

Castor CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110824
Local Authority	CITY OF PETERBOROUGH LA
Inspection number	310427
Inspection dates	13–14 December 2007
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Blanchford
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Wynne
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Stocks Hill Castor Peterborough PE5 7AY
Telephone number	01733380280
Fax number	01733380280

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school takes pupils from Castor and the surrounding villages. The background from which pupils come is relatively advantaged. Attainment on entry is typical for children of this age. The proportion taking a free school meal is well below average. A below average proportion comes from minority ethnic groups and none are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is average but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average. The headteacher was new to the school in September 2007. The deputy head was acting head for the term before this and has also joined the school since the previous inspection. The school's health promoting schools status was renewed in 2007 and they have an Inclusion Charter Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspection findings agree with the school's own assessment that its effectiveness is satisfactory. Children start school with skills that are similar to those nationally expected for their age. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average. However, pupils' achievement as they move through the school is uneven and is best in the Foundation Stage and in Year 6, where it is good. In some years, progress is barely adequate, because of weaknesses in teaching. For this reason, the overall achievement across the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall although it varies significantly, from outstanding to inadequate. In some classes, lessons lack challenge and planning is too brief to support good quality teaching. In others, detailed planning helps provide a good structure to lessons and teachers have high expectations of the quality of pupils' work.

Overall care, guidance and support are satisfactory and pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have a very strong sense of what is right and what is not acceptable and behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Older pupils mirror the good pastoral care shown for them by adults through an impressive level of care shown for younger pupils and those who need that extra little help and support. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, feel safe and attendance is good. Pupils have a good idea of how to stay fit and healthy through eating a healthy diet and taking part in the wide range of opportunities to help them stay physically fit. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school is beginning to think about linking subjects so pupils are able to improve and consolidate literacy skills, particularly writing, in other subjects. These links are not established well enough at present and the good quality of pupils' writing seen in English books is not matched in other work, such as science, history and geography.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team is increasingly effective in raising attainment through using challenging targets. The headteacher and deputy keep a very careful watch over each individual pupil's progress in English and mathematics. Based on this knowledge they set challenging targets for each pupil although pupils themselves are not involved enough in checking how well they are doing in achieving those targets. Through progress review meetings with each class teacher each half term, the headteacher and deputy headteacher increasingly hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. The school therefore has good capacity to improve. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. There was no school development plan when the headteacher started, but in the short time since then, she and the deputy headteacher have gathered a lot of important information regarding school performance. While they know clearly what the school's strengths and weaknesses are and what needs to be done to improve this clarity of understanding is not shared by staff and governors yet. Consequently, the information on the school's strengths and weaknesses has not yet been collated into an effective long term school improvement plan.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children achieve well. The teacher and teaching assistants work together successfully and know children well, using this knowledge effectively to plan for next steps in learning. Children are cared for very well. They feel secure, confident and enjoy a good range of learning activities taking place both inside and outdoors. Parents

are pleased at how well their children settle into school. The curriculum is planned well and meets the needs of children at all levels of attainment. The school is currently working on enhancing support for children's personal development, as this is sometimes a weak area when children start school. Staff monitor progress carefully and know how well each child is doing. The tracking of individual children's learning experiences ensures that their access to all areas of learning is balanced well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least good in all classes and enables pupils to make good progress as they move through the school.
- As a matter of some urgency, the senior leadership team and governors should gather together all the information they have from school self-evaluation and identified areas for improvement, into a long-term school development plan.
- Use curriculum planning creatively to develop pupils' writing, to ensure that it is as good in all subjects as it is in English.
- Involve pupils more in assessing and evaluating their own performance against the targets set for them.

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

Overall achievement is satisfactory. Children achieve well in Reception and the majority of them reach nationally expected standards. By the time they move into Year 1, many are working comfortably within the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum. This good start is not sustained throughout the rest of the school. Standards at the end of Year 2 are usually above average, but they fell in 2007 to average, because of inadequate teaching. There has been some reorganisation in Key Stage 1 and standards in Year 2 are once again above average. Overall achievement in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, with attainment being above average by the end of Year 6. School monitoring data shows progress across the key stage is uneven, with the best being in Year 6, when pupils catch up some lost ground. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactory standards, although they do well in achieving their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their social skills are developed very well through a wide range of sporting, musical and other extra curricular activities. Pupils develop a very strong moral code and willingness to care for and help others. Pupils say occasionally they are troubled by unacceptable behaviour, but teachers manage this well and they feel safe. Although pupils have a good understanding of their own culture their awareness of others is limited. The school has recognised this and is implementing strategies to develop pupils' awareness of other cultures. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities. They willingly organise successful fund-raising activities, which benefit local and international communities. School council representatives take their responsibilities seriously and influence what happens in school well. Pupils are polite, friendly and their behaviour is good. Pupils' good literacy and

numeracy skills, combined with their reliable work ethic and ability to work cooperatively prepare them well for their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is a significant variation in the quality of teaching pupils experience as they move through the school. Planning varies considerably. Some consists of detailed activities that are matched well to pupils' different abilities and identifies ways of assessing progress. The weakest planning consists of brief notes with no detail of the different levels pupils are to achieve and no assessment identified. Marking does not always give pupils sufficient information or clear enough guidance about what they do well and how to improve their work. Teachers' expectations of pupils vary. Pupils' workbooks show that sometimes teachers praise unacceptable work. This does not encourage them to do their best in all subjects, whilst in others, high expectations and challenge are clear. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and are consistent in the way they manage behaviour in a sensitive and supportive way.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It provides a broad range of learning opportunities, including Spanish. A good personal, social, health education and citizenship programme and philosophy for the older pupils supports their personal development well. While the school is beginning to develop links between subjects, to add meaning and relevance to learning and give pupils the opportunity to use core skills, particularly writing, in other subjects there is still some way to go in this regard. The school is also developing pupils' global perspective in order to widen their knowledge and understanding of cultures different from their own but again recognises that there is more to do on this. There is a good range of extracurricular provision, covering a variety of preferences and a good assortment of visits and visitors to add interest to learning. Links with other schools enrich pupils' experiences in science and physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a good level of pastoral care for pupils. Child protection and health and safety procedures are fully in place. All staff have had necessary checks made on them. The school uses its links with outside agencies and the local community, including the church, effectively to support pupils' well-being and build their confidence. Care is extended to families where appropriate. The academic guidance provided is now satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are setting academic targets for all pupils. However, some teachers do not have a wide enough knowledge and understanding of target setting to be able to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils are not yet involved in checking their own progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher, who form the senior leadership team, have made a good start in leading and managing the school. They rigorously monitor important aspects of the school's work and its impact on pupils' achievement. They have reliable information about progress in different parts of the school and know the strengths and weaknesses well. School self-evaluation provides them with a clear view of what the school does well and where it needs to improve though this information has not yet been used as the basis of a comprehensive school improvement plan. Although satisfactory, subject coordination does not yet fully involve monitoring standards and setting targets, as the headteacher and deputy headteacher mainly do this. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, the governors have refreshed their involvement with the school. They are eager to support the school and to take a lead in its future development. They are currently working out a monitoring programme and plan to improve their involvement in school self-evaluation and development planning.

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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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2
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	2

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	2
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	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

17 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castor CofE Primary School, Peterborough PE5 7AY

I enjoyed visiting you just before Christmas and I would like to thank you for making me welcome. I really enjoyed the opportunities I had to talk to you in lessons and at other times during the two days. I was pleased to see and hear that you appreciate what teachers and other adults in school are doing for you. You have good attitudes to school and you enjoy being there. This was clear in the good behaviour I saw throughout my time with you. The way in which you look after each other, speak kindly about other children and contribute to life in school is very pleasing. The adults working at Castor CofE Primary care for you all well. All this helps you settle in quickly and feel safe.

At the moment the school is providing a satisfactory education, but the headteacher and deputy headteacher are determined to improve the curriculum and teaching, so they are good at all stages of the school and you all make good progress as you get older. There have been a number of improvements this year but there are still some things to do. I have asked the headteacher and governors to:

- make sure that the quality of teaching and learning is always at least good so that you can all make equally good progress
- plan in detail how they are going to improve the school over the next few years
- make sure that your writing is as good in all subjects as it is in English
- involve you more in assessing how well you are doing.

You can play your part by continuing to cooperate and behave as well as you do.

I wish you all well for the future.

David Speakman (Lead inspector)