

Castle Batch Community Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109135 |
| Local Authority | North Somerset |
| Inspection number | 309892 |
| Inspection dates | 28–29 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Jonathan Palk HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 427 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | John Flannigan |
| Headteacher | Robin Strawbridge |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 January 2004 |
| School address | Rawlins Avenue Worle Weston-super-Mare BS22 7FN |
| Telephone number | 01934 514552 |
| Fax number | 01934 522907 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Castle Batch is a large primary school. Most pupils are White British although there are a small number from other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need for their learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. Children start school in Reception with skills and abilities that are generally in line with those expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, where its mission to develop 'happy, confident children learning to learn' is clearly realised. One parent captured the essence of the school when writing, 'Children are respected and encouraged, and love learning.' The dedication of staff and the high quality of relationships between pupils make it an exciting place to work and learn. Parents are extremely pleased with all that the school offers.

The personal development of the pupils is outstanding and is one of the key strengths of the school. Excellent provision helps all the pupils develop self-confidence, have pride in their work and tackle lessons with a 'can do' attitude. The good curriculum helps them understand the importance of keeping healthy and staying safe and gives them excellent opportunities to learn important life skills, such as working together and developing as independent thinkers. A particularly effective aspect of the school is the way it has built its curriculum around themes that motivate pupils and challenge their problem-solving skills and computing skills. This is preparing them well for the future.

Most pupils achieve well although standards are average. In the main, this is because not enough of the more able pupils go on to reach above average standards. Recent changes in assessment procedures have made the school much more aware of who these pupils are and good steps have been taken to check on their progress more regularly. Teaching is good, with some exemplary practice that is shared around the school. The well-planned and exciting topics and regular use of computers is motivating all. Pupils are encouraged to think and to work out solutions for themselves. As a result, they make good progress in lessons. A good track is kept on all pupils' progress in lessons and the teaching assistants make an outstanding contribution in this respect. Teachers adjust tasks so that they are better matched to the range of abilities but more able pupils are not consistently given harder work.

Pupils are offered excellent care, guidance and support. Pastoral care is of the highest order. There are very effective systems to ensure that the pupils feel safe and have their views taken into account. The organisation of the learning for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables staff and pupils to know their needs and this contributes to their excellent personal development. The very good provision for activities at playtime and an excellent range of clubs help pupils keep fit, play harmoniously and learn to cooperate.

Leadership and management are good. The school's self-evaluation is perceptive and reflects robust monitoring of provision. Managers at all levels, including governors, work as a cohesive team and they are creative in making plans that are rapidly improving provision and raising achievement. Managers understand the importance of evaluating their plans. There is a lack of clarity in the terminology in the school development plan that makes it less easy to monitor the school's progress at a glance. The school demonstrates a good capacity to reflect and constantly continue improving.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Most children make good progress from a typical range of starting points. The high quality of leadership and management in the Foundation Stage ensures successful learning by those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Careful planning of interesting and creative activities that take account of children's different needs, coupled with excellent teaching, have led to

rapid learning gains. Adults continuously and comprehensively assess how well children are doing as a result of the activities provided. The information gained is used well to provide appropriate challenges for different needs inside and outside the classrooms. As a result, most children are achieving the expected learning goals by the start of Year 1, with many achieving above that. All areas of learning are covered thoroughly. The environment is stimulating, calm and orderly. Excellent attention is paid to children's personal development, ensuring that they behave extremely well, treat each other kindly and work extremely well with each other and adults. The very good opportunities for children to learn about others are managed sensitively and with respect for others' feelings. Their welfare is promoted very well and all requirements are met.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the challenge for more able pupils in lessons.
- Establish measurable targets for judging the effects of the actions taken to improve provision and raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievements across the school are good. All pupils make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and towards becoming effective learners. Progress in lessons is consistently good because of the recent improvements in teaching techniques. This is a more positive picture than the satisfactory progress made by all pupils in recent years. Pupils have made rapid progress in their use and understanding of information and communication technology (ICT) and this contributes very well to their progress. Whilst standards overall are average, there are some well above average standards in writing at the top end of the school. The significant group of pupils in the school with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities makes good progress because of the way the school organises their learning and the careful account taken of their needs. However, a significant minority of the more able pupils are not always given hard enough work and so are not reaching above average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. They are wonderful ambassadors for their school and they make a real contribution, through their work as 'Batch Buddies' and working with those who find difficulties in learning, to the welfare of others. Attendance is good and continues to improve. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and residential stays and social development is outstanding. Their spiritual and cultural development is equally strong. Pupils reflect on many issues and on their own learning. They show a high level of moral awareness in their support for charities and behaviour towards one another. Awareness of other cultures is very good because of links, such as those with schools in Wolverhampton and Ghana, and visits to the local mosque. They make good choices about choosing fruit at break times and take regular exercise. The school council takes its responsibilities very seriously and works hard to ensure that pupils make a significant contribution to their own and to the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned well and teachers successfully work in teams to share good practice and develop new ideas. Teachers use their expertise well to motivate pupils to learn. Activities are varied and based on a careful assessment of pupils' needs. High expectations and good management are common features of typical lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, show positive attitudes towards their work and generally make good progress. Teachers use the skills and expertise of support staff very well to enhance learning, not just for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but also for other ability groups. Some lessons are exemplary. However, the pace and challenge provided for the more able pupils are sometimes unsatisfactory. More consistent monitoring of pupils' work and progress since the last inspection means that pupils know better how to improve their work and develop their key skills for learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has taken care to reshape the curriculum so that it provides an exciting topic approach to learning. Teachers successfully bring literacy, numeracy and ICT into many lessons, reinforcing pupils' skills and adding to their enjoyment. The use made of the local environment, visits to places of historic and geographical interest and residential experiences is extensive and enriches the curriculum. It also makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development and cultural awareness. The school has extended the curriculum by introducing French and German. This is adding significantly to pupils' opportunities in the future. There is good provision for pupils identified as able and talented outside the daily lessons although provision is more variable in classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is a very high level of care and pupils enjoy learning in a safe and stimulating environment. Teachers and support staff go out of their way to offer help and guidance. Links with outside agencies are used very well to support vulnerable learners and the arrangements to help pupils when they change year groups are excellent. This is helping prevent any unnecessary setbacks in the quality of pupils' pastoral and academic support. All safeguarding procedures are properly implemented and the monitoring of attendance is good. Pupils are very well supervised at all times and rigorous procedures ensure their safety during the current building work on site and on the many trips and visits arranged for them. Improved use of attainment data is showing where individuals are not achieving their full potential and teachers are becoming more proficient in evaluating progress against realistic targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have formed a highly effective team working to a common purpose that has improved provision in key areas. Managers are very good at working

together and with local partnerships in developing an exciting and rich curriculum. The headteacher is particularly good at supporting innovative practice that has raised the quality of teaching and learning and achievements. The passion for developing learning skills that will unlock pupils' potential is channelled extremely well through staff training that is matched to the school's needs. There is a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and planning to improve is well focused. However, the success criteria in the school development plan do not assist in the efficient evaluation of the effects of this work, particularly on standards.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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|---|-----|
| 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 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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 | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| 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? | 2 |
| 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

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Batch Community Primary School, Worle, Weston Super Mare BS22 7FN

I am writing to tell you about what we discovered when we visited your school this week. The first thing to tell you is that we really enjoyed our visit. You have a good school and are rightly proud of all the many exciting experiences you have there. We were particularly pleased to see what good opportunities you have to learn about other people in the world and even to learn some modern foreign languages. These skills will certainly help you in the future. We were also impressed with the way you have learnt to understand how different pupils have very different needs and how helpful you all are towards each other.

We were very impressed with your enthusiasm for learning in lessons. In particular, the way you are developing important skills like questioning and giving reasons for your answers. We did think that some of you need harder work to really challenge you and we have asked teachers to make sure this happens more often. You could always help them by saying if the work is too easy for you.

The headteacher and all the staff are very good at supporting each other in developing what it is you have to learn and how they teach this. They are rightly proud of the changes they have made over recent years and we know that teachers from other schools often visit to get ideas themselves. One thing we have asked them to do, however, is to check up on the things that they have already done to be sure they are having a good effect. This will help them understand more clearly what is and what is not working and help the governors, who care a lot about you all, understand the good progress the school is making. It is really important to do this.

We know that your parents like your school because very nearly all of them told us so. Please thank them for filling in the questionnaire because it helped us get a good picture of the school and what matters to them.

Once again, thank you all. Good luck in everything you do.

Best wishes from

Mr J Palk Her Majesty's Inspector