

Castlecombe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101606
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	323488
Inspection date	19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheena MacDonald HMI

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)	240
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	Mrs Norrine Redfern
Headteacher	Mr Tim Smith
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Castlecombe Road Mottingham London SE9 4AT
Telephone number	020 8857 1504
Fax number	020 8857 9172

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the action taken to address the recent slowing down of progress in Key Stage 2, particularly for boys and in mathematics
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in evaluating and pursuing areas identified for improvement.

Description of the school

Castlecombe is a one-form-entry primary school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided for in a part-time Nursery class and a Reception class. Most pupils are White British, with a small proportion representing several other ethnic heritages. A higher than average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a higher than average numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school provides a breakfast club.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Castlecombe is a good school. Inspectors agree with parents who commented on the high levels of care and understanding, and the warm and welcoming atmosphere. Well-organised management systems mean that the school runs safely and smoothly, and pupils feel secure, enjoy school and grow in confidence. The school knows its pupils very well and provides high-quality, individualised care and support. As a result, all groups of pupils make good personal and academic progress.

Pupils arrive in school with skills which are generally below, and often well below, those expected for their age. They make good progress throughout the school, so that for several years standards at the end of Year 6 have been at, and sometimes just above, average. This represents good achievement from pupils' starting points. The school has taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 and, as a result, in the past two years there has been a sharp upward trend in attainment by the end of Year 2, particularly in mathematics. The rate of progress through Key Stage 2, although good overall, was uneven across the classes, and attainment in mathematics dropped in 2008. The school has tackled this vigorously. Much-improved systems for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment have been used to identify groups and individuals whose progress was not sufficiently rapid. Strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics, have been successful. The attainment of boys in 2008 also raised some concerns, and the school has given careful thought to making sure that the needs and interests of boys are catered for well.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour is good, and pupils treat each other, and adults, with courtesy, kindness and respect. The school has worked hard and effectively to improve attendance and although the poor attendance of a few pupils remains a cause for concern, most pupils arrive punctually and ready to learn. Pupils are proud to take on responsibilities such as becoming playground pals and school council representatives, and make a good contribution to the life of the school. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to explore the wider world, to develop an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, or to work independently and develop decision-making skills.

Teaching and learning are good and the curriculum is effectively adapted so that it meets the wide range of pupils' needs, particularly in English and mathematics and in personal development. Lessons are well structured, with activities which are carefully planned to match pupils' differing abilities, and good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Teaching assistants provide high-quality support. There is some outstanding teaching, where learning is exciting and pupils are enthusiastically and actively involved. However, in some other lessons, there are missed opportunities for pupils to develop independence or to use their initiative.

The curriculum is enhanced by the use of music specialists, partnerships with neighbouring secondary schools, and through involvement with activities such as the current artist in residence project. There are good opportunities for physical education, including popular after-school clubs and well-organised active playtimes. There are some opportunities to learn outside the classroom, and the school has exciting plans to extend the use of the school grounds. Currently, these opportunities are limited, which restricts children's first-hand learning experiences and their understanding of the local and wider worlds.

Leadership and management are good. The leadership team has developed complementary knowledge and skills, and demonstrates an appetite for improvement. Governors provide good support and some welcome hands-on involvement in school life. Senior leaders make good use of assessment and monitoring information to identify strengths and weaknesses. However, the focus of improvement planning tends to be on the adult activity rather than pupils' achievements. This means that improvement activity is not sharply enough focused on achieving specific targets in pupil attainment, and the impact of different strategies is hard to measure. Despite this, the leadership team have maintained a positive ethos and have ensured good pupil progress over time, and have demonstrated that their actions lead to improvements. This track record demonstrates that the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the Nursery and Reception classes, and make good progress. There are lots of interesting hands-on activities, they are looked after very well, and there are good relationships between home and school. When they arrive, many have very low skills, particularly with respect to communication and to personal and social skills, and the learning is skilfully planned to make sure that there are good opportunities to develop these skills both inside and outside, and to do so alongside adults, with other children, and independently. The learning is carefully linked across different aspects to make it relevant, interesting and exciting. For example, Nursery children were proud to show off their fruit shop, sunflower plants and vegetable prints, and in Reception there were many opportunities to explore the 'Goldilocks' story, including making and eating porridge! The early years team is knowledgeable, works effectively together, and is ably led by the coordinator. The team members make good use of assessment information to target particular aspects in need of improvement, such as language and literacy skills, including writing and the achievement of boys. Strategies for improvement in these areas are successfully raising attainment. The team is aware that there are aspects of children's learning - such as achievement in shape, space and measures - which require further attention.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the existing good practice, so that more lessons are outstanding with more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, use their initiative and develop independence.
- Enrich the curriculum to widen pupils' experiences, particularly their understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.
- Strengthen improvement planning so that there is a sharper focus on the outcomes for pupils.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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/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?	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
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	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

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

08 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castlecombe Primary School, London, SE9 4AT

I visited your school recently with another inspector to find out how well you were doing. Thank you for being so friendly, polite and welcoming, especially those of you who gave up your playtime to talk to us. You and your parents told us that your school is a good school, and we agree with you.

You get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes, and carry on doing well, so that by the time you leave at the end of Year 6 you have made good progress in all subjects. Your school leaders noticed that you were not doing quite so well in some year groups, and in mathematics in the older classes. They put in some extra group work, which has helped some of you to catch up, and they have worked hard so that now the teaching and learning is good in all parts of the school.

Your lessons are usually good, and sometimes they are outstanding. Your teachers should share their good ideas so that more lessons are like the very best ones, where the learning is exciting and you get to make decisions and use your initiative. We have also asked your school to give you more opportunities to learn about the world outside school, especially about different cultures.

The adults in school take very good care of you. They know each of you really well and have good systems to make sure that you get extra help and support if you need it. You behave well and enjoy school, especially playtimes! Your school is doing a good job in encouraging you to come to school every day, but there are a few of you who would do much better if you came more regularly.

Your school leaders are doing a good job and are keen to make the school even better. We have asked them to make the targets in the school's improvement plan easier to measure, and to make sure that the systems for checking on improvements are clear. Then the school will have a better idea of how well different activities are working, and which ones are making the most difference.

I enjoyed my time with you. I wish you every success in the future. Keep up the good work!

Yours faithfully

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector