

Castle Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105150
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308780
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Morey
Headteacher	Mrs S Curley
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Castle Hill Street Tonge Moor Bolton Lancashire BL2 2JT
Telephone number	01204 332766
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Introduction

The school was inspected by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Castle Hill Primary School serves a relatively disadvantaged urban area in Bolton. The proportions of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. Nearly all pupils are White British and there are no pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. On entry to Nursery the children's attainment is well below what is typical for their age.

A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science; in subject leadership; and in pupils' attendance levels.

The school's view that its overall effectiveness is inadequate is accurate. However, since the appointment of the headteacher in September 2007 improvements are evident and, despite the low standards, parents have confidence in the school. The leadership team is beginning to work together well and there are some policies that are being used consistently, for example in relation to behaviour management, and a shared positive ethos throughout the school. The school has a clear view of its strengths and is tackling its weaknesses methodically. The positive changes this school year in pupils' progress and behaviour, together with the headteacher's clear vision and the strong support she receives from governors and her key staff, show that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Children progress satisfactorily in the Foundation Stage, but standards on entry to Year 1 are below average. The school's results in the national tests and from teacher assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2007 were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. They have been so for a number of years, accurately reflecting pupils' underachievement. A weakness in the use of information from assessment to match learning activities to pupils' needs is a key reason for the low standards and pupils' underachievement. Another factor has been the inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The newly appointed headteacher has taken decisive action to address both these issues. As a result, there are clear signs of improvement in pupils' progress. Lessons are being planned to meet pupils' needs. Subject leaders are focused on raising standards and are clear about their roles.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they could turn to a member of staff if they have any concerns. They are aware of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. The school's strenuous efforts to improve pupils' behaviour have been successful and behaviour is satisfactory. Attendance is below average. The school sees working with pupils and parents to raise attendance as a key priority and has appointed an additional learning mentor to tackle this. The curriculum is satisfactory with a clear focus on developing pupils' basic skills. Previous weaknesses in the curriculum contributed to pupils' underachievement. Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of activities and visits. For example, they talk with enthusiasm about a recent visit to a science museum. A satisfactory level of care, support and guidance is provided. Safeguarding procedures have been tightened. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively and the information gathered is beginning to be used well to make decisions about how best to meet pupils' needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has made real, tangible changes in a short time swiftly taking appropriate action. She has ensured that the school's assessment systems provide an accurate view of how well pupils are doing. The impact of her actions is very evident, for example in the improvements made in pupils' behaviour and in the improved quality of teaching and learning. The quality of leadership and management at other levels is also improving, but not all managers are focusing their work sharply enough on raising standards. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's effectiveness and support the

headteacher in the action being taken to improve standards. They are keen to know, for example, not only what the problems are but how they can be solved. The school recognises that there is still a lot of work ahead but a new school development plan is giving sharp focus to the drive for improvement. Capacity to take the school forward is satisfactory, but currently the school does not provide value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start in Nursery with knowledge and skills well below those typical for their age, with particular weaknesses in social, language and communication, and mathematical skills. Satisfactory induction procedures ensure that the children settle well into school routines and develop good relationships with adults and with each other. Though they make satisfactory progress overall throughout the Foundation Stage, few have reached the expected goals by the time they begin Year 1. Teaching overall is satisfactory. The school has recently introduced systems to enable staff to assess and record children's progress accurately. However, the information is not used effectively enough to ensure that independent activities consistently develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills. Regular and focused sessions to help children learn letters and sounds are improving their progress in early reading and writing skills. However, the lack of planning and resourcing for children to learn outdoors narrows the curriculum and restricts opportunities for children to learn as effectively as they should.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that children in the Foundation Stage have full access to an outdoors curriculum.
- Ensure that all leaders and managers are firmly and effectively focused on driving up standards.
- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are well below national averages in English, mathematics and science and pupils' achievement is inadequate. While underachievement is evident, there are clear signs of improvement. This is because improved target setting for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is enabling work to be matched more closely to pupils' needs and providing them with better challenge. However, standards and achievement are not yet good enough because these improvements are still to embed fully. An increasing number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are being identified. While additional support for these pupils is being provided, it is too early to see the impact and they too are underachieving. In recent years, the school's overall targets lacked challenge. Targets have been revised to more realistic levels for 2008. The school has compelling evidence to show that standards in English and science are improving slowly; in mathematics standards are improving more quickly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. The majority of pupils have a positive attitude to school and enjoy the opportunities provided for them to take responsibility, for example operating the overhead

projector during assemblies. Pupils say they like school but, despite the school's efforts, too many do not attend on a regular basis. Pupils say there are few instances of bullying and are very clear what to do if it does occur. Behaviour has improved and is satisfactory. As one pupil said, 'It is now under control.' Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school and would know who to turn to if they had a problem. Their knowledge about adopting healthier lifestyles is developing well and they know that regular exercise is important. Pupils also know about the importance of eating healthy foods in maintaining their physical well-being. They have recently consulted with the school's caterers with a view to providing healthy snacks. There are satisfactory links with the local community that help to promote social skills. Pupils are being given more opportunities to make decisions about how to improve their school community. For example, they are currently visiting a variety of schools to get ideas for developing the playground. Pupils have a sound awareness of major world faiths but are not so well informed about the diverse cultures in their own town. Low academic standards mean that pupils are not prepared well enough for their future lives and the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons because teachers are beginning to use information from assessment to ensure the right level of challenge. Where teaching is most effective, teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and the timing of activities keeps the pupils involved. Staff are using effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour so that lessons run smoothly and learning is not disrupted. Staff know the pupils well and the level of care shown for their personal needs is good. In some lessons the work is not challenging enough for the more able pupils. The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent. In some classes teachers have low expectations with regard to how pupils should present their work. Increasingly effective use is being made of classroom assistants to support the work done in class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is a satisfactory range of activities that enrich the curriculum and help pupils to develop their personal and social skills. These include a variety of clubs, a residential visit and the teaching of French and Spanish. Previous weaknesses in curriculum planning contributed to pupils' underachievement throughout the school. The school has recognised the need to put more emphasis on speaking and listening activities, particularly with the older pupils, to develop their skills in English. All pupils are provided with activities that are firmly focused on developing subject-specific skills. Relevant links between subjects have been made and pupils say that they find lessons more interesting and enjoyable than they were. The new planning incorporates visits to places of interest associated with pupils' current work, for example to local museums and galleries.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The attention to pupils' personal welfare is good and required safeguarding procedures are in place. Staff have a good understanding of issues such as child protection and are vigilant to

ensure pupils' welfare. Below average attendance has started to be tackled but it remains an issue. The school has ensured an effective and consistent approach to behaviour management that, in a relatively short period, has brought about improvement in pupils' behaviour. Parents are mostly pleased with the attention their children receive and are right in their view that the school takes good personal care of their children. The school has satisfactory procedures to meet the pastoral needs of vulnerable pupils. Every effort is taken to meet the needs of the small number of pupils with physical disabilities. The school recently considerably improved its procedures to support pupils' academic progress by introducing regular rigorous assessments. This has already proved to be useful by highlighting additional pupils who need extra support. However, the system is still in its infancy and the data are not used consistently enough to be fully effective. There is some evidence of pupils being involved in target setting but this practice is not consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and governing body are taking appropriate action to improve the quality of provision and pupils' achievements. The recently appointed headteacher quickly recognised that the school needed additional help and it has benefited from valuable support and guidance from the local authority. The evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and staff and governors are raising their aspirations for the school. The headteacher's clear vision is firmly focused on raising standards. Targeted actions to improve the quality of leadership and management are beginning to make a difference; for example, the establishment of a regular system to monitor, assess and evaluate the quality of learning has already identified areas for improvement. Assessment procedures have been improved enabling pupils' progress to be tracked more accurately and challenging targets set for groups and individuals. However, the headteacher and governors recognise that many of the actions taken since the headteacher's appointment remain at an early stage of implementation. Moreover, not all senior and middle managers have the experience and expertise to contribute fully to the actions for improvement. The improvements in pupils' behaviour have helped to create a sound ethos for learning and raised pupils' levels of interest in school. The governing body is satisfactorily fulfilling its range of roles and responsibilities. Recent new governor appointments have helped to build better capacity with the additional expertise being put to good use in challenging the school to make the improvements required. Nevertheless, there has not been sufficient improvement since the previous inspection.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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	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	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Castle Hill Primary School, Bolton, BL2 2JT

We are writing to you to thank you for your help during our visit to your school and to share with you our judgements about it. We were impressed by how friendly you are, not just with us, but most importantly with each other. You behave and work hard. It was lovely to see how proud some of you were to receive certificates from the school for doing your very best.

We agree with you that your headteacher and teachers are very caring and willingly help you if you have a problem or personal issue. The younger children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle well into school life. Your school council members are working very hard to come up with sensible ideas to improve the playground. It is good to see that many of you know what you need to do to be safe and keep healthy and fit. Although we were pleased about these things, we found that at the moment your school is not as effective as it should be. Consequently, it has been given a Notice to Improve. This means that inspectors will visit your school again in the near future to check how well it is doing. We have asked your school to improve some things to make your work even better.

- To make sure that all of you achieve the best you can in English, mathematics and science.
- To provide younger children in the Nursery and Reception classes with better opportunities to develop their skills outdoors.
- To make sure that all subjects are led well and that if you are not making the progress you should, something is done about it.

There is one other very important area that we would like you and your parents to help the school to improve and that is your attendance. Please do your very best to come to school regularly.

All the very best for the future.