

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 March 2020

Julie Baldwin
Castlethorpe First School
Castlethorpe
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK19 7EW

Dear Mrs Baldwin

Subject inspection of Castlethorpe Primary School

Following my visit on 27 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. The findings do not change the overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding from the last section 5 inspection.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for a no formal designation inspection of schools. The inspection was carried out to enable Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to better understand the quality of education in specific subjects provided by outstanding primary schools.

Main findings

Leaders have created a bespoke geography curriculum for the school that equips pupils with a significant and meaningful body of geographical knowledge. The village of Castlethorpe sits at the heart of the curriculum plans and remains the consistent point of reference throughout pupils' time at the school. Pupils learn how the village has changed over time and how humans have affected the land. Relevant links with the history curriculum help pupils to understand both the time and space they occupy. For example, pupils consider the 'great fire of Castlethorpe' and conduct field studies to look at the construction of the houses from both before and after the fire.

Staff work together to sequence the curriculum in a logical and coherent way. This approach means that staff select case studies and topics which pupils can compare to their previous learning, thus building their understanding further. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 used their knowledge of weather from the early years to collect meteorological data and then to develop and present informed weather

reports. Sometimes staff teach pupils concepts that are too advanced when pupils do not yet possess the foundational knowledge required to understand these ideas.

Staff present information clearly and use appropriate resources to help pupils to understand abstract ideas. For example, by using block models, pupils in Year 1 were able to construct an accurate plan of a farmyard and view this from both ground level and aerial view. Pupils' strong understanding of maps and plans means that they are able to do this quickly and confidently, later directing each other to form a route around the farm. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well and achieve highly. Activities are carefully structured so that barriers, such as reading and writing, are minimised when appropriate. This means that pupils with SEND are able to focus on the key geographical content.

Children in the early years develop their understanding of the local area because they discuss geographical concepts often. They know and can recognise the different local landmarks and can explain where these are in relation to each other. Staff help children to consider geography through their play. For example, children set up a train station, recording the stations passengers can travel to and estimating how far away it is and how long it will take to get there. As children in the early years develop their knowledge, they also become more curious about the world around them. This prepares them well for further geographical enquiry.

Pupils understand that there are physical, economic and sociological variations found in all countries. Staff present information carefully to ensure that pupils do not form stereotypes about people or places. For instance, after studying tribespeople in rural Kenya, pupils studied Nairobi, learning about the wealth and affluence that are evident in this diverse country. However, some pupils do not possess a strong understanding of the characteristics of countries that make up the United Kingdom.

Evidence

During this inspection I met with you and both the early years and key stage 1 teachers. I scrutinised curriculum planning and visited both early years and key stage 1 classes. I met with pupils in all year groups to talk about their learning in geography and evaluated work in pupils' books.

Context

Castlethorpe First School is a smaller than average-sized infant school. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged or with SEND is below the national average.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Milton Keynes. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector