

# Castle Wood

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 135569             |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Coventry           |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 331632             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 24–25 June 2009    |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Margaret Jones 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.

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|--|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>  | Special   |
| <b>School category</b>   | Community special                                   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 3–11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |   |
| School (total)   | 114   |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 10  |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years                                     | 0   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body                                  |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Mark Rendell  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Yvonne McCall                                       |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 1 November 2006                                     |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                            |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                            |
| <b>School address</b>  | Deedmore Site<br>Wyken Croft<br>Coventry<br>CV2 1HQ |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 02476 612271  |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 02476   |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 3–11            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 24–25 June 2009 |
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

## Description of the school

Castle Wood is a new Broad Spectrum School formed in 2008 from an amalgamation of two special schools. A purpose-built new school will be completed by 2010. The school is currently based on two sites and includes pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ranging from profound and multiple to moderate learning difficulties, and including autistic spectrum disorders. Well over half the pupils come from a White British background; other pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, and of these 26 pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Over half the pupils are eligible for free school meals and five pupils are looked-after children. There are 12 pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the school has an after-school club which is managed by the governing body. The school has achieved Healthy School status.

## 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 an effective school, which is improving and has a good capacity to improve further. The school is at the moment in transition, as there are still two separate sites pending the move to a new building next year. In the meantime, much work is being done to link the two sites together and establish a common purpose and common practices for the benefit of all the pupils. One of the sites has suffered from a high turnover of staff in recent years but this situation has been stabilised and the team spirit among staff is now excellent. The school is a very caring and inclusive community where learners feel safe and secure and are very well looked after by committed and dedicated staff. Around one third of parents responded to the questionnaire and were overwhelmingly positive in their support for the school and all it does for their children. As one parent wrote, 'I am very happy with my child's progress. The school is very supportive and staff always approachable. There is great after-school provision and the summer play scheme offers lots of activities. My child is secure, confident and always encouraged.'

Personal development is good and is carefully tracked in the pupils' records of achievement. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and pupils are very well prepared for life in a diverse society. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to participate and learn. They appreciate what the school is doing to help them, and in turn are sometimes able to support each other. Pupils make good progress and achieve well because they are well taught, and teachers and support staff at both sites are developing expertise in supporting pupils with different kinds of difficulty and disability well. Occasionally in lessons, staff are too structured in their approach and do not give the pupils enough time or freedom to explore and learn for themselves.

The curriculum is good, and is enhanced by an excellent range of enrichment activities such as clubs, residential visits, themed assemblies on different cultures, visits from external agencies and music groups, and lunchtime and sporting clubs, all of which expand the horizons of pupils. The healthy school weeks help to reinforce learning about healthy lifestyles. The excellent after-school club, managed by the governing body, provides a range of enjoyable activities for the pupils, who have established positive relationships with the staff who care for them.

The school is led and managed very well by a determined headteacher, who is clearly communicating her vision for a school which is a centre of excellence. Monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior leaders is robust and the school has a very accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. However, the roles of subject leaders in monitoring teaching and progress are not sufficiently well developed. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well and pupils receive a good start to their education. Leaders have established positive links with a network of supportive external agencies which assist in meeting the broad range of children's needs. Children begin the Reception class with skills that are well below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress despite their low starting points. This is due to the careful planning of appropriately adapted activities that address the range of children's unique needs and capture each child's interest so that they are eager to learn. Staff make good use of a visual timetable,

accompanied with action songs to make learning enjoyable. Practical tasks, such as textural exploration of mangoes, plums and apples, which are subsequently used to make fruit salad and eaten at snack time, make learning relevant. Children respond well to the activities provided, using verbal and non-verbal communication to demonstrate their delight and comfort. However, activities are not always matched closely to more able children's abilities in order to ensure that they make as much progress as they can. Behaviour is good. The children enjoy each other's company and integrate well. Staff supervise children well during activities which promote their well-being and health. Observations of what children know and can do are used well to plan for the next stage in their learning. Staff interact positively with the children and this reassures them and facilitates their settling well into the daily routine. The partnership with parents is strong and facilitates good exchange of background information and continuity in learning. The outdoor environment supports play opportunities well, and allows direct access for children to use a range of climbing and balancing equipment. The lack of a covered area restricts children's access to outdoor play during inclement weather.

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

- Develop the role of subject leaders in monitoring the quality of standards, progress and teaching, and taking responsibility for improvement.
- Promote pupils' learning by providing more opportunities for independent exploration and play.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good, although standards in tests are well below average because of the nature of the pupils' learning difficulties. Data gathered by the school using the nationally recognised levels of learning (P levels) show that learners make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and through the primary age range, developing their communication and social skills well. This is supported by evidence seen in lessons during the inspection. Pupils are confident and express themselves well, within the constraints of their learning difficulties. They also make good progress in English and mathematics, and those who are more able reach Level 3 or even Level 4 of the National Curriculum. The introduction of phonics has led to a marked improvement in reading levels. Pupils enjoy their learning and respond well to a variety of stimulating experiences including sports, music, drama and art. The school analyses the results of different groups of pupils over time and the data show that there are no significant differences in performance between different groups. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are given effective extra support so that they too make good progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils behave well because of the behaviour management approaches implemented by the staff, and there have been no exclusions since the school started. Attendance is satisfactory. Absence rates are above national norms but this is because some pupils with medical problems are unavoidably absent and some parents take their children on holiday during term-time. Pupils feel very safe around school and know who to go to for help. They say that bullying is taken seriously and dealt with quickly. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and most go swimming every week. Knowledge and understanding of the changes that occur at puberty are less well developed. Through the school and class councils,

pupils feel their views are listened to and they have a part to play in running the school community. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding because they are given many structured opportunities to explore the world and their own identities. For example, the school has set up a link with a school in Uganda and pupils have written their own letters to the children there, and in a science lesson pupils made and flew their own butterfly kites and experienced first hand the power of the wind. Preparation for adult life is good. Pupils acquire good communication skills, particularly in their use of information and communication technology (ICT). They have the opportunity to use money and go shopping when out on trips and residential visits, and older pupils apply for jobs around the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Most lessons are carefully planned to cater for each individual pupil in the class. Teachers ensure that pupils are given work that matches their level of ability and this helps them to make good progress. Pupils' behaviour is skilfully and effectively managed by all staff and relationships are outstanding. Teachers use a good range of activities and resources which involve and engage pupils, for example hot-seating, the sensory room and a range of artefacts for pupils to touch and feel. ICT is used well to engage pupils in their learning. Good use is made of visual prompts, signs and symbols to reinforce communication skills. The progress pupils make is carefully tracked and recorded and shared well with pupils so they know what they have achieved. However, pupils are not always clear about their targets for their future learning. Occasionally, towards the end of lessons the pace of learning is not maintained and pupils become bored and restless. From Year 1 onwards, lessons are highly structured and pupils can sometimes be over-directed by staff and not given sufficient opportunities or time to learn through independent exploration and play.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs of a wide range of learners. Appropriate priority is given to literacy, numeracy and ICT. The school is implementing the Primary strategy to update provision and moving to a themed-based creative curriculum. Through work with creative partnerships, the school regularly has artists on site working alongside teachers to enrich the curriculum and provide pupils with different experiences to develop their personal and social skills. For example, a theatre company, which has actors with learning difficulties, has worked with pupils twice a week and helped them produce a show called Hansel and Gretel which pupils are performing for the local community and neighbouring schools. Over half of all pupils across the ability range have the opportunity to integrate and mix with pupils from mainstream schools, either in lessons or extra-curricular activities. At the moment classes are divided between the two sites with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties at one site and those with less severe needs on another. This means that not all pupils benefit from mixed classes. However, work has started on harmonising provision across the two sites. In the well-attended after-school club, pupils enthusiastically take part in a range of exciting activities which include horse riding, swimming, football, dance and parachute games. Pupils have opportunities to contribute their suggestions and select activities of their choice for the next academic year. They feel safe and

are reassured by adults' presence. Lively discussions about healthy eating and devising individual menus are promoting their awareness of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care and support shown by staff are outstanding and this is clearly seen in their dedication and commitment to ensuring that all learners are healthy, happy and safe. The school monitors and encourages attendance well. Arrangements for safeguarding are in place and the child protection policy, backed up by regular training, ensures that staff are aware of what procedures to follow. The school's disability awareness scheme has raised staff awareness about equality of opportunity and the school has made adaptations to the environment to ensure access for all. Because learners are well supported by staff who are intuitive to their needs, they are challenged to make good progress. Pupils are prepared well for their transfer to secondary school. Daily contact with a range of social, therapeutic and medical services ensures high-quality support for pupils but at present there is no direct access to medical support on one of the school sites. There are detailed assessment systems to track learners' progress, both in their learning and their personal development. These assessments are moderated internally but not yet externally with other schools, and the resulting information is not pulled together in a streamlined way that would ensure easy access to inform future planning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher is establishing a strong and supportive management team who are working together well to link and establish common systems across the two school sites. Teachers and support staff are being well supported and trained to be able to work with pupils across the range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities once the school is on a single site. The senior leadership team monitors and evaluates the work of the school extremely accurately and is beginning to develop the role of middle managers in this process. However, not all subject leaders have the opportunity to observe lessons in their subject areas or to monitor achievement and progress. The school's governors are settling down in the new school. They are supportive and well informed and are beginning to take a more active role in ensuring high-quality teaching and learning. Statutory requirements with regard to an assessment of the impact of the school's equalities policy have not been fully met. The school gives good value for money. The school does much to promote community cohesion, although there is no written plan. Parents report they are treated with respect and understanding by staff at the school. Local community groups from a variety of faiths and cultures are included well in the work of the school. The school serves half of Coventry and has productive links with other schools across the city. Much work has been done on the global aspects of the school's curriculum.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b> | <b>School Overall</b> |
|--|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 2  |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | NA |
| 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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>       | 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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 4 |
| 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 |

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |

## The quality of provision

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 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

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <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  | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated   | 2   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 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  | 3   |
| 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**

26 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Wood School, Coventry, CV2 1HQ

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you. Castle Wood School is a good school and getting better all the time. We thought you would like to know what impressed us most about your school.

- You are very happy in school and enjoy your lessons; most of you come to school every day, behave well and are kind to each other.
- You are making good progress in the development of your communication and social skills, and also in your school work.
- You like and respect your teachers and support workers and work hard for them.
- You enjoy the outstanding range of activities provided for you, especially out of school hours.
- You told us that you feel very safe in school and are well looked after. There is excellent care and support for all of you.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher and there is an excellent team spirit among the staff and governors, who want you all to do your very best.

This is how we thought the school could get even better.

- Subject leaders could sit in on more lessons to make sure they are going well.
- Teachers and support workers could help you to learn things more independently.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Jones Her Majesty's Inspector