

Castleford Half Acres Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108238
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309630
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Carmen Markham

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	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Judy Box
Headteacher	Mrs Mandy Pickles
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	Temple Street Castleford West Yorkshire WF10 5RE
Telephone number	01977 723010
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school draws pupils from an area of varied social and economic advantage, although the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school provides before- and after-school care as well as a family learning programme; these were not inspected at this time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Castleford Half Acres Junior and Infant School is a good school with many outstanding features. It provides outstanding care, pastoral support and equality of opportunity for all its pupils. The outstanding progress the school has made since its last inspection is identified by parents who are delighted with the quality of care and education their children receive. Typically, parents write, 'The improvement and successes in school have been driven by the enthusiastic and energetic headteacher and her dedicated staff who provide a happy environment where children become enthusiastic to learn and try new things with confidence.'

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding and are accelerating improvement and the rate of pupils' achievement. The headteacher and senior leaders continually review the progress of all initiatives and actions to bring about improvement and meet challenging targets. They identify strengths and areas for development accurately, enabling the school to provide good value for money. All staff are part of a team providing good quality teaching and learning. Their work is closely monitored to ensure school policy is delivered consistently. The governors and the headteacher help to ensure that their vision for the school is delivered by making very astute staff appointments. Staff are supported well and helped to improve their skills. The headteacher, together with the deputy headteacher, is not afraid to embrace innovation where it will meet the needs of pupils. This is clearly exemplified in the development of the Key Stage 1 Unit that continues some of the methodology of the Foundation Stage.

The achievement of pupils overall is good. From well below expected skills on entry to Nursery, they make good progress so that by the end of Year 2 their skills are broadly average. By Year 6, pupils continue to achieve well and normally attain standards a little above the national average in English, mathematics and science. However, the very able Year 6 group of 2007 achieved standards well above the national average and made very good progress. The school acknowledges that standards in writing are not good enough by the end of Year 2. The school has introduced a good range of strategies to develop pupils' speaking and thinking skills to address this aspect of its work. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations in terms of pupils' written presentation, which throughout the school lacks care and attention. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress because their needs are speedily identified and they receive good support. The outstanding behaviour of pupils, the excellent tracking of their progress and the identification of those in need of additional help all contribute to the steadily rising standards. This sustained improvement through the excellent leadership demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity to improve.

Another strength of the school is pupils' outstanding personal development, a direct result of the excellent provision made by staff to support, care and guide pupils. The school works hard to involve parents to support their children's learning with specific workshops and challenges. Pupils grow quickly in maturity as staff make firm demands of them to promote their independence from the Foundation Stage onwards. By Year 6, they are highly effective members of the school community and the wider world beyond school and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Relationships are of the highest order and cement the harmonious atmosphere that percolates through school. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is good because teachers plan well to meet their needs. The outstanding curriculum motivates and interests them because it is relevant to their experience and interests. It takes good account of the needs of boys in order to help them perform as well as the girls. Pupils have a strong voice and feel that they are involved in ideas and decisions that affect them and help improve

the school. They are extremely well prepared for their move to secondary school and have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter the Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding that are well below average compared to the national expectations for 3-year-olds. Their attainment is particularly low in personal and social development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics and creative development. However, they make good progress overall as most are working within the expected levels for their age by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children make excellent progress in the development of their personal and social skills. Their attainment in knowledge and understanding of the world, particularly information and communication technology (ICT) and construction, is strong although their skills of writing and calculation are not as well developed. The newly appointed Foundation Stage leader is demonstrating the skills of very good leadership and management and there have been rapid improvements in provision. Children receive good quality teaching and learning experiences. Assessment is thorough and children who need extra support are quickly identified and helped. Activities are well planned to develop knowledge and basic skills. This ensures that the needs of all children are met. Effective classroom organisation provides a safe and happy learning environment that is well resourced. There is well planned provision for the transfer of children into the Key Stage 1 Unit. Relationships are strong. Children work and play happily together, follow school routines sensibly and enjoy the opportunity to participate in joint activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by the end of Year 2.
- Raise teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' presentation of their written work in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their well below average starting points pupils make good progress across the school. Standards in Key Stage 1 overall are average and this represents good progress from their starting points. However, in Years 1 and 2 progress is slower in writing where standards are below average. The school recognises this and has put in place a number of innovative strategies to enable pupils to develop their speaking skills so that their writing can be improved. In 2007 the very able pupils in Year 6 made very good progress, achieving standards well above the national average and building very well on the starting points they entered Year 3 with. More typically since 2003, standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 have risen and have consistently been above average. Here, English is a real strength as standards in writing are well above average. This is because teachers know their pupils well and successfully challenge them to achieve demanding targets. However, pupils' presentation of work could be improved. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy their time at school enormously and this reflects in their above average attendance and very good levels of punctuality. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary as they work in classrooms,

move around school or play outside. They concentrate extremely well in lessons and respond effectively to the consistently high expectations made of them. They show particularly well developed levels of maturity as they work with classmates during lessons. Older pupils provide excellent role models for younger children in school. They readily accept responsibility and contribute very well to improve the quality of school life. For example, trained peer supporters work in pairs to make the playground a more positive place. Active school councillors demonstrate how democracy works and enable all pupils to have a real voice in the school. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key strength here. Respect, care, tolerance and kindness all embody pupils' responses as they go about their daily work. Pupils raise funds for the less fortunate, entertain local residents and join in local and overseas projects. Pupils adopt increasingly healthy lifestyles as a result of all the guidance they receive on fitness and diet. They actively choose healthy meals and participate with enthusiasm in physical activities. Their increasingly strong literacy, numeracy, technology and thinking skills equip them very well for future success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate a strong commitment to improve pupils' learning. Adults use questioning very well to clarify pupils' understanding and consolidate newly learned information. Classrooms and shared areas offer much creative flair and inventiveness in order to stimulate pupils' interest, capture their imaginations and absorb good models of the English language. This is particularly useful for engaging boys more readily in their learning. The extensive use of data ensures teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' starting points and achievements. This helps staff set pupils' work with the correct level of challenge. Good, clear marking and feedback helps pupils to understand the progress they are making in relation to their targets and this drives them on to work hard in lessons. Teachers involve pupils well to model the correct answers in lessons and this enhances pupils' self-esteem. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, ensuring that the final parts of lessons consolidate pupils' learning well. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good, the pace of learning slows because the explanations pupils get are not always clear enough. Teachers and support staff work well together to support lower attaining pupils and those with specific needs. These pupils are well included in all activities and make progress at a rate equal to their peers. Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. All staff in school maintain consistently high expectations of pupils in terms of their response and behaviour. These are always exemplary and ensure pupils concentrate well and persevere with tasks. Even so, teachers' expectations of pupils' written presentation are not always high enough. Parents appreciate the work of the school with comments such as, 'The school provides a good level of teaching and takes into account individual learning abilities.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum makes a substantial contribution to the development of pupils' skills and their enjoyment of learning. As a result partly of this contribution, standards are rising and attendance is improving. Most pupils are well engaged in their learning because teachers plan interesting lessons and topics. The innovation of the Key Stage 1 Unit, where play continues to support learning, is very successful in ensuring smooth transition from the Foundation Stage and enables

pupils to apply newly learned skills. There is an emphasis on thinking and speaking to help develop writing capability. Group discussions and learning approaches, such as philosophy for children, support pupils' development very well and encourage them to think through problems for themselves. The improved science curriculum emphasises practical science and standards have subsequently improved. The popular mathematics challenge, run in partnership with parents, helps pupils to acquire the knowledge they need to underpin their developing skills in the subject. Provision for music and art is very good. The school has introduced the teaching of French in Years 3 and 4 and pupils' enjoyment of the subject is clear from discussions with them. ICT has a central place in the curriculum and is very well supported by an improving range of resources. There is excellent provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education and this is having a very positive impact on pupils' personal development. Visits, visitors and a good range of out-of-school clubs and activities strengthen pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Adults show pupils how to care for others and respect them at all times. Impressive induction arrangements ensure pupils settle quickly in school. Transfer to secondary school is equally well handled. Parents comment that their children 'love coming to school because it is friendly and everyone cares for them'. There are excellent systems in place to safeguard pupils and to ensure their health, safety, and general and emotional well-being. Pastoral support is an outstanding strength of the school. The school works very well with outside agencies to provide the right levels of skill and expertise to support the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Lunchtime, ancillary and administrative staff are well trained and have high expectations of pupils who hold them in warm regard. The school assesses and monitors pupils' progress meticulously. Staff use this information when they plan together and to let pupils know how to improve. Staff quickly identify any difficulties and provide appropriate support so that pupils progress well. Pupils of all ages mix seamlessly and support their buddies' academic and personal development very well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is a dedicated and inspirational leader who has worked very hard to bring about improvement in the school. She has appointed an experienced team of senior and middle managers. Together with good governors, they provide outstanding leadership and management and firm direction. They are inspired by their vision of combining the Every Child Matters agenda and the improving standards agenda into a single strategy to enable all children to reach their full potential. The leadership team knows the school's strengths and weaknesses very well because monitoring is thorough and systematic. Therefore, appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified and a full range of strategies has been implemented effectively. This has successfully led to improvements in all aspects of the school's work. The new policy of pairing teachers to enable them to plan together and team teach, when appropriate, has improved the quality of teaching. Teachers have increasing opportunities to benefit from sharing good practice, different ideas and resources. Procedures to assess and monitor pupils' progress and identify challenging targets that pupils and parents understand are a significant development and have enabled standards to rise. Although the school evaluated the performance of the leadership and management team as good, the high quality and impact

of strategic planning and the work of well informed, challenging governors confirms that the work of this team is outstanding.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for making us so welcome in your school. You helped us to find our way around the school and we enjoyed looking at the beautiful displays of your work. We also enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your school council and the work you do in lessons. We were very pleased to see that your behaviour is excellent, you respect each other and visitors, and you take very good care of your school.

We think that your headteacher and the staff all work hard to make your school very special. We judge it to be a good school with some things that are excellent. The staff look after you very well and most of you feel safe and happy in school. You do well in lessons and make good progress because your teachers plan your lessons carefully so you all have work that suits you. They also make sure that they involve you in a lot of interesting things so that you can practise new skills.

As you all behave so well you are able to listen and learn. You know that 'yippy yellow' stands for things you have learnt and done well and that 'green for growth' means that you have more to do to improve your work. You also know how to stay healthy and safe and make the most of all school activities. We noticed that a lot of you attend extra music sessions during and after school. You attend school regularly and arrive on time so that you do not miss any lessons.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school can improve. We have asked your school to help you to improve your writing in Years 1 and 2 so that you can write stories and explain your ideas clearly. The school has already started to help you to do this by asking you more questions to encourage you to speak more and describe your ideas better. Some of your written work is untidy and hard to read so we have asked your teachers to help you to improve this. You can help by taking lots of care to make your writing neater.