

Castle Cary Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123640
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	327952
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Ann Henderson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	194
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	Rob Angel
Headteacher	Jane Evans
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Park Street Castle Cary BA7 7EH
Telephone number	01963 350520

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
Inspection number	327952

Fax number

01963 351663

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in one Reception class. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The school has received several awards in recognition of its work in promoting health awareness and financial management.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. A significant factor in its success is the strong leadership by the headteacher and the commitment shared by the whole school community to raise standards and improve provision. The school is committed to sustaining close links with the community and parents greatly value the care and inclusion that is a strong feature of the school. As one parent stated, 'The care and support shown by staff is fantastic.' The school is highly effective in its work with local support services to ensure the well-being of all its pupils.

Pupils' achievement is good. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and this provision gives the children a secure grounding for their later learning. The outdoor learning environment has improved in recent years ensuring good learning opportunities for all children both indoors and outdoors. By the end of Year 2 in 2008, pupils reached above average standards in reading writing and mathematics. They were significantly higher in reading. Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 2 and, by the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average for the majority of learners; however, although there were fewer higher achieving pupils they did less well in 2008. Standards are above average overall.

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and feel very safe. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Behaviour is exceptional. Pupils make a marvellous contribution to the local and wider community and have lots of opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Attendance is good.

Teaching and learning are good with some lessons that are outstanding. Lessons are interesting and brisk, so that pupils are interested and sustain their concentration. A particular strength is the very positive relationships between adults and pupils which, combined with an interesting and enriched curriculum, help to explain the outstanding attitudes of the pupils towards their learning. Effective use is made of assessment in order to provide challenging tasks and pupils have a good understanding of their learning and their targets for improvement. Marking successfully focuses pupils on how they can improve. Teaching assistants provide good support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so that they make good progress.

The curriculum is outstanding. There is a particularly wide range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities which enrich the curriculum. There is a good focus on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). In addition, subjects are effectively linked which brings cohesion and enjoyment to lessons. The school has adopted a more creative approach to planning the curriculum, which is beginning to offer wider opportunities to pupils. The quality of care and guidance and support that the pupils benefit from is excellent, and underpins their outstanding personal development. This is a very caring school with a strong commitment to the well-being of all pupils. Risk assessments and procedures to safeguard pupils including child protection are fully in place. Assessment and tracking are robust and lead to clear targets for improvement. Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides clear and purposeful leadership and staff and governors work well together to raise standards. The school evaluates its performance well. Further improvement is required to ensure more effective links between self-evaluation and development planning

by all leaders. Governance is outstanding. Governors are supportive and play a highly effective role in helping to shape the direction of the school; they have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The school has good capacity to bring about further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in Reception start school with skills broadly in line with those expected of their age, and make good progress. Children enjoy coming to school and settle quickly because they are well supported by adults who show high levels of care and encourage children to develop good habits and behaviour. Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding and their behaviour is excellent. The newly introduced planning board effectively encourages children to make their own choices, thereby promoting independence. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Good use is made of observational notes and photographs to capture children's experiences, contributing to vigorous assessments, informing planning and the next steps in learning. A broad range of opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, enables children to explore and develop their learning in a safe and supportive environment. The improved outdoor learning environment provides a safe space for active and quiet learning. The safety of children is a priority and all safeguarding procedures are in place. Links with parents are purposeful and productive; some remark on how much their children enjoy learning. The newly appointed EYFS leader is demonstrating the capacity to build on recent improvements; overall the setting is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all leaders and managers are fully involved in school evaluation and improvement.
- Develop the creative curriculum as a tool to provide further high quality learning opportunities and improve achievement for all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2008 was above the national average. However, higher achievers did less well, particularly in English. In national assessments at the end of Year 2, standards are at least in line with national expectations. Because of good teaching and a focus on phonics, pupils make good progress in reading and at the end of Year 2 reading standards are particularly high. Standards in writing across the school have improved and are now good because the school has successfully put steps in place to address some previous underachievement. Pupils are now making good gains in their learning through high quality teaching and good levels of challenge. Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in relation to their individual learning targets. These pupils often benefit from high quality support from teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school is highly successful in creating a happy and harmonious environment in which all pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school; this is confirmed through good attendance rates and the positive views of pupils and parents. Staff set very high expectations, with the result that pupils behave extremely well. Pupils feel very safe at school because they know there is always someone to turn to if they need help and they say that bullying does not exist in school.

They fully understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the necessity for exercise to keep fit and healthy. They participate well in physical and other extra activities provided. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and social development is outstanding. There are good opportunities to learn about other cultures through links with Zambia and Switzerland. The school has plans to further develop the curriculum so that it reflects even better the diversity of cultures found in modern Britain. Pupils know their opinions are respected and listened to through the school council and have been successful in raising money for a range of charities. They gain a greater understanding of their community through their representation on the Children's Parliament. They are well prepared for further study and for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The enthusiasm of staff helps to make lessons interesting and this is reflected in pupils' motivation to learn. They manage pupils well. Good questioning keeps pupils involved, encouraging them to explain and expand their ideas. They are keen to answer and join in discussion. Appropriate challenge and extension work is provided for higher achievers, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties are supported well by the focused work of teaching assistants. On a few occasions, the pace of the lesson slows resulting in some pupils losing attention. Teachers work purposefully with the good support of teaching assistants to assist groups and individuals during independent work. However at times, some teaching assistants are too passive in the first part of the lesson. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively and imaginatively and pupils use their skills with this technology well to support their own learning. Good marking, giving praise and indicating the next steps in learning, enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Teachers are very alert to blending subjects together, for example a Year 2 history lesson about Florence Nightingale had very good links to literacy. Excellent relationships support the pupils' good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is imaginatively planned to enthuse pupils. The evolving creative approach focusing on developing skills across the curriculum has the potential to ensure that pupils' understanding is deepened and learning is cohesive. The school's inclusive approach ensures that alongside its effective provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those with special gifts and talents enjoy a further enrichment. The curriculum is thereby adapted well to meet the personal needs of all pupils. There are good links with other agencies to support pupils, parents and teachers, including effective projects within the local and international communities. There is an extensive range of enrichment activities, including residential visits for Year 4 and Year 6 pupils. Visits, visitors and extra-curricular opportunities provide added interest to an already rich curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's fervent commitment to the nurture and care of all pupils is woven into every aspect of its work and pupils feel comfortable about confiding in adults. Excellent relationships with outside agencies ensure additional support for the most vulnerable children. Child protection

procedures meet statutory requirements. Throughout the school, safety and the welfare of children are given the highest priority and safeguarding procedures are thorough and fully in place. As one parent said 'The school really cares for its children and prepares them brilliantly for their next school and lays the foundations for them to develop into confident, sensitive and enquiring young adults.' Procedures for supporting pupils' academic work are effective in providing a measure of progress and identifying potential underachievement. In this respect, the termly pupil progress meetings provide very effective opportunities to review the progress and targets for every pupil.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are characterised by a very strong commitment by all leaders to improve the educational outcomes for all children. There is a shared understanding of the 'bigger picture' and the senior leadership team works very effectively to ensure all staff work together as a team. Staff are self-motivated and mostly lead improvements in their areas of responsibility, although there is scope for them to be more fully involved in evaluation and planning. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion, having developed effective links with Zambia and the local community, and is well placed to improve links in the national context. The school's exceptional use of targets to improve outcomes for pupils is making a significant contribution to the raising of standards. The school accurately assesses its own performance; with the involvement of a committed and effective governing body, it has devised a well written improvement plan to address effectively the school's strategic priorities. Governors are highly effective in carrying out their roles and responsibilities and have successfully challenged and supported the leadership of the school in recent improvements through the development of 'The Lodge' and the accessibility for parents to use a laptop in the foyer for further school information.

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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 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?	1
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	2
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?	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
The extent to which 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	2

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Castle Cary Community Primary School, Somerset BA7 7EH

Thank you for the friendly welcome we received during our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and looking at your work. We think your school is providing you with a good education and that you achieve well as a result. With your help, we are sure that the headteacher and all the staff in the school will continue to make your school even better.

We were impressed with your good attitudes to work and how well you get on together and how sensible and friendly you are. The behaviour we saw was excellent. We would like to thank the school council for sharing their views with us and were pleased to see how many of you take responsibility at school. All the staff look after you very well and make sure you are happy and safe. You work hard in your lessons and your teachers make learning interesting, challenging and enjoyable. We were pleased to see how many of you attend the good opportunities for out-of-school activities. We know that your teachers and visitors to school teach you about healthy eating and the importance of taking regular exercise. You tell us there is always an adult to help you if you have any problems and that you feel safe in school.

There is very little that needs to change in your school, but I have agreed with the school that it needs to make sure all staff develop planning further and help to provide a more creative curriculum to make your learning even better.

We enjoyed our visit to your school and we wish all of you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson

Lead inspector