

Castle Hill Infant School

Dryden Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 6QD

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Despite considerable turbulence in leadership and academy arrangements, the determined principal has successfully focused on ensuring that the quality of education at Castle Infant School is good.
- The principal is ably supported by the senior and middle leaders. All leaders share a clear vision for the school and make a strong contribution to the good and improving picture of teaching and, consequently, pupils' outcomes.
- Teaching is good as a result of well-considered training, high expectations and rigorous performance management.
- During the transition period between academies, senior leaders and governors have received clear strategic guidance through strong support and effective challenge from the South Suffolk Learning Trust.
- The curriculum is well planned, with a rich variety of creative activities and memorable experiences that effectively prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils are friendly, polite and well mannered. They behave well in lessons and around the school. They show respect for one another and are proud of their school.
- Children get off to a flying start in the early years. Staff provide a highly stimulating and well-structured learning environment and ensure that children develop good learning behaviours.
- Subject leaders are keen and contribute effectively to ensuring that pupils are taught a broad range of subjects. However, many are new to their roles and do not yet fully lead improvements within their areas of responsibility.
- Differences in progress and attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing. However, leaders rightly identify that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils still needs to improve further.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers generally plan activities that are suited well to pupils' next steps in their learning. However, the work for the most able pupils is not routinely demanding enough, so these pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - the pupil premium funding builds on recent improvements so that disadvantaged pupils across the school consistently make better progress in English and mathematics from their starting points
 - the skills and confidence of all curriculum subject leaders are further developed so that they improve the quality of teaching, assess pupils' progress, identify any underachievement and raise standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that the most able pupils, in particular, are consistently set work which challenges and stretches them to achieve as well as they are able to.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Over time, leaders have not been successful in improving teaching and learning and raising standards consistently across the school. The turbulence, caused by several changes in senior leadership and academy arrangements since the previous inspection of the predecessor school, has left a legacy of poorer teaching and, subsequently, weaker outcomes. The current leadership team is positive, energised and successfully forging ahead with actions to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. As a result, current pupils receive a good and improving education.
- The principal sets high expectations and has a clear vision for doing what is right for pupils and their families. Her strong leadership is steering improvements across many areas of school life, including the quality of teaching. The principal is ably supported by enthusiastic and skilled senior and middle leaders who share her passion and determination to move the school forward.
- The professional development of staff has been a priority. The outward-looking senior leaders have sought a wide range of training activities from external providers linked to the school's improvement priorities and pupils' achievement. Staff have responded positively to improve their practice, flexibly adapting to new approaches to teaching and assessment. As a result, the quality of teaching is good and improving.
- Staff morale is high. Staff spoken with during the inspection stated that they feel well supported and proud to be working at the school. Staff seek opportunities to learn from each other, try out new ideas and make learning fun. Collaborative teamwork is a strong contributor to the school's success.
- Leaders have developed a creative and engaging curriculum of well-planned activities that capture the imagination of pupils. The school's chosen topic approach begins with 'stunning starts' and 'fabulous finishes'. These carefully linked events stimulate pupils' imaginations, make meaningful connections across subjects and motivate them to learn. For example, following a whole-school topic on the circus, pupils organised their own 'circus' event to share with parents. Pupils chose to be performers, ticket-sellers, to arrange security for the event, or to prepare and serve food.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Pupils are thoughtful and sensitive to the needs of others and show respect for other people's beliefs and ideas. Pupils take part in elections to vote for the school's prefects and learn about democracy. They become aware of different faiths, through studying different cultures and festivals. Pupils organise and run various activities to raise funds for different charities, for example the local hospice. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Strong leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) by the knowledgeable inclusion leader ensures that funding is well spent. Regular reviews of pupils' progress ensure that teaching, including programmes of support, is well suited to pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well.
- The school's specialist support centre (SSC) is well led and managed. The provision for the pupils who attend the centre is good, and current assessment information shows

that they make strong progress from their individual starting points.

- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is spent effectively. Specialist teachers have been brought in to deliver high-quality PE lessons. Additionally, pupils have benefited from access to a wide variety of school sports clubs, competitive events and activities. As a result, more pupils are participating in a wider range of sports.
- Almost all parents spoken with during the inspection, and those who wrote to the inspectors, say that they value and support the school. Parents commonly spoke about the school's 'caring environment' and how staff 'engage with the children and get them excited to learn'. Parents appreciate the good communication they receive about the school's work, the many creative experiences their children take part in and the strong progress their children make. One parent spoke for many by saying: 'The teachers are very approachable. They are enthusiastic, energetic and passionate. I would not hesitate to recommend this school.'
- During the interim period between the school ceasing to be part of the Bright Tribe Trust and joining the ASSET Education Academies Trust, the South Suffolk Learning Trust has provided effective support for the school through training and challenge to secure further improvement. In addition, senior leaders have actively sought guidance from external advisers and visited other successful schools to share best practice so that the school continues to move forward and improve.
- There is now a stronger focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the progress required to attain as well as other pupils nationally. Leaders are ensuring that the pupil premium funding is deployed more effectively to address any gaps in the knowledge and skills of those pupils eligible. Leaders have recently raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils by setting an appraisal target for all teachers focused on rapidly improving the achievement of these pupils. Staff work closely with families to identify any barriers to learning and provide appropriate support. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving. There is still work to do to ensure that chosen approaches are effective and these pupils make consistently strong progress across the school.
- The English and mathematics leaders provide effective leadership. They are knowledgeable, monitor their allocated areas closely and the implementation of their action plans is improving provision across the school. Many of the leaders for other curriculum subjects are new to their roles. Currently, their monitoring and assessment practices are less well established. They do not yet use the information they gather on the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils to accurately decide the priorities for improving standards and pupils' outcomes in their subjects.

Governance of the school

- Governors, currently known as the 'drive team', have continued to work with school leaders during the transition period, as the school joins with the ASSET Education Academies Trust.
- Regular visits have been carried out by the drive team to find out, at first-hand, about the school's work. The drive team has carried out its statutory duties, including in relation to safeguarding. It has ensured that additional funding, such as the pupil

premium funding, is deployed with increasing effectiveness, for example to overcome barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils.

- In addition, the interim support from the South Suffolk Learning Trust has focused on making sure that actions to move the school forward are monitored closely and leaders at all levels are held rigorously to account. The trust has also undertaken statutory responsibilities such as conducting the principal's appraisal and overseeing the performance management of staff.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Castle Hill Infant School. Leaders, staff and governors ensure that pupils are safe and happy in school.
- Staff are vigilant in safeguarding matters. They are meticulous in recording any concerns that they might have about a pupil's welfare or safety. Detailed records show that any recorded concerns are followed up quickly. Where necessary, the school works closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The pastoral leader supports vulnerable families well and helps them to access support from a range of external agencies.
- Safer recruitment and vetting procedures are thorough. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work in the school, including volunteers.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. They fully understand their roles in relation to child protection and can talk confidently about the school's procedures for passing on any child protection concerns to the designated safeguarding leaders.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- High expectations set by leaders, and appropriate training, have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The relationships between pupils and staff are positive, encouraging and highly conducive to learning. The staff know the pupils well. Pupils concentrate well in their lessons because they enjoy the activities teachers have planned for them. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and of the quality of their work.
- Teachers and other adults have good subject knowledge. They use this well to make learning points clear and often model what they expect from pupils.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well by the school. They receive appropriate training to support the varying needs of pupils and they plan closely with teachers. In particular, teaching assistants provide effective support for those pupils with SEND. Teaching assistants have a strong understanding of the individual needs of the pupils they work with and adapt their approach accordingly. As a result, teaching assistants' work contributes effectively to the increasing progress that pupils make when in their care.

- The quality of teaching at the SSC is good. The pupils who attend the centre make strong progress because the teaching is highly personalised and based on their individual needs.
- Reading is given a high profile at the school. As a result of training, teachers and teaching assistants have strong phonics knowledge. This is used to plan targeted activities for pupils so that most pupils made good use of their phonics skills to work out unfamiliar words. Engaging topics of work based around high-quality texts have been introduced across the school to encourage pupils to enjoy reading for pleasure, and to improve their reading skills. This is making a positive difference. Pupils were able to speak to inspectors about their reading books, their favourite authors and their love of reading.
- Pupils' achievements in writing are improving. Evidence in pupils' books shows that the teaching of writing effectively incorporates spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop a range of vocabulary and write for different purposes.
- The quality of mathematics teaching is good. Pupils are making greater progress as teachers check pupils' understanding and set them appropriate next steps for learning. Pupils are encouraged to develop their reasoning skills by solving increasingly complex mathematical problems.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and plan interesting tasks to build on their earlier learning. Activities are often challenging, but sometimes pupils, especially the most able, finish their work quickly and wait too long to be moved on. This limits the progress that these pupils make.
- Effective assessment procedures in reading, writing and mathematics ensure that leaders at all levels are able to monitor pupils' achievement to quickly identify individuals or groups who are at risk of falling behind their classmates. Equally, this information is used to ensure that additional provision is put in place to meet pupils' needs. Subject leaders are currently developing an assessment approach for subjects other than English and mathematics so that pupils' progress can be checked rigorously to ensure that they achieve well across all subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop good personal and social skills because adults are good role models. They expect pupils to be respectful to others, and to be kind and caring.
- Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes towards their learning, although some pupils told inspectors that their work is 'too easy'. Pupils are confident and happy to talk to adults. They regularly refer to the school's 'learning knights' – 'Knight Thinks-a-lot', 'Knight Grafts the Great' and 'Knight Explores-afar' – which describe learning behaviours such as being resourceful and persevering. Pupils told inspectors, 'We need to try and be like these knights, so we can learn well.'

- Pupils who attend the SSC are cared for well. They enjoy learning because the work their teachers plan for them is relevant and engaging.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is very rare. They said that if bullying does happen the teachers will sort it out quickly.
- Pupils can talk about ways in which they stay safe, including when they are online, moving around the school and crossing a road. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe 'everywhere in school' and they know to talk to the adults in the school who will help them with any concerns.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who wrote to or spoke with inspectors during the inspection agreed that pupils are well looked after and safe at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous, and the school is a calm and orderly place.
- The school's behaviour policy and procedures are generally applied consistently across the school. Pupils know the school rules of 'Be ready, be respectful, be safe', and they understand that it is important to try and keep to these so that they are 'kind to other people'.
- School records confirm that incidents of poor behaviour are few and, even so, leaders still work to reduce them even further.
- Pupils appreciate their teachers, who they say 'work hard' and 'help us when we get stuck'. Pupils settle to work quickly and generally persevere with activities. Playtimes and lunchtimes are well-supervised occasions that ensure pupils can play and socialise happily together.
- Leaders have worked hard to promote the importance of good attendance with pupils and their families, including those who are disadvantaged. Staff closely monitor why pupils are absent and follow up concerns with parents quickly. As a result, attendance rates are improving and overall attendance for the school is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who regularly miss school is also reducing and, although still high, is moving nearer to the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the inspection of the predecessor school, pupils have not achieved as well as they could. Published assessment information in 2018 shows that the proportion of Year 2 pupils who attained the expected standards in reading and writing was below the national averages, and in mathematics the proportion was in line with the national average. The proportion of Year 2 pupils who attained greater depth in all three subjects was below the national averages. This does not reflect the good, and sometimes better, progress of most current pupils from their starting points. This is a result of improvements in the quality of teaching and more rigorous assessment. Additionally, the quality of work in most pupils' books also demonstrates better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils are now being better

equipped with the academic skills to be fully ready for the next stage of their education.

- For the past few years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics check at the end of Year 1 has been in line with the national average. This is as a result of phonics being taught systematically and pupils being able to use their phonics skills accurately when reading books.
- Expectations of pupils with SEND are high. The school identifies, and assesses, pupils' needs accurately and ensures that the support provided improves their learning, and that funding is used appropriately. As a result, these pupils are currently making better progress from their individual starting points.
- The pupils who receive support from the school's SSC make good progress from their different starting points. This is because their additional needs are accurately identified on entry to the centre, and pupils are given access to a highly personalised and engaging curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils progress at broadly similar rates to the other pupils at the school, often supported effectively through carefully planned small-group work. Despite their progress being good, their performance is not yet sufficiently strong to ensure that a high proportion of pupils leave Year 2 having achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The work in current pupils' books shows clear evidence of most teachers building on previous learning and moving pupils on with appropriate tasks. However, at times, the most able pupils, in particular, are not challenged sufficiently to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, these pupils do not achieve the higher standards they should.

Early years provision

Good

- The provision in the early years is well led and managed. The passionate early years leader has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the early years. She has worked successfully with staff to improve provision by providing training and support. The improvements can be seen in the good quality of teaching and in the progress that current children are making.
- Many children start in the early years with skills and abilities which are below those typical for their age, particularly in communication, literacy and their personal, social and emotional development. Staff form excellent relationships with children, and this ensures that children quickly settle into school life and learn the school's rules and routines. Children make strong progress in their learning, and the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been consistently above the national average for several years.
- During their time in the early years, children develop good attitudes to learning. They listen carefully to adults and other children and show good levels of concentration when working with their friends or choosing their own activities.
- The curriculum in the early years is a strength. Staff have developed a high-quality learning environment with plenty of creative opportunities for children to play, discover and learn, particularly outside. Appealing activities around topics such as 'magic and

mystery' effectively engage children in their learning. Whether matching rhyming words to make a spell, making flick paintings of planets, or enthusiastically counting bottles of potions, children make good use of the skills they have learned.

- Many children display good levels of independence and are able to cooperate, share ideas and persevere in their learning. During the inspection, children were using the well-organised 'snack café' confidently. They take reasonable steps to manage their own well-being and health. For example, one child told an inspector, 'We wash our hands first before we choose our snack. We put our rubbish in the bin.'
- Staff have ensured that all welfare requirements are met. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that children are safe and secure in school.
- Staff develop strong partnerships with parents and keep them informed about the progress that their children are making. Parents are encouraged to attend a variety of events in school, including 'come and learn' sessions, so that they understand how to support their children's learning and development at home.

School details

Unique reference number	141372
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10085488

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dave Watson
Principal	Gemma Andrews
Telephone number	01473 741 758
Website	www.castlehillprimary.org.uk
Email address	office@castlehillprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized infant school. It shares the same principal, leadership team and premises as Castle Hill Junior School.
- Until recently, the school was sponsored by the Bright Tribe Trust. Following the closure of the trust, the school has received support and challenge from the South Suffolk Learning Trust on an interim basis. In March 2019, the school will join the ASSET Education Academies Trust.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEND support is in line with the national average, and the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is well above

the national average.

- The school has a special needs provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties called the Specialist Support Centre (SSC). This provision currently has 10 pupils on roll from across the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class. Several of the observations were carried out jointly with the principal or vice-principals.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' workbooks throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, the vice-principals, one of whom is the designated safeguarding leader, middle leaders and subject leaders, the inclusion leader, the early years leader, the pastoral leader, the office manager and the interim chair of the drive team. The lead inspector spoke by telephone to the interim chief executive officer (CEO) of the Bright Tribe Trust. The lead inspector also met with the CEO and director of standards of the South Suffolk Learning Trust and the CEO of the ASSET Education Academies Trust.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes and lunchtimes to seek their views about the school.
- The lead inspector met with a group of pupils more formally to discuss many aspects of school life.
- Inspectors heard some pupils in Years 1 and 2 read. Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including: assessment information; the school's own evaluation; improvement plans; and records about behaviour, safeguarding children and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 10 letters received from parents. Inspectors also spoke to some parents before school at the beginning of the inspection and during the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the comments and letters received from staff.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Welch	Ofsted Inspector

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