



Castleton Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105765
Local Authority Rochdale
Inspection number 287323
Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007
Reporting inspector Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hillcrest Road
School category	Community		Rochdale
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire OL11 2QD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 631858
Number on roll (school)	302	Fax number	01706 710270
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr B Warburton
		Headteacher	Ms L Torrance
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a mixed area of council estates and private housing to the south-west of Rochdale town centre. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is nearly twice the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, but there are 22 pupils with statements of special educational need, an above average proportion. Most pupils are of White British heritage but there is a significant number from minority ethnic groups, most of whom have English as an additional language. A local authority speech and language unit and also the Acorn centre for autistic children are both accommodated on the site. Castleton Primary holds Healthy School status and has the ActiveMark Gold award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils at Castleton Primary School are proud of their 'three rights': the right to be treated fairly, the right to be safe and the right to learn. Parents, too, are grateful that the school provides, in their words, 'a very safe and secure learning environment in which our children can grow both socially and academically'. Most certainly, this is a good school, with significant outstanding features, and in which all those connected with it are made to feel both valued and valuable.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills which are well below average for their age, but their confidence and self-esteem go from strength to strength. Pupils progress well in Key Stages 1 and 2. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is below average overall, but standards and achievement are improving at a much better rate than nationally, although not always at the higher levels. Pupils want to learn and are delighted to support their classmates when they are experiencing difficulty. They are desperate to show visitors how well they have all done and also just how much more they want to do for their school. Teaching is good, but pupils now require more opportunities to work out for themselves the progress they are making.

Pupils are proud of their school, behave well and look after each other. They have an outstanding awareness of how to eat healthily and agree with their parents that school lunches provide a nutritious and balanced diet. They are not afraid to express their opinions and believe that adults in school listen to them. They take responsibility for organising a wide range of events, for example, quizzes and talent shows. The school council and the 'playground pals' make sure that no-one is lonely and that everyone can join in games at break and at lunchtime.

Teachers and support staff provide outstanding care and guidance for their pupils and give them optimum support in their efforts to improve academically and personally. Assessment is accurate and marking is both regular and informative. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also benefit from the school's commitment to each individual and are fully involved in a curriculum which meets their needs and interests. The many extra-curricular activities enrich the learning, raise the aspirations and broaden the horizons of all.

The impressive leadership of the dedicated headteacher, who is ably supported by a talented management team, a committed staff and a knowledgeable governing body, is a key factor in the ongoing quest for improvement in all areas of school life. The school's evaluation of its performance is rigorous, but subject leaders now need to play a more effective role in raising standards. Outstanding links with parents, school-based units, other schools and agencies benefit pupils to the full and demonstrate that at Castleton Primary, every child really does matter. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science and ensure that more pupils attain at the highest levels.

- Develop strategies to ensure that pupils are actively involved in assessing their own progress.
- Develop the evaluation skills of subject leaders and ensure that they play a more effective part in raising standards and improving achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although improving, children's attainment on entry to Nursery is well below age-related expectations. Pupils make good progress across the school and reach broadly average standards in English and below average attainment in mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. As a result of better teaching and more effective strategies to identify and reverse any possible underachievement, progress and standards have improved steadily since the last inspection.

Children make the most rapid progress in the Foundation Stage and achieve very well in all areas, but particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils achieve well across Years 1 and 2 but their progress in writing is slower than in their other subjects. This good progress continues in Key Stage 2 and the school has successfully addressed the dip in achievement often found nationally in Years 3 and 4. Both boys and girls are under-represented at the higher National Curriculum levels, particularly in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language achieve as well as others because of the outstanding support and guidance they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding with pupils showing a clear respect for each other and themselves; creating positive relationships with children and adults alike. Pupils clearly enjoy every aspect of school and have excellent attitudes towards it. They appreciate their teachers making their lessons exciting, saying: 'Teachers make lessons fun. You learn better when it's fun, you know!' Attendance is broadly average and has improved year on year because of the many incentive schemes offered by the school to reward pupils who attend well. Pupils' behaviour is good and they conduct themselves in an orderly way in lessons and around school.

Pupils suggest, plan and conduct fundraising events and activities for other pupils quite independently, but with school approval and the minimum of adult supervision. The success of the school council demonstrates just how willing they are to take on responsibilities. Pupils feel safe in school and have very clear ideas about the need for regular exercise and a balanced diet. They make good choices when taking advantage of the excellent after-school sports clubs and when choosing their lunches. Although standards are below average, the basic skills they learn and the outstanding levels of

responsibility shown by the oldest pupils in the school are a good foundation for the world of work and a successful adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are examples of outstanding practice in all key stages, especially the Foundation Stage. Pupils benefit from dignified and respectful treatment from their teachers and teaching assistants and behave well as a result. In an outstanding Year 5/6 numeracy lesson, for example, pupils were beside themselves with joy during the 'disco numbers' starter and demonstrated that they were fully used to appropriate levels of challenge. Similarly, teachers have high expectations of what their learners can achieve and, as they say at the beginnings of lessons, 'Don't worry, we are all going to get to the same place, but some of us may choose to go further!' Support for pupils experiencing difficulty is very impressive and pupils of all abilities benefit equally from what lessons have to offer. On occasions, teachers direct learning activities too much and now need to ensure that the more able pupils reach the highest levels in English, mathematics and science.

Teachers track the progress of their pupils closely. As a result, any underachievement is highlighted rapidly and the school intervenes most effectively to address it. Marking is a strength and teachers offer their pupils detailed advice on how they may improve their work. More emphasis should now be placed on pupils assessing their own progress against criteria agreed in advance with their teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs, aspirations and interests of pupils well. All pupils, including those who often find the work difficult or who sometimes struggle with English, receive the curriculum to which they are entitled. The exciting activities in the Foundation Stage, for example, fascinate the children and make them eager to learn. In the other key stages too, staff are working hard to link skills across subjects in order to make learning more relevant. Good emphasis is placed on learning through practical activity and first-hand experiences. Indeed, teachers take pupils' views into account when planning modules of work. Pupils apply their computer skills satisfactorily to support their learning and they enjoy the opportunities to use the interactive whiteboard. The curriculum develops pupils' understanding of citizenship, keeping safe and healthy lifestyles very well. The wide range of physical activities adds to this also. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the outstanding range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors which enrich their experiences and contribute greatly to their personal development and enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding levels of care, support and guidance delivered by a highly committed and skilled staff have a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils know that adults care for them as individuals and comment: 'Our teachers are comforting and we feel very safe in school.' Procedures for the safeguarding of children are in place and risk assessments are conducted for all off-site visits and potential hazards within school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable are identified early and focused support enables them to make the same progress as their peers. Parents of these pupils are involved regularly in helping to review their children's progress and in setting targets for the future. There are excellent links with outside agencies and those sited in the school building to provide pupils with any specialist help they need. Academic guidance is outstanding and target-setting is strong. Pupils' progress towards their targets is monitored closely and teachers have a very clear understanding of the strengths of each individual and the areas they could develop.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

'We are all equally valued here and we have many opportunities to introduce new things ourselves.' This view, expressed by staff of all levels of experience, demonstrates the good quality of leadership and management across the school. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, who works in close partnership with the very effective deputy headteacher and senior leadership team, sets both the tone and the vision: the well-being and achievement of pupils, parents and staff are all-important in everything the school tries to do. Staff are fully committed to providing the best learning opportunities for the pupils and achievement across the school is improving as a result. Ongoing improvement is central to the work of the school and it evaluates its performance with rigour. The two occasions when the inspection team disagreed with its judgements were the result of the leadership's view that nothing is ever perfect and that improvements can always be made. The work of the Raising Achievement Project group is developing links between all curriculum areas, but the role of subject leaders in raising standards is not fully developed. Governors contribute well to the life and work of the school. Although recently restructured, the governing body has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and provides an effective balance between challenge and support. The strengths in leadership, personal development and care, and the outstanding links with other providers both within and outside its walls, confirm that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

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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	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	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 all so much for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We are very grateful for the way you helped with the inspection and also for the information you gave us. We would now like to tell you what we think about your school.

Castleton Primary is a good school, and you are right to be very proud of it! Your teachers take very good care of you and want you to do well. The school council also does a lot to help and support younger pupils and they have many ideas about how to make the school even better. You are making good progress in your lessons because your teachers and teaching assistants teach you well and help everyone to succeed. Your behaviour is good, too, and you represent your school really well when you go out on the many trips and visits you have. You know how important it is to eat healthily and to keep yourselves fit. You enjoy playing games and get on very well with the pupils from other schools when you meet them at sports competitions.

One of the best things about your school is the polite way you greet visitors! We were so pleased that you wanted to talk to us about how much you like your teachers, teaching assistants and classmates. You enjoyed showing us your work in exercise books and also on the walls in the classrooms and corridors. Your school really is a bright and colourful place to be and we know that your headteacher and all the other staff are working very hard to improve things even more!

We would now like your teachers to help you reach the highest standards you can in English, mathematics and science and we know you will work hard with them to do this. We have also asked your teachers to improve their skills in judging the progress you are making in all your subjects. We would like them to help you work out for yourselves just what you need to do to improve your work.

Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly to us. We enjoyed watching you learn.