

# Castle Hill Infant School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 116041        |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Hampshire     |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 312159        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 28 April 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Rob Crompton  |

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

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|---|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Infant   |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–7  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 168  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                     |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mrs Michele Amos                                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Dr Steve Jefferson                                     |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 November 2004  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Greenbank<br>Winklebury Way<br>Basingstoke<br>RG23 8BN |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01256 326899   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01256 350639   |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The school was visited for one day. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Year 2, pupils' spiritual and cultural development, academic guidance, and the impact of leadership and management on the school's overall performance. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, curriculum and planning documents, observation of the school at work, interviews with staff and pupils and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is broadly average in size. Most pupils are White British, with 12% coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most of the pupils who need extra support or are falling behind, have speech and communication problems or behavioural difficulties.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. One parent's comment, 'I cannot stress enough how fantastic the school is', reflects the views expressed by the vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire. Standards and achievement are outstanding. The understanding and skills children have as they enter the school are below those typical of their age. They make excellent progress so that the standards reached by Year 2 pupils are well above average and often exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) are well above those expected by the end of Year 2. Excellent achievement results from a combination of high quality teaching and outstanding care, guidance and support.

The great majority of pupils reach or exceed the challenging targets they are set. The tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress are very rigorous and there is rapid and effective intervention when necessary. For example, pupils with particular gifts or talents are quickly identified and special provision is made for them. As a result of first class support, pupils with learning difficulties reach standards that are above the national average for such pupils. Parents are very complimentary about the provision for individuals. One wrote, 'The staff have made every effort to meet his emotional needs.'

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils behave extremely well. They grow in self-confidence, increasingly become independent, and try hard to succeed. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. Pupils have a good range of opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school. Through their school council, pupils acquire an excellent understanding of working together to improve their community. By the time they leave, pupils have acquired high-level skills to help them move on successfully to junior school and beyond.

The teaching is outstanding. The three learning support assistants in each year group work extremely well in tandem with the teachers. Staff ensure that pupils are aware of the next steps in their learning, often involving them in self-review. This means pupils develop mature attitudes and an increasing awareness of how they can contribute to their own success. Older pupils are well aware of the different kinds of thinking skills they can draw upon. One said, 'Sometimes we use organisational skills, sometimes fact finding and sometimes creative.' Highly effective feedback encourages pupils to strive for the challenging targets they are set. Lessons are well planned, take into account what pupils have previously found easy or difficult, and move at a brisk pace. Teachers inspire pupils to rise to the high level of challenge. They routinely share the learning objectives for each lesson so pupils have a clear idea of the purpose of the work. Occasionally, individual targets are expressed in language which is a little too sophisticated and rather difficult for pupils to interpret.

The outstanding curriculum contributes extremely well to pupils' academic progress and personal development. As one parent commented, 'This is a wonderful environment that allows children flourish and excel.' The school's innovative approach to planning is based on an agreed set of values: independence, emotional engagement, spirituality, creativity and thinking. Interesting topics engage pupils and, together with a wealth of enrichment activities, successfully promote these ideals. For example, pupils talked enthusiastically about the recent Africa Week, when work in art, music and dance provided many opportunities for creative and spiritual development.

Visits and outside speakers, capture pupils' imagination. For example, pupils explained how a visiting children's author helped them to improve their skills in writing.

This is an extremely caring school. One parent wrote, 'The staff are diligent and caring - they most certainly bring out the best in the children.' Child protection and health and safety procedures are well established and any pupils who are at risk are quickly identified and supported extremely well.

The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are outstanding. Subject leaders provide well-informed and innovative guidance, which inspires staff in their pursuit of excellence and even higher standards. Governors provide first class support and use their comprehensive knowledge of the school to monitor performance. Self-evaluation is accurate and realistic, and reveals strengths and areas for improvement. For example, a slight dip in standards last year was addressed very effectively. Governors are actively involved in strategic planning and manage funds well. The school's excellent capacity to improve is evident from the progress made since the last inspection. Overall provision remains outstanding and ICT, previously identified as a weakness, is now a strength.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Excellent provision in the Foundation Stage gets children off to a flying start. Children build very well on the rather weak social, language and number skills that many have on starting school. This is because the highly effective staff team provides challenging activities that move children's learning on at a pace. The teaching is lively and underpinned by warm relationships. Through careful observation, staff build up a clear picture of children's strengths and specific needs, in order to refine their planning. A very good balance between teacher led sessions and activities initiated by the children provides highly effective support across all areas of learning. In addition to a very secure foundation in literacy and numeracy, children develop particularly good computer skills. They take full advantage of well-designed outdoor adventure apparatus, the large construction blocks and toy vehicles. Such activities successfully promote their social, mathematical and physical development.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Use child-friendly language in setting out targets so that pupils fully understand what they need to do to improve.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1   |
| 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   | 1   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 1 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 1 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 1 |

### 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?          | 1 |
| 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 |

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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  | 1   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 1   |
| 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

09 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Hill Infant School, Basingstoke, RG23 8BN

Thank you for making me so welcome during my visit. I really enjoyed seeing how well you are all working and enjoying school.

This is an outstanding school. From the excellent start in Reception, you make great progress and reach high standards. It was good to see the quality of your written work. I know that you enjoyed Denis Bond's visit and it was clear that many of you have picked his ideas for making stories interesting. I saw some good work in ICT too. Year 2 were making presentations to show to parents before their children start in Reception. It was great to see how confident you were in using the laptops and how well you worked independently with your partners.

You told me how much you enjoy lessons and I could see that this is because teachers make learning exciting and fun. The individual targets you have in literacy and numeracy are sometimes a little difficult for you to understand so I have suggested that simpler words are used.

The school helps you to develop personal qualities that will be useful all through your lives. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and the importance of living healthily. For example, I was impressed that Year 2 pupils knew how exercise helps the heart to pump blood around the body. One of the best things you like about the school is its friendliness. I saw this for myself in the way you get on so well together. You can take much of the credit for the happy atmosphere because you behave so well and take pride in your school. It was a pleasure to see how you look after one another, especially when someone needs a little extra encouragement or support.

All the good things you enjoy do not happen by accident of course. The school is run extremely well to ensure you get the most out of lessons and the wealth of extra activities.

Thank you again for such an enjoyable visit.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector