



Castledown Community Primary and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114474
LEA East Sussex
Inspection number 279390
Inspection dates 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005
Reporting inspector Robin Hammerton HMI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Priory Road |
| School category | Community | | Hastings |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 | | East Sussex TN34 3QT |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01424 444046 |
| Number on roll | 447 | Fax number | 01424 426491 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | |
| Date of previous inspection | 11 October 1999 | Headteacher | Mrs Linda Morris |

| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
|-----------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school situated close to Hastings town centre. Most pupils are White British with about nine per cent from different ethnic backgrounds. A significant number of pupils join and leave each year. More pupils than average have special educational needs. Most of these pupils have moderate learning needs or communication difficulties, though a few are autistic. The school is in the Hastings Excellence Cluster and Sure Start. The acting headteacher is seconded from another school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

In its self-evaluation, the school considered itself to be providing a satisfactory standard of education; inspectors disagree. Significant weaknesses in teaching and learning, the curriculum and leadership and management are causing pupils to achieve at a very low level. Despite some recent changes for the better, led very ably by the acting headteacher, this is not an effective school.

Provision and achievement in the Nursery and Reception are satisfactory. After this, most pupils make slow progress throughout the school. Their needs are not assessed well enough and far too little is expected of them. Standards are very low. Pupils often enjoy their lessons, and have good relationships with the adults who care for them, but this is not enough.

In spite of the very good work of the acting headteacher, the senior management team and governing body do not have the experience needed to bring about the necessary improvements quickly enough. Improvement since the previous inspection is inadequate.

The school is not yet able to work out the impact of its financial decisions. In view of the low standards achieved, the school provides inadequate value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the leadership, management and governance so that there is greater capacity to raise standards urgently.
- Ensure that accurate assessment information is used effectively to plan pupils' next learning steps, making sure that expectations are high enough.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that work is precisely matched to needs and all pupils progress well.
- Improve the whole school curriculum so that pupils' skills are developed more thoroughly and better opportunities are provided for problem solving, creativity and teamwork.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils join the Nursery with lower levels of attainment than those expected for their age. Staff quickly get to know the children well. As a result, the pupils settle in straight away and make sound and sometimes good progress in the Foundation Stage. However, most pupils are still working at below average levels when they enter Key Stage 1.

Standards by age seven are very low. However, reading test results rose in 2005 and pupils' handwriting has improved. By the age of 11, standards are exceptionally low in English, mathematics and science. This has been the case for some years. Although there was a clear improvement in the 2005 test results from the poor 2004 scores, attainment remains much too low.

Most pupils underachieve as they move through the school, leaving gaps in their learning. There is too much variation in progress from class to class, depending on the quality of teaching. Too few higher attaining pupils reach the levels they should and there is a long tail of low attainers. Children with special educational needs do not make enough progress. Some appropriate targets have been set for pupils. However, staff are not yet sure enough how to use these to raise standards.

Grade: 4

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils generally enjoy being in school and behave well. They are polite, friendly and ready to learn. They understand right and wrong. Some unacceptable behaviour has left the school with little alternative but to exclude the few pupils concerned. Parents identify that there have been some problems with behaviour in the playground but that this is much improved since the arrival of the acting headteacher. The school provides a 'Social Skills Unit' for any pupils who need to calm down. Pupils like this initiative and say that adults quickly sort out any difficulties.

Pupils are keen to take some responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school but do not yet have enough opportunities to do this. However, the school council has recently been re-instated to enable pupils to make certain decisions. Attendance rates have improved but remain rather low. A few pupils often arrive late.

Pupils are aware of safety issues. For example, they exercise due care when using equipment in science lessons, working on the internet and at playtime. They are learning to adopt healthy lifestyles. Many enjoy fruit at break times and understand the importance of exercise. Pupils have a developing appreciation of their own culture and other cultures. Their spiritual awareness is satisfactory.

Grade: 3

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. The key weakness, which leads to low standards, is that work is not well matched to pupils' needs. Not enough is expected of the pupils.

In the Foundation Stage, most teaching is adequate with elements of good teaching in one Reception class and parts of the Nursery. Staff understand the pupils' needs and assess their progress accurately. Children have too few opportunities to work independently, however.

Some lessons, scattered throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, are good. Teachers and support staff explain things well and involve the pupils effectively. However, more often, teaching does not meet all pupils' needs. Children often have to spend too long listening and are then given undemanding tasks. Assessment information is not used effectively to provide well targeted work for groups and individuals. Not all teaching assistants are deployed effectively, sometimes having too little to do.

Systems for assessing pupils' learning are at a very early stage of development. The school recognises this. Most teachers and managers are not using assessment information well enough to analyse pupils' progress. They do not identify clearly the areas of underachievement that need rectifying.

Grade: 4

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate. It covers legal requirements and sufficient time is allocated to each subject. However, not enough attention has been paid to it in recent years. It is not specific enough to Castledown or sufficiently relevant to the pupils. It does not ensure that pupils develop all the skills they need as they progress through the school. For example, in science, it is not clear how pupils should become more proficient at investigating things and communicating their findings. Therefore, the curriculum does not lead to high enough expectations of the pupils or help to raise standards.

In recent months, the staff have worked effectively to make some sensible modifications but a more major overhaul is needed. Pupils have too few opportunities to work creatively or to solve problems. The school library is underused. Pupils do not have enough good chances to work in teams or make decisions for themselves. This does not prepare them well enough for later life. Visits out provide enrichment for the curriculum. There is also a small range of well organised extra-curricular activities, especially in sport.

Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Although there are some strengths in these areas, care, guidance and support are inadequate overall. This is because of the weaknesses in ensuring pupils meet suitably challenging learning targets. Marking, and other feedback to pupils, are unsatisfactory. Staff do not adjust work sufficiently to meet individual needs.

Adults are kind and caring to the pupils, whom they know well. They notice if any child might be upset. Midday supervisors are very good at helping the children to enjoy lunchtime games, like skipping. These good relationships ensure pupils feel secure, safe and settled. The school liaises well with agencies to provide any additional support pupils need, such as speech therapy. Child protection procedures are effective.

Neighbourhood links are used effectively. For example, pupils enjoy going to Hastings Theatre to see plays. Local people, including church members, visit the school to talk to the children. This enables pupils to understand that they are part of, and have responsibility towards, their community.

Grade: 4

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

In the short time since her arrival in June 2005, the acting headteacher has made a very substantial positive impact. She inherited many significant and long-standing weaknesses. These had not been identified until she came, as the school's self-evaluation procedures are not well organised or robust enough. She identified most of the weaknesses accurately and has made sound plans to begin to address them. Her initiatives to improve the behaviour of some pupils have been successful. She has quickly and sensitively won the respect of the staff and parents. Morale has risen. She is rightly seen as a first-rate leader, providing clear direction. Support from the local authority is used well.

The acting headteacher has reorganised the school's management structure and begun to try to involve the senior staff. They have responded enthusiastically, beginning to gain some awareness of the seriousness of the issues facing the school. These senior staff have mostly been working in the school for a long time but, over the years, they have not had sufficient professional development and training to know clearly how to support their teams in improving the school. They depend on the acting headteacher. Additionally, the role of the deputy headteacher is severely underdeveloped. The school will not be able to improve quickly enough without a much stronger leadership team.

The governing body does not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of the seriousness of the issues facing the school. Governors are beginning to respond to the leadership of the acting headteacher but there is much for them to do to become effective.

Grade: 4

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Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 4 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 3 | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 4 | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | No | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No | NA |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 4 | NA |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 4 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 | 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 | 3 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 4 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 4 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 4 | NA |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 4 | NA |

¹ 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

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 4 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 4 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 4 | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 4 | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 4 | 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 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| 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 |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| 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 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| 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 |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | No |
| 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

The Pupils, Castledown Primary School, Priory Road, Hastings TN34 3QT

October 2005

Dear Pupils of Castledown School,

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we came to visit recently. We really enjoyed meeting you. We think you are a credit to your school.

When we finished the inspection, we decided the school needs special measures because some important things are not good enough at the moment. Special measures means the school will get some extra help to put these things right. It also means that inspectors will visit the school regularly to check on how well things are going.

The main things that need to be put right are:

At the moment, a lot of the work you are given is too easy. Although you often enjoy your lessons, this means you don't get the chance to learn enough. Some of you told us this and you were right.

The senior staff and school governors must make absolutely sure that you all get the chance to do as well as you can. They haven't been clear enough about this.

All the subjects you do in school need to be planned a bit better so that you can learn more about them and do more exciting things.

You need more opportunities to work together and do more for yourselves.

There are also some really lovely things about your school. For example, you behave well. You are kind to each other and polite. You listen carefully in class and join in all lessons well. The adults take good care of you. We really enjoyed seeing the way you have fun together in the playground. Finally, Mrs Morris is an especially good headteacher! You are lucky to have her in your school.

With best wishes,

Robin Hammerton Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools