



Caslon Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103801
Local Authority Dudley
Inspection number 286767
Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007
Reporting inspector John Lilly

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Beeches View Avenue
School category	Community		Halesowen
Age range of pupils	3–11		B63 2ES
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01384 818875
Number on roll (school)	218	Fax number	01384 818876
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Steph Sellers
		Headteacher	James Randle
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007	Inspection number 286767
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Caslon is a school of average size. An increasing number of pupils are joining the school from overseas, including many who do not speak English at home. An above-average proportion of pupils have identified learning difficulties and disabilities. The school manages a wide range of community activities to support the parents and carers of pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Caslon is a good school. Provision has improved dramatically over the past three years and this has underpinned sustained improvement in pupils' progress. The comment, 'I am very happy with my child's progress at Caslon,' reflects the views of the vast majority of parents. Standards are below average but this represents good achievement in relation to pupils' generally low starting points. The school has many strengths and each strength supports the others; for example, the school's work with parents improves pupils' attitudes. Provision at the Foundation Stage gives children a good start. The headteacher and school leaders provide outstanding leadership because they have created a staff team with very clear understanding of what needs to be done and of their individual responsibilities. Clarity of planning comes from systematic and accurate self-evaluation. Leadership overall is good and management effective and efficient. Teaching and learning are consistently good and on occasion outstanding. The curriculum is good. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and get to grips with and largely overcome the many barriers to learning that pupils face. The school has good capacity for further improvement because a skilled and stable staff are determined to create an outstanding school. The outstanding partnership with parents and the community is raising everyone's aspirations and the confidence to meet these high expectations.

Personal development and well-being are good. The pupils enjoy school very much and this shows in their good attitudes, relationships and behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Pupils show a good understanding of what they need to do to be safe and healthy. They check that their lunch boxes contain only healthy foods and know they must avoid talking to strangers. They willingly contribute to the growing success of the school, for example, through the school council and by playing their part in meetings with their parents and staff. They are gaining the skills and maturity needed for their future lives and employment but these will not be completely secure until skills in numeracy and literacy improve even further. Pupils throughout the school have weak speaking and listening skills. This hinders their learning because they cannot express their thoughts. This is connected to their very limited knowledge and understanding of the world beyond their immediate locality, for example, different contexts to think and talk about. Teachers do not give enough opportunities for pupils to apply and, relate what they learn in school to the wider world, for example, applying mathematics to situations beyond school and the immediate locality.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking skills.
- Relate what pupils learn to applications in the real and wider world.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below average but this represents good achievement. Until recently, standards were exceptionally low and pupils did not make the progress they should. Effective assessment identified the reasons and staff addressed the causes rigorously. Achievement is already good and still improving throughout the school, with the strongest evidence in Year 6. Pupils still have some catching up to do, in part to raise attainment to at least the national average and to improve upon previously inadequate teaching. The key literacy and numeracy skills that pupils learn by the time they leave the school give them a sound preparation for the next stage of their education, although for some pupils they are insecure.

The large majority of children join the Nursery with attainment that is much lower than usually expected of children of that age. Partnership with parents is raising these starting points through education programmes that they share with their children. Children in Nursery and Reception make good progress, becoming keen learners. Children join Year 1 with attainment that is lower than that expected of their age. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2, although their attainment by the end of Year 2 is still below average overall because of their low starting points. Determined action by the school is closing the gap; for example, standards of reading are now broadly in line with the national average.

Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6, especially in English. Outstanding care, guidance and support identify the significant barriers to learning facing many pupils and in most cases overcome them. Consequently, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, those learning English as an additional language do so quickly, and those with emotional or behavioural problems become confident, self-managing learners. A good curriculum is raising the attainment of high-ability pupils and the achievement of boys, who tend not to do as well as girls. Targets for further improvement are challenging but realistic.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop good social skills, and this shows in the way they collaborate in lessons, take part in debates and enjoy residential trips. They respect the various cultures present in the school and are proud of what their local community achieves, for example, the many parents who are gaining qualifications. They care about people they have never met, for example, organising a sponsored fast for earthquake survivors. Pupils take on responsibilities willingly as 'buddies'. They develop a clear sense of right and wrong. They talk openly about their feelings and are perceptive of those of others. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen clearly in the way they are fully and reflectively involved with issues raised in assemblies.

Pupils enjoy their lessons, value their teachers and are proud of their school. Attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is usually good. Pupils work

hard to achieve the different rewards offered by teachers, especially Golden Time, when they can choose what they want to do as a reward for good work. Pupils show responsibility for their own safety. They confidently go to adults for help with problems, for example, the very approachable and caring teaching assistants. Incidents of bullying or racism are rare, and are dealt with firmly when they occur. Pupils work hard to remain healthy and do so by taking regular exercise. They involve themselves in moving the school forward through, for example, the school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers teach with enthusiasm and drive. Pupils share this excitement and pride in learning, and try hard. Lessons are well planned. Staff focus tightly on meeting the individual needs of each pupil. Teachers know precisely what they expect each level of ability to attain but do not always make these different objectives clear enough to pupils at the start of lessons. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards very effectively to explain ideas. They manage pupils well, ensuring that all remain on task. They provide helpful advice and feedback on how well each pupil is doing. Pupils respond by collaborating well with each other and adults, and in taking responsibility for their own learning. Good assessment evaluates each pupil's progress and teachers act quickly if it slows. Not enough lessons provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills, and this reduces pupils' ability to express and order their thoughts. For example, a pupil said, 'I want to ask for help but cannot find the words to say it!' Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to apply their learning to solve problems in the wider world.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is good provision for English and mathematics and pupils know their targets in these subjects. Other subjects are effectively linked together within themes. These cover all the required areas and allow pupils to increase their understanding in more depth. This approach increases the pupils' enjoyment of learning. A wildlife area deepens the pupils' responsibility towards the environment. There is an extensive programme of experiences beyond the classroom, for example, clubs, speakers, theatre groups, musicians and visits. Even so, many pupils have experience of only their own locality and this makes it difficult for them to understand topics that involve the wider world. Teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to relate the pupils' own experiences to those in other parts of the world. Personal and social education, including 'circle time' (times each day when pupils can share their concerns and feelings), makes a considerable contribution to the pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school takes extraordinary care to ensure pupils' safety, and there are effective procedures for safeguarding children. The school handles pupils with challenging behaviour extremely well. Vulnerable pupils are given individual specialised support and lots of time and patience. Qualified counselling provided by the school is available to families and there is a wonderful mix of courses for parents. These help parents to give their children more support. The school works successfully with parents to improve attendance. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have very good support in lessons and extra help from outside specialists when needed. The recent emphasis on healthy living and eating has begun to change attitudes. Pupils are very aware of their targets in English and mathematics and are shown what they need to do to improve. Teachers monitor progress carefully and act quickly if anyone starts to fall behind. A considerable strength is the way the various aspects of provision work together, for example, through the support team. The high quality of provision is a key reason why pupils' behaviour and attitudes are so good and why achievement is improving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He has successfully created a highly committed and close-knit team, certain of where it is going and with each member taking full individual responsibility. Management is effective and efficient, although some staff are new to management roles and need time to find their feet. There is joint accountability and, therefore, thinking and intelligence are shared. Self-evaluation is continuous, systematic and rigorous, and leads to effective and coherent planning. Performance is well managed, setting relevant targets for improvement and linking these to high quality training. Resources, including finances, are well managed, maintaining a sensible balance to fund further developments. The school is good at attracting further funding. The school has good capacity to improve. Staff work to improve the school with determination and full commitment and are supported by a strong and highly involved governing body and by parents who are fully behind the work and aims of the school.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

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?	1

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our two days with you very much, especially talking to you and being with you in your lessons. The way you take part in assemblies is great.

You go to a good school and you are very much a part of what makes it good. You told us how much you enjoy school and that you feel very safe. Your headteacher, staff and governors run the school well. They are determined to provide you with only the best, working very hard to make the school better and better each day. The school and your families work very closely together to help you. You are working well in lessons and make good progress because you have good teachers. The good curriculum gives you many interesting and important things to learn that you will need for your future lives. You say that you find what you learn interesting and fun. We think you are extremely well cared for and get the help you need. You told us that you find 'circle time' very helpful. You get on with others and care for them very well. You behave well and are very polite. Your attendance is satisfactory, although some of you could try harder to attend everyday. You become thoughtful and mature young people. You told us you liked, in particular, 'Golden Time' and the many activities after school.

To become an even better school, we have asked your teachers to:

- help you more with your speaking so that you can explain your ideas more clearly
- help you more to use what you learn in lessons to solve problems in the real and wider world.