

Inspection of Castor CofE Primary School

Stocks Hill, Castor, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE5 7AY

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 June 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Castor CofE Primary School are happy and enjoy learning. They are benefiting from the recently revised curriculum and a positive learning experience.

Following a period of change, pupils are settled at this school. They love learning and demonstrate positive learning behaviours. Pupils revel in the chance to share their learning. For example, pupils eagerly shared their recent Roman history learning about their school site.

Behaviour is strong. Pupils strive to receive weekly rewards. Pupils enjoy a range of activities in the playground. They collaborate and support each other in a friendly manner.

The social and emotional needs of pupils are a priority. Pupils feel safe. They use the school's Bee Box to share any worries they might have. They know that an adult will be there to talk to. Some pupils visit The Hive, where they can take a break or receive bespoke support to ensure they are ready to learn.

Pupils benefit from a range of high-quality enrichment experiences. Planned trips, visits and outdoor learning activities enhance the curriculum. Pupils also speak with pride about their roles of responsibility, such as becoming school councillors and sports ambassadors. These opportunities add value to pupils' learning and development.

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

There have been several changes in leadership and inconsistencies in staffing over time. During this unsettled period, the curriculum was not developed effectively. Pupils did not achieve well. Published outcomes in 2023 reflect this. However, this academic year, rapid improvement has taken place. School leaders have worked at pace to establish clear systems and processes. The quality of education is a focus and a carefully planned curriculum now identifies what pupils learn. Pupils are now learning key knowledge successfully. The whole school community recognises this positive change.

Children make an excellent start in early years. Staff work closely with pre-school settings so they know the children before they arrive. Staff use this information to plan the curriculum to meet children's specific needs. As a result, children in early years achieve well. They are very well prepared for Year 1.

The early reading curriculum is strong. Pupils start learning as soon as they start in Reception. Leaders have implemented the early reading curriculum well. They check it regularly to ensure a consistent approach and it is being taught as leaders intend. Adults check how well pupils are learning to read. Any pupil who falls behind is supported to catch up. As a result, pupils learn to read with fluency and confidence.

In English, leaders have prioritised improving pupils' writing across the curriculum. A clear teaching approach now sets clear expectations. Pupils practise their writing across the curriculum. In English, pupils are writing to a good standard. Their spelling and grammar are typically accurate and they are achieving well. On occasion, the same expectations are not consistent across other curriculum subjects. Errors often go unchecked in these subjects. Leaders are working hard to ensure writing is of the same high standard in all subjects.

In a few subjects, curriculum approaches are new or recently refined. In these subjects, pupils do not have a secure understanding of important content over time. Checking strategies to ensure that gaps in learning are identified are not secure. Staff do not routinely check pupils' prior knowledge. Curriculum content is not always adapted to fill any gaps in knowledge that pupils have.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well catered for. A new leader has supported staff to create plans which specifically identify pupils' barriers to learning. Staff adapt the learning to remove these barriers. Pupils with SEND typically access the same curriculum as their peers.

Clear expectations of behaviour are established. Leaders recognise the need for consistency in the way behaviour is managed. Staff manage behaviour in line with school expectations. Learning proceeds without interruption.

There is careful consideration of pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about online safety and understand how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. All pupils can develop their talents and interests beyond the academic curriculum. For example, they participate regularly in local community events. Pupils also enjoy attending clubs, such as chess and football.

Governors understand their duties well. Many are new to their role, but they are well trained. They provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.

During the recent changes, staff well-being has been at the heart of leaders' actions. Staff feel valued and proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects where the curriculum is new or recently refined, pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This makes it hard for pupils to access new learning and build their knowledge over time. The school should ensure that staff routinely plan to

assess pupils' prior knowledge before introducing new content. This will enable them to adjust planning to fill any gaps in knowledge.

- Pupils' application of their writing skills across the curriculum is not always as strong as it needs to be. Pupils do not spell or use appropriate grammar well enough across all subjects. Leaders must continue to implement and monitor their approach to writing in English across all subjects. This will ensure pupils are able to use their writing effectively to demonstrate what they know and remember clearly.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	110824
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10323608
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Ananicz
Headteacher	Alice Edwards
Acting Headteacher	Suzie Phillips
Website	www.castorschool.com
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was not in school at the time of inspection. An acting headteacher has been in post since October 2023.
- The schools runs its own before- and after-school provision.
- The school does not make use of any providers of alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Peterborough. Its last inspection of its denominational education, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, took place in November 2016. The next section 48 inspection will occur within eight years of this date.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, school leaders, subject leaders, staff, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.
- Inspectors also considered other curriculum documentation and considered pupils' writing across the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, attendance records, pupil records, records of governing body meetings, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents and carers through responses to Ofsted Parent View and through speaking to parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys, as well as interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Jonny Wallace, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Harrison

Ofsted Inspector

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