

Castletown Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108792
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	288193
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Gianna Ulyatt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	382
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joan Wilson
Headteacher	Mr Robert Hennessey
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002
School address	Grange Road Castletown Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR5 3EQ
Telephone number	0191 5535210
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of above average size and the pupils come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. The majority live in the immediate area, in which there is significant social and economic disadvantage and where unemployment is high. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Skills on entry to the school are well below those expected of three-year-olds. The school offers extended services in the form of breakfast and after-school clubs.

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. There are outstanding features in pupils' personal development and the curriculum. Its success is due to the strong leadership of the headteacher, who has been instrumental in developing networks to share good practice, which is making a real difference to the curriculum and to standards. 'Every child, every moment, every achievement and every parent matters' encapsulates the school's ethos. Pupils thrive in the happy and caring atmosphere. Relationships are strong, staff are very good role models and each pupil is truly valued. As one parent wrote, 'The strong values of the pupils are second to none'. Pupils have a mature and sensible approach to life and are aware of their social responsibilities within school and in the wider community. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education and for their future economic well-being. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils show high levels of consideration for each other. They enjoy learning, listen attentively in lessons and cooperate well.

Standards are average and pupils achieve well. Children enter the school with skills and knowledge that are well below expectations for their age. The recent and significant improvements to the Foundation Stage have resulted in good provision and some outstanding teaching. Children, therefore, get off to a very good start in their early years and make good progress. In Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make good progress and their attainment is broadly average in reading and writing. In mathematics, it is well above average. Over a number of years, progress in lower Key Stage 2 was slow and pupils did not achieve as well as they should. This issue has been resolved and pupils in these year groups are now progressing well. Progress in upper Key Stage 2 has been consistently good and has ensured standards are maintained. A minority of pupils of above average ability do not achieve as well in English as they do in mathematics and science. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in both key stages, make satisfactory progress. However, some of them are not identified quickly enough. The school has recently introduced good systematic strategies to ensure earlier identification and better progress for these pupils.

Teaching and learning are good and most pupils make good progress in lessons. New learning is often delivered in practical ways, which interest and motivate pupils and ensure their understanding is secure. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss new ideas and this has a good impact on their speaking and listening skills. The new marking system and procedures for setting targets are helping pupils focus better on what they next need to think about. However, the use of assessment information and tracking data is not consistent across the school. In some lessons, the work is not matched tightly enough to some pupils' needs and progress slows. The outstanding curriculum inspires pupils, broadens their horizons and increases their love for learning. In the Foundation Stage, the very good curriculum offers children interesting opportunities to learn, both indoors and outside.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy provide strong leadership and share a clear vision with all staff and governors. The new collegiate approach to management means staff are becoming increasingly involved and responsible for bringing about improvements. Through regular monitoring, all are aware of what the school does well and what needs to be developed. Governors know the school well and are supportive and challenging in all respects. Self-evaluation is accurate and is used to inform the school improvement plan. The school has addressed the issues from the last inspection and has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and strategies implemented to support these pupils to ensure their good progress.
- Ensure assessment information and tracking systems are used consistently across the school so that all pupils make good progress, especially the more able pupils in English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is good.

- Skills on entry to the school are well below expectations, particularly in language. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in early literacy skills and mathematics. Attainment is, however, still below expectations by the time they enter Year 1.

In Key Stage 1, there is an improving trend and pupils at the end of Year 2 in the 2006 assessments reached average standards. These results reflect good achievement and school data indicate similar achievement for the current Year 2 pupils.

In the 2006 tests for 11-year-olds, standards were broadly average. This represents good achievement, based on the starting points for these pupils when they entered Year 3. Standards in mathematics were above average and in science they were average. In English, standards were slightly below average because too few pupils achieved at the higher level. The difference in attainment between girls and boys is directly linked to the greater number of girls with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

School data, supported by inspection evidence, for the current Year 6 pupils indicate similar levels of attainment to the 2006 results, but with better achievement in English. Although most pupils make good progress, some of those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in both key stages, could do better. The school has recently introduced systematic strategies to ensure better progress. The school now places stronger emphasis on improving writing in order to reduce the difference in attainment between English and other subjects. Current school data indicate that this is beginning to have a positive impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Whilst pupils' moral and social development is very good, their spiritual development is exceptional. Pupils are able to reflect on themselves as individuals within the local and global community. By sharing topics with pupils in Spain, Germany and China, they deepen their understanding of other cultures and celebrate similarities and differences. Pupils enjoy school very much and have very good attitudes to learning. Pupils feel secure because of the excellent relationships and the positive climate for learning that is evident throughout the school. This leads to good attendance and exceptional behaviour. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. As one pupil said, 'Our code of conduct makes things better. Without rules, school would be a mess.' Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and most take regular exercise. Attendance at after-school sporting activities is high. Older pupils take on responsibilities; such as, the Castletown Angels who look out for people who are in need of a friend. Pupils have high levels of self-confidence and work with partners and independently. Consequently, they have high

aspirations for themselves and are well prepared for the future. Many are ambitious enough to be thinking about going to university.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Throughout school, very good relationships instil pupils with confidence and encourage them to concentrate on their work. Explanations, demonstrations and instructions are very clear and effective in promoting good learning. The time spent in the classroom is used well because teachers encourage pupils to work to deadlines. Teachers question the pupils very effectively to promote discussions and to encourage them to think about their responses. As a consequence, the pupils are learning to express their ideas with increasing clarity. Pupils know exactly what they are going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. They have personal targets and are learning to make accurate self-assessments by using a 'traffic light' system.

The way teachers mark work helps the pupils understand how to improve. Classroom displays focus on key learning points, helping pupils consolidate their understanding. In upper Key Stage 2, assessments of pupils' learning are used well to set high expectations. Consequently, pupils are well challenged and well motivated to learn. However, where assessment is not used sufficiently well in planning, the work is not tightly matched to pupils' ability and progress slows. This is one of the reasons why some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities could do better. In the Foundation Stage, teaching is excellent and adults engage well with children, offering them many opportunities to improve their mathematical, literacy and speaking skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. The recent move towards a skills-based curriculum has ensured a better match of activities to learning styles, with many lessons being of a practical nature. Skills learned in one lesson are practised in other areas and for a real purpose. For example, pupils wrote letters to the police and local community expressing concern about cars speeding in the area. Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities provided for enriching and extending the curriculum during and beyond the normal school day. Experts are brought in for children to learn new skills, such as sign language and touch-typing. The school choir performs to a very high standard and is a real cause for celebration in school and the local community. Older pupils thoroughly enjoyed developing their awareness of health and safety through the Injury Minimisation Programme for Schools. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school for the way it develops self-confidence and skills for future economic well-being. Children develop the ability from an early age to work with partners and independently. Information and communication technology skills are well developed. The school has been proactive in developing partnerships and networks to share expertise and good practice in the interests of all pupils, making a real difference to their enjoyment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school provides a safe environment and places a high priority on the care and welfare of pupils. All statutory requirements are met, including those for child protection and risk assessments. Staff know their pupils well and are caring and supportive. Provision for vulnerable children is good. Mentors work with pupils in Year 6 and a nurture group provides additional support for pupils in the Foundation Stage. The school has developed systems to track pupils' progress but these are not yet used consistently across the school. Nevertheless, the school has recently introduced good strategies to identify and make provision for pupils who find learning difficult in order to raise achievement. Extended services are provided through a breakfast club and an out-of-school club. The school has good links with the secondary school and Year 6 pupils say they are looking forward to the next phase in their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The strong leadership team of headteacher and deputy provides thoughtful and clear direction for the work of the school. The school has maintained standards and the continued good progress despite extensive staffing difficulties. The headteacher has been instrumental in promoting strong relationships with the community, local businesses and international organisations to ensure that pupils' horizons are extended. There is a strong ethos of shared leadership, which involves staff at all levels in decision-making. The management of the school is good and senior staff are well trained to undertake their role. The team uses a variety of sources to analyse the school's strengths and weaknesses. New initiatives have been introduced enthusiastically, including changes to the curriculum and setting targets to help improve standards. The impact of their work is shown in the pupils' enthusiasm for school. The school improvement plan is good and areas for development are well rooted in the priorities identified through school self-evaluation. Governance is good. Governors are well informed and are closely involved in the work of the school. They support initiatives and challenge decisions when appropriate. They show a good awareness of standards and of pupils' personal development. Parents' overwhelming support for the school arises because they feel well respected and are kept fully informed. They are grateful for the wide range of extra activities the school provides for their pupils and for the courses run for parents.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
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	3

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Annex A

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	3
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

8 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castletown Primary School, Tyne and Wear, SR5 3EQ

My colleagues and I had a very pleasant time in your school recently. This was because you were so friendly, polite and welcoming. We had the most interesting conversations with you and you told us how much you like your school, your teachers and your headteacher. You are so lucky that all the adults in school work very hard to make education enjoyable for you. There is so much on offer through clubs and activities, both in school and after school. You all sing beautifully and the choir is stunning! I was particularly impressed by your ambitions to become doctors and lawyers.

You behave so well in lessons. You listen carefully, put forward your ideas well and try your best. This is one of the reasons why you are doing well. Your standards are getting better and the information on the classroom walls is helping improve your writing. I have asked the school to look very carefully at what you are capable of doing and to make sure that, in all classes, you have work to match your ability. This will help you all to make better progress and get better results in your tests. Most of you do well in mathematics, English and science but some of you who are more able do not get the higher levels in English. The school knows about this and is going to help you do better. You, in turn, need to work especially hard even when your tasks seem very difficult. In this way, your parents and teachers can be even more proud of you.

I know some of you find learning more difficult than others do. I have asked the school to continue to check out ways and means to help you more.

Thank you again for being so helpful and don't forget: keep working hard and always look ahead and upwards. The harder you work, the better your future chances in life.

Yours sincerely

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector