



Castle Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109081
Local Authority Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number 288274
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Jacqueline Ikin

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Newlands Road
School category	Community		Keynsham
Age range of pupils	4–11		Bristol BS31 2TS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0117 9864489
Number on roll (school)	215	Fax number	0117 9869831
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Reg Maule
		Headteacher	Nicola (Jen) Southall
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006	Inspection number 288274
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Castle Primary School is an average sized primary school. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is above average. The school is the designated school in its area for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and it has an above average number of these pupils. At the time of the inspection the school was without a permanent deputy headteacher and the headteacher had been in post for two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which has begun to improve as a result of the strong leadership of the headteacher. Staff, pupils and parents say that she has 'turned the school round'. A warm and welcoming atmosphere has been created in which everyone feels involved, trusted and valued. Pupils' personal development and well-being and the care and guidance they receive are good because of this. Well organised management systems have been put in place. Together with the headteacher's frank and business like approach they ensure that everyone is in no doubt about where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie and what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and teaching and learning are satisfactory. Within these judgements there are some things that the school does well and some things that need to be improved. Standards are below average but they are beginning to improve in mathematics and reading as a result of improved teaching methods. The school provides a lot of extra support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and these pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. However, some more able pupils do not achieve as much they should because the targets that are set for them are not high enough and there is not enough planning for their specific needs in lessons. There is also not enough attention given to equipping pupils with the broad vocabulary and command of standard English that they need to develop their ideas to a greater depth in speech and in writing across the curriculum.

Pupils take great pride in their school and grow in confidence because of good opportunities to take responsibility in its smooth running. These opportunities are not always given in lessons when some pupils are over dependent on adults for things they should be able to do for themselves. The school's recent work on its healthy schools' award has resulted in pupils having a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Visits to place of interest and visitors contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of learning. However, whilst the curriculum, including provision in the Reception class, is satisfactory not enough attention is given to helping pupils to apply their communication and problem solving skills across the curriculum.

There is a clear sense of purpose in the school, with staff and governors united in their determination to drive up standards. However, the leadership and the management of the school and its capacity to improve further are judged to be satisfactory rather than good because there has not been enough time for the school's actions to be fully effective for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of more able pupils by setting challenging targets and planning precisely for their particular needs in lessons.
- Improve pupils' skills in speaking and listening by increasing their vocabulary and knowledge of standard English.
- Improve whole-school planning to ensure that pupils make progress in the skills of independent learning, communication and problem solving across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When children enter the Reception class standards are much lower than those expected for children of a similar age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Although standards by the end of the Reception year and in the rest of the school are below average this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' low starting points on entry. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well but some more able pupils do not always do as well as they should. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their classmates. Standards at the school have begun to improve, most notably in mathematics, where staff training has resulted in a greater focus on addressing specific weaknesses in pupils' basic understanding, such as place value. Reading is beginning to improve because of the introduction of well planned opportunities for pupils to read with classroom assistants in small group situations. Writing is not improving to the same extent because pupils do not have the wide vocabulary and grammatical knowledge they need to express their ideas clearly. When boys enter the school their attainment is much lower than that of the girls. The school recognises this and is beginning to close the gap.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils thrive in the school's warm and supportive atmosphere. They get a good start in the Reception class where they learn to get on well with each other and enjoy learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and there are particular strengths in pupils' social and moral development. Pupils' pride in their school is very apparent as they take visitors around and they clearly enjoy all that it has to offer. They are fully involved in decision making processes through their work on the school council. They make a considerable contribution to the school community, for example by keeping an eye on more vulnerable pupils in the playground and through organising money raising events for charity or school improvements. Behaviour is good and most pupils have positive attitudes towards their work. However, some come to rely too much on adults for help in lessons and then do not develop the skills they need to tackle new work independently. Attendance is satisfactory. The school does all that it can to promote good attendance and when pupils are away it is usually because of legitimate health problems. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to keep safe and healthy and are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Throughout the school behaviour is well managed. Group reading sessions are beginning to help pupils make better progress. Pupils are keen to answer questions and contribute to whole-class discussions, particularly in mathematics where, as a result of recent work, they are developing the vocabulary to explain their mathematical ideas. However, there is insufficient emphasis on this in other areas of the curriculum. The school is well equipped with computers and interactive whiteboards, but insufficient use is made of them in lessons. Satisfactory attention is given to learning through play in the Reception class although the outdoor area is underdeveloped for this purpose. A satisfactory range of assessment systems is in place and these are used well to plan work which closely meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Not enough use is made of assessment information to set challenging targets and plan work for more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision is satisfactory and meets the needs of most pupils. There is a good range of strategies, including one-to-one support and specialised group work, to support the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Less attention is given to the needs of more able pupils. The school provides a good range of additional activities to extend the curriculum and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school. A good example of this is French, taught to pupils in Years 3 to 6. Satisfactory use is made of national guidance to ensure that pupils acquire basic subject knowledge. However, not enough attention is given to making purposeful links between subjects to develop pupils' communication and problem solving skills across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Rigorous health and safety and child protection procedures are in place. Pupils receive high quality pastoral care and guidance because of the very good knowledge that staff have of individual pupils and their families. Good procedures when children start school contribute to this. Pupils support each other well and speak positively about regular group sessions to show them how they can help those who are unhappy. The school has good links with outside agencies for when it needs to offer extra support to pupils. The use of marking and target setting to guide pupils' academic progress varies and, as a result, some pupils are not clear what their targets are. Parents are highly supportive of the school and appreciate the down-to-earth approach of the headteacher who listens carefully to their needs and is a familiar sight on the school playground at the beginning and end of each day.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is a particular strength. Achievement and standards have begun to improve because of her commitment and determination. A positive ethos based on mutual care and respect has been created in all aspects of the school's work. All members of the school community are fully consulted and involved. Systematic and well organised management systems are in place. Staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's work and their part in helping it to improve. Performance management is satisfactory and firmly linked to improving standards. Accurate monitoring and evaluation systems are much better than they were at the time of the last inspection. The senior management team is new and its role is developing satisfactorily. Governors carry out their work satisfactorily and appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that the school works within its budget.

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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	3
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	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?	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?	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.

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 for making us feel so welcome and showing us around when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn and play. We can see why you are so proud of your school and think that it gives you a sound education.

What we liked about your school

- Your headteacher is doing a good job in helping the school to get better and all the teachers are behind her in this.
- We think that the school council works well and that you do a lot to help the school run smoothly.
- You behave well and look after the school and each other well.
- The school takes good care of you and is interested in what you and your parents have to say.

What we think needs to be improved

- The way the school helps those of you who are able to reach higher standards.
- The way the school helps you to develop your speaking skills.
- The opportunities that you are given to develop the skills of independent learning, problem solving and communication in all subjects of the curriculum.