

# Great Casterton CofE Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120185
<b>Local Authority</b>	RUTLAND LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	285391
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Miller

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	66
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Margaret Markey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Clare Rowbotham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 2005
<b>School address</b>	Pickworth Road Great Casterton Stamford Lincolnshire PE9 4AU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01780762417
<b>Fax number</b>	01780762417

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Great Casterton Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average school situated in the village of Great Casterton, near Stamford in Lincolnshire. Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with levels of attainment similar to national expectations. The proportion of pupils either joining or leaving the school, other than at the usual time, has been increasing in recent years and is well above average. Most pupils are of White British ethnic origin. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups, or for whom English is an additional language, is below average. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils who need additional support is average.

The school is part of a federation with Empingham Church of England Primary School, which was inspected separately in November 2007. Both schools share the same headteacher, subject leaders and governing body, and have a common management structure and curriculum.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. It contributes well to its federated partnership with another local primary school. The school has made good improvement since its last inspection, and has a good capacity for further improvement. Effective leadership and management by the headteacher and leadership team, with good support from governors, have ensured that monitoring and self-evaluation are increasingly sharp. The use of good systems for setting targets challenges pupils effectively and the systems are based on an informed understanding of their abilities. Challenge is consistently very high in the mixed age and ability classes. Parents respect this approach and appreciate why the school gives good value for money.

The school has worked hard and successfully to resolve significant difficulties which have affected standards and progress in the past. In the 2007 national tests, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was below average but progress from their starting points was satisfactory. In Year 2, standards were average but progress was good. Achievement is now good across the school and the school's tracking shows that pupils are making good progress. Currently, pupils' standards are broadly average by Year 2 and are above average overall by Year 6. This is because teaching is good and there are some outstanding features. As a parent wrote, 'I am very happy with the way my child is taught and inspired by the teachers.' Pupils confirm that staff support them very well and they see teaching as a strength of the school. Consequently, pupils learn well. They consider questions carefully before giving thoughtful responses. This is a consistent feature of lessons and learning, which is having a real impact in raising standards.

Teachers have proved their ability to improve achievement in English, and are now purposefully directing their expertise to raising standards in mathematics. Planning is good, but the connection between what is to be taught and what teachers will subsequently assess is not always clear. The curriculum is good because of exciting improvements. However, there is scope to further develop the work and challenge for the most able pupils in areas other than English and mathematics.

This is an inclusive school, which knows itself well and has the learning and welfare of pupils at its heart. Consequently, a major factor in the school's success is its fostering of the pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They value their role in the school community. The school's basic three rules, including respect for one another, are implemented very well. Accordingly, the school provides a safe and very friendly environment where pupils have a strong sense of belonging, appreciate each other's strengths, are tolerant of their weaknesses, and develop responsibly as future citizens. Pupils have an active voice in school life through an effective school council and are cared for well. Pastoral support is strong and academic guidance is good. Healthy lifestyles are promoted and understood well. Pupils' are being prepared well for their future lives. Parents stress their appreciation of the way their children prosper at the school.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The very good leadership, management and monitoring of children in the Reception year ensures that they make a good start to their education. Children are being prepared well for their work in Year 1. They make good progress because they are taught well, and benefit significantly

from their day-to-day contact with classmates in Years 1 and 2. Because of this, children learn to cooperate well and care and support each other. Consequently, their personal development and attitudes to learning are particularly good. Children in Reception enjoy their time at school because they have good opportunities to explore, investigate and discover together. The atmosphere for learning is very positive. Parents appreciate the ways their children are enabled to settle quickly into Reception, and how active and occupied they are in their learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop strategies to promote skills in calculation to further improve pupils' standards in mathematics, particularly in its use and application.
- In lesson planning, include more and specific opportunities for assessment in order to underpin the development of pupils' key subject skills and knowledge.
- Broaden the school's provision for pupils who may be most able to ensure further challenge in subjects other than English and mathematics.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are improving. In the recent past, standards have sometimes been affected by high levels of pupil mobility. When children enter Year 1, standards are broadly meeting national expectations. Standards are above average by Year 6, and pupils' achievement by Years 2 and 6 is good. There is significant success in English, and pupils talk with excitement about this work. Some more able pupils in Year 6 are producing creative writing of a very high standard. At the time of inspection, standards in science were above those expected. Those in mathematics are broadly average, and improving as teachers are increasingly successful in targeting pupils' use and application of mathematics. Standards are better than in 2007 when the Year 6 national tests were below average overall. Pupils attained below average results in mathematics, but average standards in science and above in English. The high proportion of pupils who need extra support made sound progress. Standards by Year 2 in 2007 were average but those in writing were above average, with some exceptional performance from boys in English and mathematics. Girls who find learning more difficult made good progress.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development is outstanding because the school has a strong ethos based around three school rules: showing good manners, following instructions, and caring for everyone and everything. Pupils understand these very well, enabling them to feel very safe in school and preparing them well for their future lives. Attendance is good because pupils enjoy their learning. Their behaviour is exemplary and during lessons they concentrate very well and work hard. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their sense of belonging to the school, and show a strong understanding of right and wrong. Achievements and human endeavour are celebrated very well. Pupils learn in a most supportive and inclusive environment where they are valued as individuals. They develop self-confidence through excellent relationships and feel free to express opinions because their views are valued. Pupils understand the value of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles are promoted well. The school council has been involved successfully in the establishment of a 'trim trail' in the playground.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The school now has a settled and established staff, and teachers and teaching assistants are developing their professional skills well. An outstanding element of teaching and learning is the way in which pupils are challenged by the searching questions asked of them by teachers. Furthermore, pupils are encouraged to give considered responses through which they explain their ideas and thinking. Pupils' approach to solving problems is often impressive. This explains the increasingly rising standards being achieved. Assessment is used well by teachers in lessons to help pupils understand what, and how, to improve. However, teachers' planning does not identify specifically enough the key skills or knowledge to be assessed. Nevertheless, the teaching concentrates well on enabling individual pupils to understand how best they can learn.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Pupils appreciate the ways the school's 'creative curriculum' enables them to have fun in learning. Key skills, knowledge and understanding are now taught within broad topics. This supports the progress of pupils of all abilities well because it takes into account individual needs and learning styles. The successful use of information and communication technology across the school makes an important contribution to the pupils' future lives. There is an interesting range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits, and pupils benefit well from these. However, the planning for extension work for the most able pupils is not yet established in subjects apart from English and mathematics.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The quality of care and pastoral support for all pupils is good. There are good systems for ensuring the safeguarding and welfare of children. Academic guidance is good and, following improvements to the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress, has much improved since the last inspection. However, links between lesson planning and marking are not always clear enough to help reinforce pupils' understanding of the next stage in their learning. Nevertheless, pupils appreciate the good support they receive and how this enables them to improve. Pupils are prepared well for their next stage of education because staff are committed to ensuring pupils have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

An outstanding feature of the good leadership and management is the way in which all leaders work and cooperate. This is having a clear impact in good improvement and in setting a clear educational direction. Initiatives from both the Foundation Stage leader and office manager have been adopted as exemplars by the Local Authority. Pupils are benefiting well because staff relish the opportunity for challenge and the governing body is supportive and effective. Initiatives, such as 'Governor of the Month', help to cement firm links with the school and keep governors well informed. Governors have helped to turn around a budget deficit into a surplus

which is enabling the good development of learning resources. Effective links exist between the school's leaders and parents. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive and the school has worked hard on developing robust monitoring systems. Consequently, target setting is much improved and is now good. There is a strong commitment to inclusion and minimising any barriers to learning. Federation is developing securely and the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

18 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Casterton Church of England Primary School, Pickworth Road, Great Casterton, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 4AU.

I would like to thank you all for welcoming me, and being so friendly, during my recent visit to your school. I spoke with your parents and carers at the school gate on the first morning, and some of them wrote to me. They described a school which was welcoming, took good care of you and knew each one of you very well as an individual. They were right. Yours is a good school with much to celebrate.

These are the things I found are best about your school.

- Your behaviour and your attitudes to learning are excellent.
- You take good care of each other, both when you are at work and at play.
- You achieve well and make good progress during your time at the school.
- You are supported well by good teaching, which helps you to do your best.
- Your work is made interesting and exciting, and you have fun whilst learning.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors work very hard to help you to learn.

What I have asked your school to do now.

- Develop further the ways in which your teachers are helping you to improve your standards, and make even better progress in maths.
- Your teachers are keen to plan your lessons and mark and assess your work well. They are always looking to help you. We have agreed new and even better ways by which they can do this.
- Develop extra ways in which those of you who find learning easier can be helped to make even better progress, especially through the 'creative curriculum' work which you enjoy so much.

During your Celebration Assembly, you sang a hymn about the blessings of the sun shining on you, the stars twinkling, the rain splashing, the wind blowing and the birds singing to you. I would add another, celebrating how your love of learning supports you.

With all best wishes for your future,

Michael Miller

Lead Inspector