



Castledown Community Primary and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114474
LEA East Sussex
Inspection number 285307
Inspection dates 5 July 2006 to 6 July 2006
Reporting inspector Steffi Penny HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	439	Fax number	01424 426491
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Maureen Cooper
Date of previous inspection	5 October 2005	Headteacher	Mrs Linda Morris

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	5 July 2006 - 6 July 2006	285307

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a large primary school situated close to Hastings town centre. Most pupils are White British with about 9% 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, although a few are autistic. The school is in the Hastings Excellence Cluster and Sure Start. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money. The school judges itself similarly, recognising what it needs to do to improve standards. Since the appointment of the current headteacher in the autumn of 2005 a wholesale review of procedures and practice has begun. These changes have led directly to the improved quality of provision that is now securely in place. There is now a common sense of purpose and drive for improvement with considerable progress being made in a short space of time.

Good attention is paid to personal, social and emotional development and consequently pupils make particularly good progress in this aspect. However, attendance is not as good as it should be. This is because, despite the best efforts of the school and local authority, a hardcore of pupils do not attend regularly enough or arrive on time.

Pupils are provided with a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They come on in leaps and bounds so that almost all meet the goals expected of them by the end of the Reception year. Thereafter progress for all pupils is at least satisfactory and for many it is good or better. Standards in the current Year 6 are not high enough but for all other classes they are at the level seen nationally.

Pupils enjoy school and speak appreciatively of recent changes. In particular they said they loved their 'learning journeys' and felt proud of how much better their school is now. As well as being 'a good place to make friends' they said school 'makes you smart' and 'you do fun stuff', many also said they wanted their parents to be more involved with their school work.

The school has improved dramatically since the last inspection. This is due to the enthusiastic and hardworking staff who have readily embraced the new vision and changes implemented by the new senior leadership team. The governing body is also now in a position to support the school but some individual governors need more help to understand their wider roles and responsibilities. The school has great capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the ability of all governors to be able to challenge the school where necessary and to hold it to account.
- Consider further ways of involving parents in all aspects of the life of the school.
- Continue to raise standards and achievements by making sure that all policies are applied consistently throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The majority of children join the school with lower than expected standards in most areas of learning but especially in communication skills, personal and social development. Within the Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress and by the time they leave the Reception class, the majority will have reached the goals expected of them for all areas of learning. Further progress is satisfactory to the end of Year 2, with targets set for the recent National Curriculum Tests being met. This represents a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

In the rest of the school, where teaching has improved and the use of assessment is effective, similar improvements have been noted in the progress pupils make. In Years 3, 4 and 5 standards have improved and are now at levels expected nationally, achievement has been at least satisfactory and in many cases good or even better. However, in Year 6, standards are below average and a significant minority of pupils do not reach their potential. In spite of a legacy of weakness from previous years, the vast majority of pupils are now making good progress but, due to gaps in knowledge and understanding, their standards are still not high enough.

Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are beginners in English are making at least satisfactory progress, with many making good progress in their learning and achieving well in relation to targets in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are now good.

Pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes behave well and develop good attitudes. They grow in confidence as they respond to the many opportunities to work independently and collaboratively.

In Years 1 to 6, behaviour is good. Pupils develop mature and sensible attitudes by the time they reach Year 6. Opportunities for showing and sharing their work develop the pupils' confidence and self-esteem and contribute effectively to their spiritual development. Pupils say that there are now few incidences of rough or bullying behaviour and they are confident to turn to any adult should the need arise. They have welcomed the 'friendship bench' and the systems for rewarding good behaviour. They know right from wrong and are clear about the consequences of breaking rules. Pupils now have greater opportunities to take responsibility such as playground friends and as members of the 'Green team', who keep the school grounds tidy. The school council gives pupils a good voice and helps them to make a good contribution to the community.

Pupils show a good awareness about healthy eating and keeping safe in physical education and other practical lessons using tools.

Attendance remains below the national average. Although the school is making every effort to promote good attendance, including the introduction of the 'Cool Cats' scheme in September, there are still some parents who do not give sufficient importance to this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory. Most of the senior leadership team are classroom teachers. This allows them to demonstrate good practice and to test and model new ideas. Newly qualified teachers have particularly benefited from this. Innovations in the curriculum and assessment procedures have helped pupils to learn more and to be in a position where they want to learn. In the best lessons teachers have taken advantage of this and work is exciting and challenging. Where teaching is less strong the main areas for improvement are the quality of marking, the match of work to pupils' needs and the depth and quality of work expected.

Teachers work hard to create attractive and stimulating environments to support pupils' learning, encourage independence and celebrate their achievements. Where there is high quality work on display, this provides a useful example for pupils to aspire to. Where they are available, good use is made of interactive whiteboards to make lessons engaging and informative.

Assessment procedures and processes are good but the application throughout the school is not yet consistent. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and make a positive impact on pupils' learning. In particular good support is given to those pupils with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. In the Nursery and Reception classes, the wide range of learning opportunities both inside and outdoors meet the needs of pupils well. They often excite them so that learning is fun.

The school has worked hard since the last inspection to improve the curriculum throughout the school. A cross-curricular approach to the teaching of key skills and National Curriculum requirements has been introduced so that pupils now have more opportunities for problem solving, creative thinking and working in teams. Pupils themselves say how much they enjoy this approach and describe their 'learning journeys' as 'brilliant' and 'a really good way of fitting subjects together'. The result is that the work is now much better matched to the needs and interests of all groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The senior leaders recognise that there is still further work to be done and have already begun to prepare a revised curriculum for the start of the next school term.

There is good enrichment of the curriculum through the use of visits and visitors and through the use of before and after school clubs. Pupils particularly enjoyed the fire engines visiting the school as part of the 'learning journey' titled 'The Fire of London'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, although staff are good at looking after the personal and pastoral needs of the pupils. Because of this, pupils feel safe and secure in school. Procedures for child protection are effective and risk assessments are carried out for visits. The school has provided pupils with access to additional support from a counsellor for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and a learning tutor. This ensures that, whilst pupils have good relationships with members of staff and can confide in them, they have access to professionals from outside the school. Healthy lifestyles are promoted in school with virtually all pupils using their own drinking bottles during very oppressive weather.

Assessment and tracking procedures have improved substantially and are now good. However, as their introduction is still quite new, not all teachers make very best use of the information gathered. In the same way, marking has improved, but the picture is inconsistent, with only some teachers helping their pupils to make progress through very clear written advice. The identification of pupils with additional needs is improving and, as a result, support is better focused.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The exceedingly well led senior leadership team have been a driving force in moving the school forward. The members have each identified specific projects for which they are accountable. These projects are innovative and linked directly to the school plans and targets for further improvement in standards and achievement. This strong team is inspired and excited about what it has achieved so far and the journey ahead for the school. This enthusiasm is contagious and other members of staff are now very near the stage where they can develop their own projects and curriculum areas.

The school's self-evaluation is now robust and well organised. It knows what needs to be improved and how it is going to do it. The improvements since the last inspection have been considerable. Some have been at greater pace than others but all trends are positive.

Good links have been established with other agencies and schools. Pupils said they liked the way that their outdoor playing spaces had been enhanced and were proud of the way that they had been awarded funds to do this through successful grant bids. The Year 6 pupils also appreciated visiting their new schools. In some cases they noticed that the 'learning journeys' had encouraged their parents to be more involved with their learning and they liked this very much. However, although parents do get involved with social aspects of the school their involvement with other aspects are far less advanced.

The reformed governing body is now able collectively to support the school and help it improve. Further training is needed for individual members to have a full appreciation of their roles in particular with regard to monitoring in classrooms.

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	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	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	3	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	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

Following our visit to inspect your school we would like to thank you for welcoming us. We enjoyed talking to you and listened carefully to what you said. This letter is to let you know what your school does well and how you can help your school to be even better.

There are lots of things that we and you like about your school. Some of these are:

You really appreciate the 'learning journeys' that the school now provides for you.

The school does a good job of encouraging you to become confident in all of the things you do.

Your headteacher and staff work well together to make a calm and happy atmosphere in the school. You behave well and get on really well with each other.

You try much harder now in your lessons and, when you find work hard, you are given the right sort of help.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better and this is what we have asked your school to do now.

Lots of you in different classes are making good progress. We believe that some of you could do even better. We have asked the teachers to continue to improve lessons and the way they look at how well you are doing. You can help by telling the teachers when you are finding the work too easy or if you need more advice on how to improve your work.

This is a school that has improved in leaps and bounds but the governors need more help to develop their skills, to make sure that your school is the best that it can be.

Many of you said that the 'learning journeys' helped your parents see what you were doing and how they could help you. We have asked the school to think of other ways that your parents can be involved with your work. Perhaps you and your parents could think of some?

Thank you again for helping us to have such a great visit to your school, and especially for the couscous.

We wish you a happy and successful future.