

Castledown Community Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114474
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311617
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Jacque Buttriss

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	420
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemarie Loosley
Headteacher	Linda Morris
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Priory Road Hastings TN34 3QT
Telephone number	01424 444046
Fax number	01424 426491

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school with integral nursery provision. The school is in an area of relatively high deprivation near the centre of the town. Pupils from the age of three attend the nursery, which forms part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There is a breakfast club. A larger than average proportion of pupils have free school meals. The number of pupils for whom English is a second language is close to the national average, as is the proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities of various kinds. There is higher than average pupil mobility.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. There are several good features, one of which is the good teaching, which is inspiring pupils to enjoy their learning. As a result, they are now increasing their rate of progress throughout the school. Another strength is the good EYFS provision, which enables children in the Nursery and Reception year classes to make good progress and achieve well. Despite these recent improvements, the standards pupils reach by the time they leave are low. However, their achievement is broadly satisfactory given their starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported particularly well so that they make good progress.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the need to develop healthy lifestyles and know how to stay safe. Several parents commented on the improvements in pupils' attitudes and behaviour, although there remain a few who express concerns. The school is tackling these concerns effectively. Many parents comment on how much their children 'definitely enjoy school'. The school council does not meet very regularly, but it has brought about some changes, for example in playground activities. However, currently pupils do not have enough opportunities to express their views to support the drive for school improvement.

The broad curriculum provides a satisfactory framework for learning, enriched by a good range of additional activities. Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, more able pupils are not always given tasks that are sufficiently challenging in some curriculum areas. Teaching is typically good and is improving learners' rate of progress. A few teachers' expectations of what pupils can do in some subjects are not high enough, with the result that there is sometimes insufficient challenge in these classes and pupils' progress slows. Pastoral support is a strength of the school. As one parent commented, 'they really care about each individual child'. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory, although not all pupils know their individual targets, which slows their progress in some classes.

The satisfactory leadership and management are introducing new initiatives, with increasingly positive impact in a number of areas, such as pupils' behaviour and the quality of provision. The leadership team is clearly focused on continuing school improvement, but the school's self-evaluation processes are not fully documented, with the result that they do not readily help inform school improvement planning. The majority of parents are supportive of the school, as their positive responses show. One parent reflects the view of others, saying, 'I am very pleased with the education Castledown offers my children'.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS is good in most respects. Good teaching and an exciting curriculum give children a good start. They make good progress from their very low starting points, even though the majority of children do not reach average levels by the time they go into Year 1. Children enjoy their time in school and activities are well planned to keep them actively engaged. Staff monitor children's progress thoroughly and accurately so that work is well targeted to meet their individual needs. Good relationships and new procedures to ensure consistency across the EYFS are working well to ensure that children settle in quickly and gain confidence. As one parent commented, 'Our daughter had a wonderful first year at school.' Arrangements for welfare and

safeguarding pupils are well established. However, there is a need for private changing facilities for times when children have the inevitable 'little accident'. Good links with parents, including home visits, help them feel involved in their children's care and education. As one parent wrote, 'We have always felt welcomed and valued.' Children from different cultures and backgrounds work and play in harmony together and they begin to develop the skills that will help them become good learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teachers set high expectations of what pupils can do in Years 1 to 6, so that they provide greater challenge across the curriculum.
- Improve the school's self-evaluation by ensuring that the information gathered is used more effectively to guide school plans for action and improvement.
- Ensure that all pupils' views are valued and that they are more actively involved in helping to improve 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

When pupils join the school at the beginning of the Nursery classes, their attainment is well below national expectations. They make good progress throughout their time in the EYFS and their achievement is good. From Year 1 to Year 6, standards remain low, with variations between year groups, but the most recent checks on pupils' performance provide evidence that their progress is now beginning to increase. This is borne out in the good progress made in lessons during the inspection.

Achievement overall is satisfactory throughout the school, given pupils' low starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the good additional support they receive. Writing is an area of focus and current work shows that pupils are making good progress in some year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy the variety of experiences provided by the school and develop good personal qualities. 'I love everything about school,' said one Year 6 pupil. Moral and social development are good, as shown in pupils' good relationships, their good behaviour and the dramatic drop in the number of exclusions. However, spiritual and cultural aspects of learning are underdeveloped. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to reflect on issues affecting the diverse community in which they live. The school has a Healthy School Award and pupils enjoy a range of opportunities to support healthy lifestyles, such as their daily 'Activate' sessions. Pupils say they feel safe and that any poor behaviour is addressed quickly. They talk of occasional incidents of bullying but say they know who to turn to for support should they have concerns of any kind. Pupils take on an increasing range of responsibilities, such as becoming 'peer mediators' to help resolve disputes in the playground. However, they would like further opportunities to have their views taken into account. There are high absence rates, particularly amongst younger pupils, but the school has developed a range of clear procedures for encouraging better attendance, taking firm action where necessary. Pupils are satisfactorily

prepared for their future lives, but their low attainment hinders their quicker progress in gaining skills for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is predominantly good through the school and this is increasing, with the result that pupils are now making better progress in most classes. For example, older pupils were inspired by dynamic teaching to express very thoughtful responses to their reading through the use of drama. Pupils generally enjoy their lessons. One said that 'the teachers are really funny' and another announced, 'I really like solving problems.' Teachers set motivating tasks which engage learners fully, so that they work purposefully and make good progress. Teachers know their pupils well and in most lessons work is well matched to their needs. However, in a few classes, teachers have insufficiently high expectations, with the result that activities sometimes lack challenge, especially for more able pupils. Assessment is increasingly thorough and is well used in most classes. Teaching assistants provide good support, particularly for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has developed a broader curriculum since the last inspection, which is engaging pupils' interest and motivating them more actively. However, writing is still a necessary focus for development, although opportunities are not always planned frequently enough for pupils to develop their writing skills across other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from a variety of intervention strategies, such as the 'strikers' groups, although these sometimes occur during literacy lessons, with the result that learners may miss important curriculum content. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, but there are not enough activities designed to challenge them across the curriculum to enable them to achieve higher levels.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care is a distinctive feature of the school, as pupils benefit from the focus on managing and understanding their own feelings, with special support given to ensure social and emotional well-being. Care, guidance and support overall are satisfactory. All statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are met. Good links with external agencies ensure good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties. Vulnerable pupils, such as looked-after children, are also very well supported and integrated into the school community. However, a few pupils arriving from different countries are not integrated socially as quickly as they could be and the school plans to harness greater support for non-English speakers in their first weeks. There is good use of self- and peer-assessment in some classes, but this is inconsistent. Not all children know their individual learning targets. Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always help learners know how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders are enthusiastic and committed to their vision for the school. They work well as a team. This leads to a clear direction to remedy weaknesses, but the essential actions that will drive forward change more quickly are not always identified and prioritised. The school has good self-evaluation processes, including detailed analysis of pupils' performance. However, the resulting information is not used to the best advantage in helping the school identify all priorities for development. Targets have not been challenging enough until recently, but these have now been increased. There is a clear monitoring schedule and the regular monitoring of teaching has helped it to improve, but identifying those features which help increase pupils' learning is sometimes missed. There are strong partnerships with local schools and organisations to develop pupils' personal development and their learning. The local authority is providing strong support to help the school raise achievement and standards. The school's approach to promoting community cohesion is satisfactory, with active involvement in the local community, but the focus is not sufficiently wide. For example, there are no links with schools in other parts of the UK or abroad. Improvements since the last inspection have included behaviour management, resulting in the greatly reduced exclusion rate. Governance too has much improved. Governors now give good support and challenge to the school and undertake their monitoring roles with energy and diligence. These improvements, together with current evidence of pupils' increasing progress, indicate a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which 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	3
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 learners' needs?	2
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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

6 October 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Castledown Community Primary and Nursery School, Hastings TN34 3QT

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We all enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a satisfactory school. It helps you to enjoy your work and cares for you well.

- These are the things we especially like about your school:
- You work hard in lessons and some of you make good progress. Well done.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle in quickly and have a good start to their school lives.
- Your behaviour is good and you enjoy school. Keep it up!
- You have good teaching that makes most of your lessons exciting and fun for you all.
- You have lots of extra activities and clubs to enjoy.
- The adults in your school take good care of you all and help you when you have any worries.
- This is what we think your school could do even better:
- Enable you to reach higher standards by setting you more challenging tasks and by helping you to know how you can improve your work.
- When your school leaders are looking at how well things are going, they could be clearer in what they choose to do next to make things even better.
- Take your views into account more to help make the school a better place for you all. You could help too by thinking of some ideas for your school council to consider.

I would like to wish you lots of success in your future learning. Yours sincerely,

Jacquie Buttriss Lead Inspector