gymnastics, skipping and a range of sporting clubs. They take delight from their teams' successes.
- Pupils are actively taught to be resilient learners. Pupils chuckled as they told an inspector of the approach if they are 'stuck'. This uses letters to form words which pupils find amusing and which helps them to remember. They also explained how this helps them to persevere when they are struggling and when they make mistakes. Pupils consequently relish the challenges set for them.
- Pupils who find it difficult to cope or to build positive relationships with others benefit

from attending 'Place 2 Be' sessions and working with a specially trained counsellor who helps them to overcome their barriers to their learning. One pupil commented that 'It is OK to let other people know how you are feeling,' while another said, 'You feel a better person inside.'

- Leaders have developed the school's ethos and identity and it is a very positive culture and environment. Parents value how welcoming the school is, one parent commenting that 'The teachers always have a smile on their faces, and the school, whenever you go inside, has a very positive feel about it.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school has successfully implemented a tight framework of expectations and non-negotiables which pupils adhere to well because of the way teachers consistently reinforce them. The rules are sensibly underpinned by the system of sanctions and rewards, which are often considered and agreed by pupils themselves.
- There are very few pupils whose behaviour is challenging. To help these pupils, the school has developed successful programmes which enable pupils to learn how best to manage their emotions.
- Attendance has improved. Gaps between the attendance of different groups have narrowed, especially between disadvantaged pupils and others. Despite improvements overall, attendance is just below average. It has been significantly affected by a very few families who continue to ignore school rules and the headteacher's wishes by taking children on holiday during term time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Due to effective teaching, pupils from much lower-than-average starting points make strong, and in some cases very strong, progress. As a result, in 2015, pupils achieved standards significantly above average in key stage 2 national tests. In addition, 2015 published performance information showed gaps diminishing between disadvantaged key stage 2 pupils and others nationally.
- Progress for pupils who left in 2016 was not quite as strong as that made by key stage 1 pupils. This was because the older pupils had a legacy of poor progress (identified in the previous inspection) and, despite additional support, this remained a barrier for some.
- Overall, there is an improving trend in the achievement of pupils currently within the school who have benefited most from recent improvements. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check has steadily improved and is now above average.
- Successful approaches to teaching writing and mathematics have led to a greater proportion of pupils attaining the age-related expectation in all year groups, and almost all pupils are making at least the expected progress in these subjects.
- In the past, pupils' attainment in key stage 1 was affected by a small number of disadvantaged pupils who arrived late in Year 2 with additional needs, including language barriers or special educational needs. This group of pupils was supported very well and made very good progress, but nevertheless fell short of achieving the expected standards. Pupils in key stage 1 are currently making good progress in all

subjects, however.

- The most able pupils currently in school are generally given demanding tasks, and teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are higher, especially in writing and mathematics but also in non-core subjects. As a result, in most subjects and year groups, the vast majority of most-able pupils make rapid progress and achieve highly. However, a small number of teachers in the lower key stage 2 classes do not consistently ensure sufficient challenge for their most-able pupils.
- The school has a successful approach to teaching phonics. It has led to better outcomes in the phonics screening test and the differences are diminishing between the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected phonics standard and others, both in school and nationally. The school's predictions show that this year the proportion reaching the expected standard in the check will rise further and the gap between disadvantaged and others in school will close altogether.
- The progress pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make is at least average, and a number make the very strong progress that others in the school make. The special educational needs coordinator determinedly tracks the progress of each individual pupil to ensure that they fully cover the learning necessary to meet the raised expectations of the new curriculum. The school successfully supports the long-term progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities because they are expected to demonstrate that they have secure knowledge, skills and understanding before moving on.
- Leaders at all levels place a relentless focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, not least by carefully tracking their progress in designated meetings. As a result, differences continue to diminish in terms of the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching their targets. This group makes progress which is at least similar to that of others in school.
- Pupils leave the school with the knowledge, skills and understanding, as well as the drive and commitment, to make a good start at secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is led well by the early years leader. Provision is effective in both the Nursery and Reception classes. This is because children get the support they need from the moment they join the setting. Consequently, children make strides in their learning, behave well and develop positive relationships with adults and their peers. They leave very well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- Children are given every opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge. They do this through formal, well-planned phonics and numeracy sessions and by answering the probing questions they are posed by teachers and assistants.
- Teachers carefully amend their work to ensure that the most able are challenged. For example, when considering words beginning with 'a', almost all children recognised 'ant'. The most able recognised 'acrobat' and 'astronaut'. In their number work, some children counted to five but the most able counted to 10 and could recognise the number left when some were taken away.
- Children make good progress from starting points that are lower than might be expected. A broadly average proportion of children reach a good level of development.
- Close liaison and visits to parents before children start at school mean that teachers

and assistants have as much information as possible before children start at the setting. They use this information very well to ensure a smooth transition, to check that the school's baseline assessments are accurate and to make sure that the right approaches are put in place to meet each child's needs.

- The early years leader has ensured that the outside play area is attractively designed, including a shelter which children make good use of for reading and mark-making. Activities are set out to support every area of learning. However, during the inspection, the outdoor area was not being used very effectively to enhance children's learning.
- Children in Nursery had only been at school for a very short time and understandably were keen to investigate and play. Nevertheless, teachers and assistants were not directing and guiding children sufficiently so that they could get the most from the equipment. As a result, many children were flitting from one activity to another, and learning, though taking place, was limited.
- Staff use questioning effectively to help children gain new knowledge and skills. For example, when children were washing their 'babies' in the soapy water, staff asked children to handle them carefully and gently. Good teaching has enabled children to describe how autumn changes the way that trees look, and they knew that trees shed their leaves and have seeds called conkers and fir cones.
- The topics covered engage and motivate children very well, and are carefully chosen to appeal to boys as well as girls. Some topics, for example the 'Wonderful Me' topic, have been partly driven by children themselves, since a number of their mums are expecting a baby. This makes the role play 'Baby Clinic' more relevant.
- The environment is safe and conducive to pupils discovering through play. There are rigorous health and safety procedures in place, which the leader carefully monitors.

School details

Unique reference number	108792
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10012043

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	421
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Bartley
Headteacher	Joan Lumsdon
Telephone number	0191 553 5210
Website	www.castletown.schooljotter2.com/
Email address	school.office@castletownprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 May 2014

Information about this school

- Castletown Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. It was last inspected in May 2014 and there have been a number of staffing changes over the past two years.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is also broadly average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in samples of lessons throughout the school. A small number of these were visited jointly with the members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and records of pupils' behaviour, safety and attendance. They also scrutinised the work of current pupils and pupils from the previous year.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's information on pupils' progress and records of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with pupils and teachers and listened to a range of readers from key stage 1 and key stage 2. A meeting was held with four members of the governing body. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through informal discussions, which were held at the school on both days of the inspection.
- The responses from the parents' online survey and a staff online survey were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Steve Bywater, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Frances Gowland	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew James	Ofsted Inspector

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