

# Castlechurch Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124203
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314843
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marian Harker HMI

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	422
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Knight
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gill Hampton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Tennyson Road Stafford ST17 9SY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 356772
<b>Fax number</b>	01785 356779

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Castlechurch is a large primary school on the outskirts of Stafford serving a diverse community. It caters for children aged 3-11 and has fully extended provision, including a nursery unit, before school, after school and holiday care. It also offers a newly opened Children's Centre. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are fewer pupils than the national average with a statement of special educational need. There are more pupils eligible for free school meals than found typically. In recent years pupils have entered the school with more complex needs representing a lower standard on entry. More pupils have joined and left the school part-way through their education.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Castlechurch Primary is a good school. One parent described it as 'like an extended family'. One of the strongest features of the school is the good care and support it provides for all its pupils, both in school and after school, particularly through its highly effective partnerships with external agencies. The school is a focus for the community and highly regarded by parents. Pupils tangibly develop confidence and self-esteem as they move through the school due to the outstanding provision for personal development. Pupils attainment on entry has changed over recent years and now is below that expected for their age. More children have less well-developed social skills and weaker communication, language and literacy skills than was previously the case. However, pupils quickly develop good social skills and make good progress through the Foundation Stage.

By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 1 they have caught up and achieve standards in line with national averages. When they leave school in Year 6, pupils achieve standards that are similar to national averages due to the good teaching and extensive curriculum, including a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. This picture represents good progress and achievement overall. Some of the individual year-groups, particularly Year 6 in 2007, have been more challenging than others with regard to pupils' specific social, emotional and academic needs.

The 2007 Key Stage 2 national tests, whilst above average in mathematics, were slightly below national averages in science and more so in English. Taking account of their starting points in English, pupils rate of progress through the school has not been quick enough. However, the management now have good strategies in place to ensure early identification of groups in need of additional support. This is impacting positively across the school. The headteacher has a clear vision to 'maximise the potential of all pupils'. Many features of management across the school are good, especially the whole school commitment to the inclusion of every child. Some aspects are currently satisfactory, such as the quality of school improvement planning and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. Leadership and management is good overall.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The provision and effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good. Attainment on entry to nursery is generally below expectations. The environment is stimulating and welcoming and the children settle quickly into school life. One parent said, 'Although my son has not been in nursery very long I feel he has settled in well. I am extremely happy with the care he receives.' Pupils individual needs are supported well and, as a result, children make good progress, in particular those identified for additional support in the Nurture Group. This good provision extends into Reception where relationships and behaviour are key strengths. The children continue to make good progress and by the time they leave Reception children are achieving standards broadly in line with national expectations.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress and raise standards in English.
- Ensure that all management tasks have a much sharper focus on measurable outcomes linked to raising standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

By the time pupils leave the school at Year 6 standards are broadly average. Taking account of pupils attainment on entry to the school being below expectations, this represents good achievement. There are areas where pupils achieve consistently well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress relative to their starting points due to the closely focused support and additional attention they receive. Pupils make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development throughout the school. Pupils make more rapid progress and achieve higher standards in mathematics due to the impact of a whole school initiative to improve pupils mental and written calculation. English, however, is still a weakness for many pupils. One reason for this is that opportunities to develop basic literacy skills in other subjects are underdeveloped. In the 2007 national tests, pupils achieved standards in line with national averages at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The increasingly complex needs of each year group, pupils low attainment on entry to the school and an increasing number of pupils who join the school part-way through their education are all factors leading to variations in standards compared to previous years. Projections for 2008 indicate that pupils will make better progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' attitudes to learning and the quality of their relationships are outstanding. Pupils really enjoy their lessons and their positive attitudes to school are illustrated in their above average attendance. One pupil said, 'The teachers make the lessons interesting.' They settle to work quickly and concentrate well. The behaviour of the great majority of pupils is good. Staff successfully support a very small minority of pupils with challenging behaviour ensuring it rarely affects the learning of others. Moral and social development is outstanding as a result of the consistently high expectations of all adults. Pupils have a strong sense of care for others and know right from wrong. They make an active and positive contribution to both the school and wider community. Opportunities to take on responsibility, such as being a member of the school council, ensure pupils gain a very good understanding of how a community should co-operate. Their extremely strong sense of self-respect and awareness of the needs of others highlights their increasing spiritual awareness. Pupils are developing a good understanding of cultures around the world but have limited opportunities to meet and talk to people from other backgrounds in Britain. Pupils' understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle is an outstanding feature of the school. One parent commented, 'Our family had a personal invitation to join the Family Cooking Club. We all enjoyed learning how to prepare a healthy meal together.' Pupils' positive attitudes to work and well developed social skills prepare them well for the next stage of education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well as a result of good teaching. For example, consistently effective teaching in mathematics is enabling pupils to learn well and attain standards above the national average by the end of Key Stage 2. Teachers are confident and are able to draw upon secure subject knowledge. At the start of most lessons there are

clear learning objectives shared with the children. Probing questions are used effectively, enabling teachers to assess how well the pupils are doing and help them develop their thinking further. Teachers set work that is usually challenging and exciting and this contributes significantly to the high enjoyment levels in lessons. Occasionally, some lessons lack pace because of lengthy introductions and this leads to the disengagement of a small number of learners. Well planned practical activities help give meaning to learning. For example, pupils really enjoyed discovering which objects conducted electricity in science. Teaching assistants are skilled and have a positive impact on learning, especially when supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This approach enables all pupils to be fully involved in lessons and to make good progress. New computer technology is used well in order to extend pupils' learning experiences. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their work and assess their own level of understanding.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A carefully planned school curriculum meets pupils' individual needs, and includes an extremely wide range of enrichment activities. Along with an excellent programme of personal, social and health education, these additional activities have a positive impact on pupils' outstanding personal development and contribute to their enjoyment of learning. Programmes of work are planned well in most curriculum areas, resulting in pupils making good progress, particularly in mathematics. Curriculum information explains clearly what children are expected to learn. The programme in English is not, however, having the same impact, resulting in pupils making satisfactory, rather than good progress, in this key area of study.

In partnership with a number of visitors to the school, including the school nurse and the local community constable, pupils learn much about the importance of healthy lifestyles and staying safe. Curriculum enrichment is outstanding, giving pupils exciting opportunities to participate in events they will remember for the rest of their lives. One parent commented, 'My children have been involved in many residential trips which give fantastic opportunities and they have sung with the school choir in the Symphony Hall in Birmingham.' The excellent range of extra-curricular activities is well attended by pupils. Sporting activities further strengthen the good provision for physical education pupils receive in lessons. Activities such as the eco club enhance pupils' understanding of environmental issues.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support for all its pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents told inspectors that their children are very happy and excited at being at school. Pupils feel safe and are prepared to go to any adult in the school knowing they will help them if they have a problem. The arrangements for ensuring their health, safety and welfare are good with risk assessments in place for the very many activities in and out of the school. Child protection procedures and safeguarding arrangements are secure. The work of the welfare assistant, amongst others, has resulted in attendance being above national figures in recent years. Assessment information provides teachers with a good understanding of pupils' progress. It enables them to provide accurate academic support to pupils and give them appropriate targets in numeracy. However, targets in literacy are not as effective in raising standards. The informative marking of pupils' work ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils' personal qualities are

enhanced by effective guidance in personal and social education. All staff provide excellent pastoral support with extensive use of external agencies where necessary to promote the well-being of individual pupils with particular needs.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

A committed senior leadership team supports the headteacher. Together they are building the capacity of middle leaders, although they recognise there is still work to do in holding all managers accountable for the standards achieved and progress made by the pupils. Collectively, they have a good capacity to improve. Actions to improve result in successful outcomes for pupils. For example, the leadership of a whole school priority to improve mental and written calculation strategies has produced higher standards. A significant strength of leadership is the commitment to meeting the specific needs of all pupils both within the curriculum and through the involvement of a wide range of external agencies. For example, there is good support for children with hearing impairment. The headteacher steers the school well and has ensured staff work together to meet the needs of all pupils. However, she realises that strategic planning and aspects of whole school evaluation lack sufficient clarity and measurable success criteria.

Governance is good. The governors fulfil their legal responsibilities well and are supportive of the school. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and hold the senior leaders to account. Communication with parents is regular and informative. Curriculum evenings are well attended and appreciated by parents. Senior staff are responsive to requests from parents to provide more advice on how they can support their children at home in mathematics. Parents and grandparents comment on the schools welcoming approach and the encouragement they receive to take an active role in school life. One parent commented, 'Castlechurch is a happy school and serves the community well.'

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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	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
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

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?	2

<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>	2
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	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

22 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Castlechurch Primary School, Stafford ST17 9SY

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. We thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what we thought the school could do to become even better

- You go to a good school and your parents agree.
- You all look very smart in your school uniform.
- Your teachers work hard to prepare interesting lessons for you.
- All the adults in the school care about you, want you to do well and make sure that those of you who need extra help are well supported.
- You enjoy the wide range of clubs at school.
- You really like taking on responsibilities in your school and contributing to the wider community.
- We think your school is a really welcoming place with lots of lovely work on the walls.
- You know how to stay healthy and keep active.
- Your behaviour is good; you are kind to each other and cooperative.
- You develop into extremely confident, mature young people.
- You thoroughly enjoy going on school visits and residential activities.
- The staff and governors lead the school well.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and senior staff to do the following

- Improve the standards you achieve in your English work.
- Develop clearer plans to ensure you achieve as well as you can.

Marian Harker HMI Her Majesty's Inspector

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**Her Majesty's Inspector**