

Inspection of Castle Cary Community Primary School

Park Street, Castle Cary, Somerset BA7 7EH

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The curriculum does not meet the needs of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), well enough. Leaders, including governors, do not have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, improvements in the curriculum, including for children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS), have not been sufficient.

Leaders prioritise pupils' well-being. Pupils are happy and feel safe in this caring school. Pupils know that staff will listen to their worries. Parents told us that their children look forward to attending school. Parents share the view that staff are approachable.

Pupils are polite and behave well. They understand that mutual respect is important. Bullying is rare; but when it happens, pupils are confident that it will be dealt with swiftly. Pupils enjoy holding roles of responsibility, such as digital leaders and house captains. They talked enthusiastically about how such roles help them to develop into responsible citizens. 'Everyone is different, and everyone is valued' was a typical view from pupils. Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have considered pupils' interests when planning the curriculum. They have created a culture where pupils want to learn. Pupils are not afraid to try or 'have a go'. However, the curriculum, including in the EYFS, lacks ambition and is not sequenced well enough. As a result, pupils, including some with SEND, find it difficult to connect learning and to build knowledge in a coherent way. The weaknesses in the curriculum mean that pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage in their education as they should be.

Leaders prioritise reading. Pupils enjoy reading. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of the phonics programme. Pupils who struggle with reading are identified in a timely manner and given the support they need. As a result, most pupils in key stage 2 have secure strategies to work out words they are unsure of. Pupils are increasingly confident about reading in subjects across the curriculum.

However, opportunities for children in the EYFS to learn new words are not planned into the curriculum. This means that some children at the earliest stages of learning to read do not develop their understanding of new words well enough.

Subject leaders are enthusiastic and keen to improve the curriculum. They want the best for pupils and have made some improvements. However, the improvements have not yet been sufficient to ensure that all subjects are consistently well planned. Pupils' learning is not sequenced well enough, and at times does not make sense for pupils. Curriculum leaders have not identified which parts of their subjects are most

important for pupils to know. They are also unsure about what is working well, because their monitoring does not identify the key aspects in need of improvement.

Parents, staff and pupils share the view that the school is at the heart of the community. Pupils enjoy engaging in local events, such as musical performances. Leaders plan opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and resilience well. This includes residential visits and the wide range of clubs on offer. The school's values of independence, collaboration and creativity are evident in all aspects of school life.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils respond well to each other. They are keen to make this a happy place for all. Older pupils talked about acting as behaviour role models. All pupils understand the reward system in place and feel motivated to achieve. Pupils have strategies that enable them to understand their emotions.

Leaders ensure that the views of staff are heard and understood. Staff feel that leaders are considerate of their well-being when making decisions. Staff feel proud to work at the school. Pupils talked confidently about the importance of learning about beliefs that are different to their own. They truly believe that differences should be valued and celebrated. Parents appreciate the nurturing approach the school provides. They described how pupils thrive in the 'family feel' that leaders have developed.

Governors understand their responsibilities well. They enquire about leaders' actions to secure the improvements detailed in the school development plan. Nonetheless, there are too many weaknesses in the quality of education provided for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have received appropriate training. This enables them to promptly identify pupils who are at risk. All staff know how to record and report concerns. They have confidence in leaders to act on these concerns. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders provide useful safeguarding information for parents.

Recruitment checks are thorough. Leaders ensure that these checks are accurately recorded. Governors understand their responsibilities in this area. They have the necessary skills to know that the school's safeguarding procedures are working well. All staff share the view that 'it could happen here'.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not well planned and sequenced. It is not ambitious enough for all pupils, including those with SEND. As a result, pupils, including those in the EYFS, do not gain the necessary knowledge they need in order to be prepared well enough for the next stage in their education. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is planned and sequenced effectively in all subjects.
- The reading curriculum does not place sufficient emphasis on developing comprehension at the earliest stages of learning to read. This means that children do not develop a rich vocabulary from the start. Leaders need to ensure that learning in the EYFS includes learning vocabulary to develop comprehension.
- Leaders have an inaccurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness. They do not check or monitor the aspects that will make the biggest difference for improvement. As a result, curricular development has been impeded, and pupils still have gaps in their knowledge in different subjects. Leaders must ensure that there are stronger, more accurate systems for evaluating the school's effectiveness.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	123640
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10200966
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Keith Bush
Headteacher	Sarah Martin
Website	www.castlecaryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 and 17 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is organised into some single-age and some mixed-age classes.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, members of the staff team and representatives from the governing body. The lead inspector spoke to representatives from the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at science and history on the second day.

- Inspectors checked the procedures for keeping pupils safe. They spoke to groups of pupils, staff and governors. Inspectors also checked recruitment processes.
- An inspector checked all survey responses, including 38 from pupils, 23 from staff and 26 from parents. This included the 16 responses to Ofsted's free-text service.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to find out what is it like to be part of the school.
- Inspectors looked at the school's plans for improvement, monitoring documents and reports from the local authority.

Inspection team

Jane Dennis, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stewart Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector

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