



Castle Hill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107520
Local Authority Calderdale
Inspection number 287836
Inspection dates 12–13 February 2007
Reporting inspector Amraz Ali

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Halifax Road
School category	Community		Todmorden
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire OL14 5SQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 813163
Number on roll (school)	283	Fax number	01706 815376
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Anne Foster
		Headteacher	Mrs Hannah Mulholland
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Castle Hill is a larger than average primary school. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. Of the small number from different ethnic backgrounds, only a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most pupils stay at the school for the whole of their primary school career. The school holds the Activemark award for provision in sports.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Castle Hill is a satisfactory school with some good features. The direction and energy of the headteacher and deputy headteacher have led to some valuable improvements over the last two years. The school is aware of its relative strengths and areas for improvement. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but has been uneven over recent years and among particular groups of pupils. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average but a small, significant number of girls and some of the more able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should, particularly in writing. This is because the quality of teaching, while satisfactory, is inconsistent in meeting the needs of all pupils.

Parents and pupils say that Castle Hill is a special place where everyone enjoys their work and learning. Inspectors agree with this because the school has been particularly successful in creating a culture where all pupils are valued and are treated as individuals. Personal development and well-being are good. Adults nurture good relationships, taking their lead from the headteacher. They know pupils well and this helps pupils to enjoy their time at Castle Hill. The school meets the needs of the most vulnerable pupils, who are supported effectively by teaching assistants. They ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress towards their learning targets.

Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and often use technology well to make lessons interesting. However, not all lessons provide work that challenges pupils sufficiently. Some marking of work is helpful but not all. The use of targets to help pupils know what they need to learn next is developing but pupils are not always aware of what these are. The curriculum is satisfactory and has the development of basic skills at its centre. Recent developments are linking subjects together to make them more interesting and relevant. A feature of this is 'theme days' such as the 'Great Fire of London Day', when pupils dressed in costume and took part in drama, dance, literacy and art activities. Pupils say that they really enjoy these types of days. The curriculum provided for the youngest pupils in the 'launch pad' (Foundation Stage) is satisfactory and gives pupils a firm foundation on which to build. Strong partnerships with other schools enhance provision, particularly in sport and the creative arts. Pupils are justly proud of their artistic achievements. The school enriches the curriculum well through an impressive range of educational visits and by inviting visitors into the school. This is enhanced by some interesting after-school activities and results in children enjoying and valuing their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and includes significant improvements to the learning environment and better support for pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills. A very positive ethos results in children's good behaviour and good personal development and well-being. Pupils' progress is tracked and teaching is evaluated soundly overall. A great deal of information is gathered and analysed but this is not always used to impact quickly enough on pupils' progress. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the work teachers plan for all groups of pupils, particularly girls and the more able, challenges them to achieve well and improve their standards, especially in writing.
- Improve consistency in the use of targets and the detail of marking so that all pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the use of information gathered about pupils' progress in order to have a consistent impact on raising standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school accurately evaluates achievement as satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with standards that are above average overall. They make satisfactory progress through each stage of their learning and finish Year 6 with above average standards overall. This represents satisfactory progress for the majority of pupils but in 2006 some, particularly the more able writers and girls, did not make the expected progress. Consequently, standards attained in 2006 were broadly average with satisfactory progress overall. The school identifies and helps pupils who are not making the expected progress, although the systems to do this are not yet consistently having the desired impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They have positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to do well. They say, 'It's a friendly place and everyone gets on well together.' This is reflected in their good behaviour and the care and support they show for each other, for example, when older pupils act as playground pals. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is broadly average and most pupils attend regularly. However, a significant minority of families take holidays in term time and this is a concern to the school. Pupils know how to keep safe and are well aware of the benefits of healthy eating and physical exercise. The good range of sporting activities contributes well to this and is reflected in the Activemark award. Pupils are proud of their school and willingly take on responsibilities as office helpers, school monitors and house captains. The school council gives pupils a good voice in decision making, particularly about improvements to the school environment, such as the recent purchase of an outdoor stage and seating equipment. Participation in events such as the Todmorden Agricultural Show, regular links with a school in Spain and fundraising for charity help pupils develop a good understanding of the wider community. Pupils leave the school as mature and confident individuals.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Strengths seen within lessons include good relationships, clear expectations of pupils and some good use of new technology to make teaching interesting. The skills of teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils who need extra help and some good teacher questioning elicits accurate responses from pupils. However, these strengths are not found consistently between classes and work is not always matched to pupils' different learning needs. As a result, the challenge provided for some pupils is not always as high as it could be and they do not achieve as well as they should. Teachers know how well pupils are learning in English, mathematics and science. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent. For example, some is detailed and helpful but not all.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. It provides a clear focus on basic skills and has particular strengths in art and sports. The school has revised its planning to link subjects together through themes and there are now more opportunities for pupils to take part in hands-on activities, particularly in history, art and design. Interactive whiteboards enhance curriculum provision and are used well in some lessons to engage, enthuse and motivate pupils and involve them actively in learning. Foundation Stage provision enables staff to develop pupils' skills through a variety of practical and stimulating hands-on activities that are underpinned by effective programmes to develop reading, writing and mathematics skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall with some good features. Pupils are well cared for in a happy and friendly environment. Relationships are good and pupils feel safe and secure. They say that, 'Teachers listen and help sort out your problems.' Child protection and all other checks to safeguard pupils' health, safety and well-being are firmly in place. The school responds at an early stage to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, involving other agencies when appropriate. As a result, these pupils are fully included in all activities and make satisfactory progress. Assessment is used to identify the needs of these pupils and to set them targets but is not always used to monitor their progress. Academic guidance is satisfactory, but pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work. The use of targets to help them know what they need to learn next is developing but pupils are not always aware of what these targets are.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is led and managed satisfactorily and has been particularly successful at creating a positive ethos and attitude to learning which results in pupils enjoying their work and learning. The work of subject leaders is developing satisfactorily and, as a consequence, they have a reasonable awareness of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. It is too early to judge the full impact on pupils' progress of recently planned improvements in teaching and the curriculum, including a focus on basic skills. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. It works well with parents, who are very supportive of its work and value the care and support it provides for their children. Governors fulfil their statutory obligations and demonstrate their high level of commitment to the school's work through visits and attendance at regular meetings. However, in their capacity as critical partners in school improvement, they are not yet sufficiently challenging in holding the school to account for pupils' progress.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 being so welcoming and friendly when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and your teachers about how well you are doing, and that helped us to form a clear view of your school.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory quality of education and it has some particular strengths. You enjoy coming to school and have many things to look forward to, such as visits, visitors and clubs. In lessons, you listen carefully to what your teachers have to tell you and you say you are never bored because learning is exciting and fun. This helps you to make satisfactory progress in your learning. You are polite, behave well and are kind and considerate to each other. Special jobs for the older pupils are an enjoyable way of helping everyone in school and you like the way the staff take care of you to make sure you are safe and happy. You know a lot about being healthy and staying safe and work hard to raise funds for different charities.

We have asked your teachers to keep a careful check on what you are doing in lessons and plan work to make sure you all do as well as you can, especially the girls and quick learners, and particularly in writing. When you have completed a piece of work, we would like your teachers to give you more advice so that you know what to do to make it even better.

Keep working hard and doing the best you can