

# Castle Hill Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133177
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	334905
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacqueline Krafft 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>	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 (total)	350
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lorraine Balcombe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Talbot
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<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>	Sidney Street Folkestone CT19 6HG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01303 251583

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	334905

**Fax number**

01303 226537

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Castle Hill is a large primary school with a nursery, which opened under the Fresh Start initiative in January 2007. The school serves an area that has high levels of social and economic disadvantage. A third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion from minority ethnic groups, largely from Eastern Europe, has risen. Higher numbers of pupils than average join and leave the school at different times during the year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is high. The main groups are those with specific learning difficulties and those with hearing impairment. The school has specialist provision for profoundly deaf and hearing impaired pupils aged 3 to 11. There is a Sure Start children's centre and a non-maintained nursery on the school site. A range of extended services to support parents and families is provided.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Castle Hill has come a long way since it was given a Fresh Start and now provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. The improvements that are being made are recognised by parents and pupils alike, and they say that the school is enjoyable and fun. As one parent wrote, 'The headteacher does everything he can to make the children feel at ease, safe and secure in their surroundings but most of all the children are happy and content here.' The senior leaders have created a caring ethos and an attractive environment where pupils are keen to learn. However, despite the wide range of actions taken by the school to reduce absence levels, too many pupils do not attend regularly and this has an impact on the progress that they make and the standards they reach.

Senior leaders have focused their energies on raising standards and accelerating the progress that pupils make. This is paying dividends. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress and standards are rising, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the end of Year 2. However, as a result of their low starting points, the legacy of underachievement and previous inconsistencies in the quality of lessons, standards remain exceptionally low by the end of Year 6.

A firm foundation for this improving picture is the good pastoral support given to pupils and their parents. For example, the school counsellor and the family liaison officer work closely with those pupils and their families who are experiencing difficulties. Specialist teachers and well trained communication assistants provide carefully planned and closely targeted support for profoundly deaf and hearing impaired pupils, who are well integrated into the life of the school and make good progress towards their learning targets as a result. Effective links with external agencies and specialists have had a positive impact, for example in helping to reduce exclusions by supporting those pupils whose behaviour is most challenging. This good care and pastoral support is valued by parents, as captured in the following comment: 'My son started school with so many hurdles to overcome. He has grown into a mature young man who loves going to school.'

Systematic monitoring and regular discussions with teachers about the progress that pupils make have secured improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, which is now satisfactory. Lessons are planned to meet the varied needs of pupils, who particularly enjoy the practical activities and using information and communication technology. However, the pace of learning slows in lessons that do not consistently provide all groups of pupils with sufficient challenge and clear academic guidance to achieve well.

Improvements have been driven by the headteacher, his senior leadership team and a group of proactive governors. They work effectively as a team and in partnership with others, seeking and acting on advice well. However, they recognise that middle leadership roles and responsibilities are not yet sufficiently well developed to help raise standards and achievement further. Improvements in behaviour, the progress that pupils are now making and the quality of teaching and learning demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided with good support so have a positive and nurturing start to school. This good start is valued by parents, as reflected in the comment by a parent who wrote, 'I regard my son's stay in the nursery as a very happy and friendly period of his life.' The leadership and management of this key stage are good and staff work effectively as a team to establish a relaxed and secure environment in which children feel valued. There are warm and positive relationships amongst the children, and between children and adults. When they arrive in school, most do not have the skills expected for their age, especially in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their use of number and language. Adults make regular observations of children which are used effectively to check their progress and to plan activities carefully to meet individual needs and interests. Stimulating and fun activities foster an excitement for learning which is evident in the children's enthusiasm and involvement, particularly in the nursery. As a result, children rapidly increase in confidence and make good progress, particularly in their understanding of the world around them and in their use of number. However, their communication, language and literacy skills remain limited and few are working beyond the levels expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. Thorough induction procedures and initiatives such as the 'Home/School Diary' have been successful in positively engaging parents in their children's learning, helping them to make faster progress.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that the pace of learning in lessons is more rapid and all groups of pupils are consistently challenged to make good progress.
- Develop further strategies in order to improve attendance.
- Develop the role of middle leaders so that they have an impact on raising standards and improving provision.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

From their low starting points, pupils are making satisfactory progress. Results in the most recent tests improved at the end of Year 2, particularly in mathematics, and targets were exceeded. They improved at the end of Year 6 in English with an increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels in writing because this has been an area of focus. However, they fell in mathematics and challenging targets were missed. The school's tracking information and work seen in books and in lessons show that the progress pupils make is increasing and there is greater consistency between classes and subjects which reflects improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress because their needs are understood and they are provided with appropriate support. The support for pupils with hearing impairment is particularly effective so these pupils make good progress against their own learning targets.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils know right from wrong, and work well together and independently. They generally behave appropriately, although a few parents expressed some concern about behaviour, and know who they can talk to if they are worried about anything. Pupils have an enthusiasm for school and their enjoyment is clear to see. They say lessons are fun. Their spiritual development is satisfactory and evident in their enjoyment of singing, for example with the London Gospel Community Choir, and their responses to photographs displayed during an assembly about a class trip to a wildlife park. Although pupils study other cultures, for example through Aboriginal art, their understanding of other faiths and cultures is limited. Older pupils act as playground buddies and help younger pupils with reading and writing. The school council has influenced the good school lunch menus and pupils speak proudly of their contributions to designing changes to the local park. They understand how to stay healthy through eating a balanced diet and taking exercise. Their good skills in using information and communication technology (ICT), their improving literacy and numeracy skills, and their ability to work as a team help to prepare them appropriately for the next stage in their education. The school is appropriately focusing on exploring more effective strategies in order to improve attendance.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved. Teachers plan lessons in detail, ensuring they include a range of activities for the varied abilities of pupils in each class. However, when lessons are satisfactory rather than good, it is because these different activities are not sufficiently challenging to help pupils make better progress and so the pace of learning slows. Most teaching assistants are used appropriately to support pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They are used especially well to support those pupils who are profoundly deaf or have hearing impairment. The good behaviour management techniques and support for those who might otherwise cause disruption means that pupils generally settle down to their work quickly. For example, in one effective lesson seen, there was almost complete silence as pupils were thinking about what they had been asked to write.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school has had a focus on improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy in its effort to raise standards. There has also been a drive to make the curriculum more varied and meaningful through topics. These usually start with a 'hook' to help generate pupils' interest. A good example of this is when pupils studied transport. At the start of this, they went on a free bus ride and were able to sample a unicycle. However, this more creative curriculum is at an early stage and some pupils mentioned that they still 'would like to do more art'. The school's investment in ICT is making a good contribution to the pupils' enjoyment of lessons and their well developed computer skills. Extra-curricular activities are varied and include gardening, sport and music. Pupils are proud of their successes in various sporting competitions.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Pastoral care and guidance are particularly strong. Pupils are looked after well and their care is paramount to the adults. Parents value the support they receive and feel that they are increasingly able to turn to individual staff such as the family liaison officer (FLO) for support. Safeguarding issues and more general health and safety take a high priority, which is of particular importance during the present extensive building works. Academic guidance has improved and is satisfactory overall. Tracking information is discussed regularly and used to identify pupils who are underachieving so that additional support can be given. Pupils understand their targets and books are marked regularly with useful comments to help them understand how they might improve their work. However, there are missed opportunities in lessons to move learning on at a faster pace when it is clear that pupils have understood the objective quickly in the early part of the lesson, or when pupils need more guidance to complete the task.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher has built a strong leadership team and robust action has been taken to address inadequate teaching so the quality of lessons is improving. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and senior leaders understand that there is still work to be done to secure higher standards. They have a useful strategic plan for improvement. However, the role of middle leaders is not yet developed and their contribution to raising standards and achievement is limited. The school understands the community that it serves and is making a positive contribution to the increased integration of those who are new to the area. A plan is being developed to build on this and increase the pupils' awareness of the wider UK and global communities. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have established systems and structures to monitor the progress being made, including through focused visits linked to priorities for improvement, such as attendance. This is enabling them to provide appropriate challenge as well as support to the senior leaders.



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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?	3
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	3

### 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?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

<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>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

10 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Hill Community Primary School, Folkestone, CT19 6HG

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We especially enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking with so many of you. You were very friendly and confident, and told us what you thought very clearly.

You and your parents told us that you like school and it is a welcoming, caring place. We enjoyed hearing all about the trip to the wildlife park in the class assembly and the singing you did with the London Gospel Community Choir. We were also interested to hear that you have made a DVD about what it is like to be at a school that has been given a 'Fresh Start'. You told us that things have improved and we agree.

Your headteacher and teachers have made your school an attractive place to learn. You are well cared for and enjoy your lessons. You get a satisfactory education and are now making the progress you should in your learning. To help make your school even better, we have asked the headteacher and teachers to do a few things. We want them to help you make even faster progress to reach the highest standards you can in your reading, writing and mathematics. We think they can do this by making sure that the work you do is not too easy or too hard and that your lessons are always as good as they can be. We have asked them also to make sure that everyone in the school is more involved in helping to improve the school. You can help too by coming to school regularly and on time so that you don't miss your lessons.

Thank you again for making us so welcome. We hope that you carry on working hard and enjoying being at school.

Yours faithfully

Jackie Krafft

Her Majesty's Inspector