

Castle Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116083
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	290414
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Sinclair

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs D Fletcher-Lance
Headteacher	Mr K Patterson
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Castle Street Portchester Fareham PO16 9QQ
Telephone number	02392 375324
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils join this larger than average primary school with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with expectations except for their literacy skills, which are less well developed. They come from a wide range of backgrounds some of which face particular social and economic challenges.

The school has been awarded enhanced Healthy Schools status, Activemark, FA Primary School development status and the Artsmark (silver) award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Castle primary is a satisfactory school with significant strengths in its curricular enrichment. The dedicated headteacher has created a very caring ethos enabling pupils to become confident, happy learners. The majority of parents express very positive views of the school and have great confidence in the strong home-school partnership. As one parent commented, 'All the staff are courteous and helpful and any problems are dealt with quickly and professionally'.

Children in the Foundation Stage are well cared for enabling them to settle well into school routines. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress across the areas of learning so that most are working within the goals expected of them on entry to Year 1, except in their writing, which is below expectations.

Across the rest of school, pupils make satisfactory if uneven progress to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. The main weakness is pupils' achievement in writing across Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with good teaching in Key Stage 1 and Year 6. Across the school, lessons are well organised and managed. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning and relationships are good. As a result, pupils behave well and are keen to learn. However, a small minority of lessons in Key Stage 2 lack challenge and the pace is slow so that pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school, are keen to learn and behave well. A particular strength is their involvement in the 'Rights, Respect and Responsibilities' agenda, which is helping them to consider the impact of their behaviour and attitudes on others in a positive and constructive manner. There is sound curricular planning. Enrichment is excellent. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities including French, which starts in the Foundation Stage, learning a musical instrument in Year 4, and Year 6's involvement in a project with a local newspaper. Parents speak enthusiastically of their children's involvement in these activities. Good procedures for pupils' welfare, health and safety ensures pupils feel safe and confident of adult support should they have any worries. Monitoring of pupils' progress is improving so that the school can now identify pupils underachieving quickly and put in the necessary support. This is already improving rates of progress. All pupils have individual targets for literacy and numeracy, which they know. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, with strong pastoral leadership ensuring pupils' good personal development. Senior staff are aware that improvements need to be made in order to accelerate pupils' rates of progress in writing and ensure more even progress for pupils across Key Stage 2. They have already put strategies in place to address this. However, monitoring of teaching lacks the necessary rigour to ensure good improvement in its quality. Overall, there is a commitment to improvement from the senior team, with clear action plans for improving writing, and a good team ethos among the staff. The school has a sound capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of the children. Role-play areas link well with the creative curriculum and support early literacy skills and personal and social development. This was seen clearly, when children re-enacted the story of Cinderella. Teaching ensures basic

phonic and numeracy skills are taught soundly, and sometimes well. However, an overdependence on worksheets and limited opportunities for independent writing hamper their overall progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the strategies put in place to improve writing are rigorously monitored in order to fully address current weaknesses.
- Improve the rate of pupils' progress by ensuring teachers consistently challenge pupils to do better and by raising the pace of lessons.
- Ensure senior leaders develop greater rigour in their monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and involve subject leaders more fully in this process, in order to improve the consistency of teaching across the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average overall. Achievement is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory across the rest of the school.

Over time, standards in Year 2 have been just above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. This represents good progress for these pupils based on their prior attainment. Pupils currently in Year 2 are continuing this good progress due to good teaching and good provision across the key stage.

At Key Stage 2, although standards have remained broadly average at the end of Year 6, there has been a declining picture in terms of pupil achievement, particularly in English. This is mainly due to weaknesses in pupils' writing skills and uneven progress across the key stage, which senior staff did not immediately detect. The school is now fully aware of the situation and is taking action. This year, the school expects to have a much higher number of pupils attaining Level 4 in writing due to the actions it has taken to bring about improvement and the good progress pupils are making in Year 6 due to good teaching. However, some residual underachievement remains across Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans due to the additional support they get.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development is reflected in their enjoyment, positive attitudes and good behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils are happy to come to school. Pupils say they feel safe from bullying and know they can get help if they have any worries. They particularly appreciate the 'Friendship Stop', which was introduced at the suggestion of the School Council. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils relate well to each other and work happily as members of a group. In assemblies, they learn to explore moral issues and enjoy the opportunities for prayer and reflection. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They are clear about the importance of eating fruit and vegetables and taking exercise. They make a positive contribution to the school community through, for example, the school council, their responsibilities as prefects and their fund raising activities. Pupils' preparation

for their economic well-being is satisfactory with strengths in learning enterprise skills. This is exemplified well in projects such as the Year 6 News Week, where pupils spend time learning about journalism and information technology at the premises of the local newspaper.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers plan lessons well, have good relationships with pupils and mainly match work well to their needs. Consequently, pupils enjoy lessons and are keen and motivated to learn. This occasionally lapses when lessons do not engage their interest or the pace is slow. Additionally, not all teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils or develop their knowledge and understanding, which slows progress. Teachers are working hard to improve pupils' writing skills with an increased emphasis on correct punctuation and spelling. This was particularly noticeable in some good written work in Year 3. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning through their support for small groups within the class. In some lessons, very high expectations and excellent planning and organisation lead to outstanding learning for pupils. This was obvious in an excellent lesson in Year 6 where all groups were fully challenged and highly motivated to give of their best. Effective use is made of whiteboards to enliven learning. Teachers are starting to use an improved method of marking, which includes praise and clear pointers for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is soundly planned to ensure continuity in pupils' learning. The school is working on improving planning for writing at Key Stage 2 to ensure pupils develop their competency as writers more evenly across the key stage and that they use writing more effectively across the curriculum. There is good provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the school. The current project for Year 6 pupils, which involves producing a newspaper, requires extensive use of their ICT skills. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy lifestyles and personal safety through, for example, involvement in the Healthy Schools award and a drug awareness programme developed with the local police.

A significant strength of the curricular provision is the imaginative and varied enrichment activities, which engage pupils' interests and contribute well to their personal development. For example, pupils in Year 4 are all learning to play keyboards, samba or a brass instrument and pupils in Years 3 to 6 have an annual residential trip.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe in a secure, supportive environment because their teachers and all adults know them well. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties or disabilities are identified at an early stage and are well supported. The school works effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure their needs are fully met. Policies and procedures to safeguard pupils and ensure their well-being, health and safety are robust.

Although the school has tracked pupil progress for some time, it has only recently used this information effectively to ensure that all pupils at risk of underachieving get well-focused

support. Pupils have individual targets for literacy and numeracy and most are clear about their content. However, some targets are not written in a child-friendly manner so pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher together provide good pastoral leadership and have created a good staff team. This is exemplified in the happy, positive and supportive atmosphere which is evident throughout the school.

Self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school has recently been confronted with some weaknesses in pupil achievement, which it has now started to address. Clear analysis by senior staff, coupled with detailed action plans, has enabled the school to target its resources accurately so that improvements are beginning to take place.

Subject leaders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in terms of improvement planning for their subjects and monitor their subjects through analysis of data and work sampling. However, they rarely observe lessons so do not have a complete overview of their overall impact. Additionally, monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff, although satisfactory, is not sufficiently evaluative to promote effective improvements in teaching.

The school's tracking system now clearly identifies any pupils who are underachieving. The school has made good use of its resources to ensure these pupils are given focused small group work with an experienced teacher to make up any shortfall in their learning.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and successfully act as 'critical friends.' They have been proactive in holding the school to account with regard to the weaknesses in writing and are fully involved in monitoring the actions now being taken to improve it. They contribute well to the school's effective financial management.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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

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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

04 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Primary School, Fareham, PO16 9QQ

I am writing to tell you how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed chatting to you and were pleased to learn how much you enjoy school and the opportunities it offers. We think that Castle Primary is a satisfactory school.

Here are some of the things we like about your school:

- you make good progress in Years 1 and 2
- you enjoy school, work hard and are keen to learn
- you are well cared for and in turn are kind and caring to each other
- you thoroughly enjoy all the after school clubs, visits, French, music and sporting activities that are on offer.

Every school has something that could be better, so this is what we have asked your school to concentrate on to help you learn more:

- improve your skills in writing at Key Stage 2 so that you make better progress
- make sure that senior staff check teaching better to help more of it to be good
- improve the progress you make by ensuring you are given harder work that makes you think more and that the pace of lessons is increased so you can learn more. I am sure you are up to the challenge!

You can do your bit by improving your spelling and punctuation.

With best wishes for your future success,

Janet Sinclair

Lead Inspector