



# Castlefort Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104204  
**LEA** Walsall  
**Inspection number** 277100  
**Inspection dates** 13 March 2006 to 14 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Christine Field AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Castlefort Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Walsall
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		West Midlands WS9 9JP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 452158
<b>Number on roll</b>	212	<b>Fax number</b>	01543 452114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Steve Malin
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 January 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Simon Titchener

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 13 March 2006 - 14 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277100
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school serves a local community and is located four miles to the north east of Walsall town centre. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a few from other minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils are learning to speak English as a new language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. No pupils have a statement of special education needs. The profile of pupils' attainment on entry covers a wide range but is typically below average. A new headteacher joined the school in January this year.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Castlefort Primary School provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education and gives satisfactory value for money. Inspection findings match the school's view of its satisfactory overall effectiveness. The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection with standards now better than at that time. However, weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation previously reported are still apparent. School leaders are aware of these and are implementing positive change at a brisk pace.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features that help pupils build key skills and supports them in becoming caring and responsible individuals. Children in the Foundation Stage learn well and make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties are well taught and make good progress. Those who are potentially higher attaining make generally satisfactory progress, but are not consistently challenged in their work. Assessment is being improved but more still has to be done to accurately pinpoint each pupil's progress. Marking does not always show pupils how to improve and there are not enough opportunities for them to review their own learning targets.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher has already started to move the school forward by identifying exactly the right priorities for improvement. Governors, including the new ones, are working swiftly with the headteacher to establish key policies and procedures. However, not all required policies are in place and the procedures for assessing risks are inadequate. The newly formed management team is developing its role effectively, particularly in the work to lead phase and subject teams. The morale amongst staff is good and there is an upbeat feel about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The school has secure capacity to make improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils, especially the higher attainers, are consistently set challenging work.
- Make sure that teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are accurate, with marking and learning targets better focused on supporting improvement.
- Inject rigour into monitoring and evaluation systems and involve senior staff and governors in regular and systematic self-review.
- Ensure that all required policies are formally ratified by the governing body, and that risk assessments are up-to-date and findings recorded.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards and achievement are satisfactory overall and show a rising trend. Pupils in Year 6 attained average standards in the 2005 national tests. The school is particularly effective at enabling lower attaining pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to achieve good standards. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher

levels in English and mathematics is below that seen nationally. The school's self-evaluation rightly pinpoints that the achievement and standards of higher attaining pupils is a key priority for improvement.

When pupils start school, their standards are below average. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception and by the time they transfer to Year 1 most are achieving at the level expected for their age. Progress is generally satisfactory from Years 1 to 6, though it is inconsistent because it has not been checked rigorously enough. The school's assessment identifies significant under achievement in Year 5 in the past. Effective support in this class is helping these pupils to make up for lost time and move forward in building key skills confidently.

The headteacher has undertaken a thorough audit of standards in all years and is working with staff to make sure that there is an accurate assessment of progress. Target setting is at an early stage of development. However, the targets agreed with the local authority for the current Year 6 are realistic and school data shows that pupils are on track to meet them.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory. The school is a happy and harmonious community that enables pupils to enjoy their achievements right from nursery and to build confidence and good self-esteem. Relationships are strong throughout the school and underpin pupils' positive behaviour in classrooms and at play. There is good racial harmony and little bullying or harassment of any kind. Through charitable work, pupils support their local and the wider community and have better understanding of the lives of people less fortunate than themselves. They are aware of the benefits of a healthy diet and are rewarded with stickers when they choose a healthy option at lunchtime. Pupils have a secure awareness of safety, such as when using equipment in science lessons and when travelling to and from the local baths for swimming lessons.

The various responsibilities and leadership roles pupils take on, such as running the stationery store, caring for the school's farm animals or as members of the school council, ensure that they have the skills needed for the next stage of education and future world of work. Pupils regularly make suggestions to initiate change in school, such as setting up a toy library for lunchtime use, which the school takes seriously.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as reflected in pupils' satisfactory achievement. Good use is made of ICT resources, such as interactive whiteboards, to stimulate pupils' keen interest and bring learning alive. Good behaviour and relationships and children's enjoyment of learning were clear strengths in a Nursery and Reception lesson when

they sang in two-part harmony. These good features are found in most lessons. Higher attaining pupils show good independent learning skills and are well able to work with minimum supervision, even when the tasks they are set are not particularly challenging.

Significant changes in teaching staff have had a positive impact on redressing the weaknesses flagged by the last inspection. All teachers are reflective about their work and very willingly take on feedback points to improve practice. Intensive and accurate monitoring by the headteacher shows marked improvement in the quality of teaching in the past two months. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning, especially when working with pupils with learning difficulties.

The school has rightly identified that assessment systems, including marking, are not yet rigorous enough. A useful start has been made through the introduction of an agreed system for recording progress and a new planning format that enables teachers to identify very precise learning objectives. There are still some inconsistencies in the quality of planning but improvement is already evident in lessons and in the quality of pupils' work in their books.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. Recently, learning resources have been improved but the library, main computer suite and the outdoor space for the youngest learners in Nursery and Reception are still in need of enhancement.

Curriculum planning is being improved in order to ensure pupils sharpen their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. This was seen to good effect in a Year 5 lesson when pupils learnt to make notes from science texts, for use in English topic work on Our Solar System. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties. Their extra support is focused firmly on improving basic skills. The school recognises the need to adapt the curriculum to better meet the aspirations of the higher attaining pupils. Pupils' personal, social and health education is good. The school holds the Eco Bronze Award and is working towards the silver standard. Pupils are aware of the need for global sustainability and display very caring attitudes about the world of which they are a part.

The curriculum is enriched well through educational visits and residential excursions. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide range of out of school clubs which they say are 'really good, interesting and fun'.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's effective care contributes to pupils' positive enjoyment of school. The youngest learners are helped to settle happily into nursery and build trusting relationships. Older pupils told inspectors that they are confident in the ability of the adults to look after them and support them. The very few incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively. The school reacts sensitively to pupils' concerns

through the use of a Worry Box in which pupils can post letters of concern and to which the headteacher and school council respond.

Child protection arrangements are securely in place and all pupils are kept safe. Whilst there is a comprehensive health and safety policy, it has not yet been endorsed by the governing body. Safety checks are usefully carried out by individual teachers, for example, in physical education. However, the assessment of risks is too informal which detracts from otherwise good quality provision.

Good personal support and guidance is provided for pupils who have learning difficulties. The school works closely with parents and is involving them increasingly in supporting their children's learning. There are strong links with the local secondary school and these ensure that Year 6 move on with confidence.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection presents a mixed picture but is satisfactory overall, as shown in the improved standards. Since the recent appointment of the headteacher, the pace of change has been rapid. Together with the determined senior management team, he has established a clear and achievable vision for the future and there is clearly secure capacity for making further improvement.

Senior leaders are pursuing the right priorities for the school, such as the development of more rigorous and consistent monitoring and evaluation systems. The new curriculum teams, guided by senior leaders, are well focused on core priorities. Performance management systems are being revitalised with good emphasis being given to improving pupils' progress. All staff are upbeat about future challenges and opportunities.

There are many new governors and they are developing their role and bringing good personal expertise to support school improvement. However, some required policies have not been ratified and governors are not yet sufficiently involved in monitoring or self-evaluation, which restricts their work to hold the school to account. There is a planned programme for improvement to the site and buildings.

There are satisfactory arrangements for involving parents and pupils in the school's self-evaluation procedures. A new forum and parents' association are positive features. Parents are very happy that their children come to Castlefort and say it is getting better by the minute.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. It was super to see you enjoying your work in classrooms, and having fun at playtime. We very much appreciated our lunch together and finding out about Castlefort.

What we liked best:

you are settled in school, behave well and take good care of one another

you are very willing helpers, whether in the classroom or in looking after the animals, running the stationery shop or as members of your school council

your teachers work hard to do their best for you and classrooms are happy places in which you enjoy learning

your new headteacher has lots of exciting ideas for the future and all staff are working with him to take the school forward.

What we think the school can do to improve:

always give you work that is hard enough, especially for those of you who sometimes find your work too easy

widen the use of learning targets so that you know how to move up a level, and use marking to show you ways to improve

make sure that work to check how well the school is improving involves all the staff

ask governors to keep policies and records up-to-date, particularly those that help the school to be the safe place you told us it is.

We wish you every success for the future.