

Castle Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107520
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	336898
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nick Hudson
Headteacher	Mrs Hannah Mulholland
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessment and tracking records, a large sample of pupils' work, internal and external monitoring records, development planning documents and the governing body's minutes. Responses by 52 parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire were examined and considered, along with responses by 10 staff and 66 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by pupils throughout the school
- the quality of teaching and learning taking place in lessons
- the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation, and the extent to which leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school.

Information about the school

Castle Hill is a larger than average school with an Early Years Foundation Stage. Almost all pupils are White British. A very small proportion of pupils do not speak English as their first language at home. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. Among several other awards, the school holds intermediate International School status, Activemark and the Healthy Schools Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school with several outstanding features. Its outstanding curriculum, its absolute insistence on equality of opportunity for all and its first-class provision for community cohesion consistently inspire pupils to consider different perspectives, to reflect on alternative opinions, and to accept, respect and celebrate diversity in all its many forms. The excellent role models presented by all adults in the school underpin this. These very considerable strengths ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; their understanding of being healthy, and staying safe; their contribution to the community; and their behaviour, are all excellent.

Pupils make consistently good progress from the time they join the Nursery class to the time they leave school at the end of Year 6. This is because teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice being evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2. Teachers expect pupils to do their best, and are positive about their ability to do so. The marking of pupils' work is regular, informative and consistently guides pupils on the way towards improvement. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2009 was broadly average, showing that pupils made good progress from when they entered Nursery. This has been the case for several years. At the end of Year 6 in 2009 attainment in the national tests was slightly above average. Pupils did not reach expected levels because they were not properly prepared for the tests. The school took its avowed intention of 'not teaching to the tests' to an extreme position and did not provide pupils with any practice for the tests. Emphatic inspection evidence from a range of sources, including lesson observations and a large sample of pupils' work, shows that attainment in Key Stage 2 is now above average, markedly so in Years 5 and 6. The school is a welcoming, interesting and stimulating place in which to learn, even though the building is old. Pupils of all ages say they feel secure and happy here. This is reflected in their excellent attitudes to learning in all lessons and their above average attendance.

The outstanding curriculum has been designed to meet the needs and raise the aspirations of all pupils. It provides many exciting enrichment opportunities, during and outside lessons, to widen pupils' horizons and to inspire thoughtful reflection. Pupils say they like the way subjects are linked around themes because, as one pupil said, 'We can see how everything fits together.'

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. The school has moved forward considerably in the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection.

Self-evaluation is accurate and based on the objective analysis of information provided by the school's accurate and reliable, if cumbersome, assessment system. All teachers contribute in ensuring that the system rigorously tracks the progress being made by

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pupils term by term, but the large amount of information generated is not used to best effect in efficiently planning for further improvements. Nonetheless, leaders know where the strengths of the school lie and, throughout the school, there is an ambition continuously to raise attainment further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils are properly prepared through practice to undertake the national tests with confidence and are then able to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge and understanding.
- Simplify and streamline the school's system for tracking the progress that pupils are making, so that planning for future improvements can have greater clarity and precision.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils learn well and make good and sometimes very good progress from Nursery class to Year 6. They quickly develop very good attitudes to learning because teachers consistently set interesting and challenging work, well matched to each pupil's individual learning needs. Pupils of all ages are routinely expected to work things out for themselves. They like this, respond well, rise to the challenges set and learn at a rapid pace. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls, and no group of pupils, including the group with special educational needs and/or disabilities, underachievers.

When children join the Nursery, most have lower levels of skill than are expected and normally seen in children of their age. By the time they leave Reception class many are reaching the early learning goals. This good progress is sustained through Years 1 and 2 and national assessment results confirm that attainment is slightly above average at the end of Key Stage 1. Progress continues to be good during Key Stage 2. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment is now above average, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Reliable school records show that this is not a recent phenomenon. Year 6 pupils have not been able to prove the depth of their knowledge and understanding in the national tests in recent years, through a complete lack of practice and experience in taking tests. Pupils achieve very well personally. They are considerate and respectful to each other and to adults. Their behaviour is exemplary from an early age. The busy dining room at lunchtime is an excellent example of this. There is a buzz of conversation as pupils eat their meals, then clear their own plates and places. There is no pushing or shouting, there is minimal adult direction. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy through a balanced diet and exercise. Pupils report that they feel safe and are confident that any adult would help them should the need ever arise. They have a sensible perspective on avoiding dangers and when asked about bullying most are surprised that the question should be asked. They make an excellent contribution to the school community by taking on responsibility eagerly, for example through the school council or as 'playground pals' and rapidly tidy away equipment and resources at the

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end of lessons. Pupils choose which local and international charities to support. They are expected to prepare a plan specifying the reasons for their choice, required actions and expected outcomes. Attendance is above average and by the time they leave school pupils are thoughtful, self-sufficient and well prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good. Examples of outstanding lessons were seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage and both key stages. All lessons are typified by the excellent relationships between pupils and teachers, and the setting of work which accurately meets pupils' learning needs. The very best lessons move forward at pace and pupils become completely engrossed in the challenging work they have been set. They become oblivious to distractions around them and interventions by teachers are minimal. In a small number of lessons learning slows when teachers spend too long talking about what pupils are going to learn instead of letting them get on with it. Marking is very good and guides pupils successfully towards what they have to do to get better.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The outstanding curriculum provides a range of memorable experiences and activities which successfully encourages all pupils to consider what it must be like to be in another person's shoes. 'Stepping through the mirror' creates an atmosphere of consideration, respect and tolerance which runs through the whole school and from which all pupils greatly benefit. It also provides pupils with many opportunities to apply the knowledge and understanding learned in one subject across a range of other subjects.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Every pupil truly matters at this school and it is shown in the high levels of support that pupils receive. Staff know pupils and families very well and this facilitates prompt and effective interventions as and when issues arise. The work undertaken by adults to develop pupils' confidence and raise pupils' self-esteem is impressive. This impacts strongly on pupils' personal development and fosters the desire to learn and understand. However, pupils do not receive an appropriate level of preparation for the national tests in Year 6.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Under the good leadership of the headteacher, a spirit of shared responsibility runs throughout all adults in the school. Morale is high and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. School self-evaluation is accurate if a little modest. Regular monitoring of the quality of learning taking place in lessons is carried out by senior leaders. All teachers are fully engaged in assessing and evaluating the progress pupils are making. School development planning lacks sharpness because it does not define the actions required to improve standards, or the procedures for monitoring their effectiveness, in sufficient detail.

Governance is good. Governors are knowledgeable, active and give good support to the school. They are keen to help the school move forward and they know the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Provision for the promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The school is at the centre of the community it serves and has strong links internationally which help pupils to value and celebrate diversity. The effective partnerships the school has with parents and carers underpin this. In this harmonious and happy school, pupils readily recognise, accept and celebrate diversity. Staff work successfully and relentlessly to ensure that all forms of inequality are addressed and discrimination eliminated. Because promoting pupils' individual interests is at the core of all its work, the school takes its

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responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding very seriously. Current government requirements for safeguarding are met well. The school gives good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, or the 'Launch Pad' as it is known, do indeed get off to a flying start and make good progress, not only in their learning but also in their personal development. Strong partnerships with parents and carers are established from the start of Nursery, and are maintained well to the end of Reception class. Children settle quickly into what amounts to an 'Aladdin's Cave' learning environment which makes excellent creative use of its attractive inside spaces and unique outdoor features to stimulate and motivate their interests. Adults promote children's welfare very effectively. Their calm and measured approach provides a fine model for the children who, as a result, quickly develop good social and emotional skills. Children play and work together very well and are happy to share and take turns. They really enjoy their learning experiences and are content, confident and safe.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Children's progress is assessed and evaluated regularly, accurately and efficiently. Excellent planning, based upon these model assessment practices, takes close account of children's interests, curiosity and individual attributes. This ensures that teacher-led activities nurture a lively sense of wonder. Children move seamlessly and safely into activities which they choose for themselves, but which sustain their learning. Arrangements for transition from Reception class to Year 1 are very effective, and children move easily into the next stage of their education. For a child, this is a great place to be.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The Ofsted questionnaire was returned by 52 parents and carers. The very large majority indicated a great deal of confidence in the work of the school. A small number raised concerns that the school did not always keep their children safe. Inspectors rigorously followed up these concerns, examining in detail the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils, but found no evidence to support them. A minority of those who completed the questionnaire did not feel that the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour effectively. Inspectors disagree. Pupils' behaviour, from the youngest to the oldest, both in classrooms and around the school is very self-disciplined and often exemplary. Inspectors did not see a single example of disruptive behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Castle Hill Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 267 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	65	13	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	42	26	50	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	38	29	56	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	46	25	48	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	28	54	22	42	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	44	22	42	4	8	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	27	33	63	4	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	35	26	50	3	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	46	22	42	4	8	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	25	28	54	7	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	33	28	54	4	8	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	46	23	44	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	58	18	35	2	4	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Hill Primary School, Todmorden, West Yorkshire, OL14 5SQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed eating our Christmas dinner with you and your invited guests. We were particularly impressed with your excellent behaviour in lessons and in the playground, and how polite and considerate you are with each other and with your teachers. Several of you told us how much you enjoy being in school because 'the teachers make learning so interesting and so much fun'.

We found that Castle Hill provides a good education for you. You all learn well and make consistently good progress because lessons are exciting and teachers make you work things out for yourselves. Every adult in the school, including your headteacher and the governors, really has your interests at heart and they look after you very well. They make sure that you enjoy learning, achieve well and stay safe and happy.

To make Castle Hill an even better school, I have asked the adults to do two things.

- Make sure that pupils in Year 6 have some practice before taking the tests in the summer, so that they know what is expected and can show what they know and understand.
- Simplify and streamline how the progress you are making is recorded, so that planning for getting better can be clear and precise.

You can help your school to get even better by continuing to work hard in every lesson, and by remaining the sensible, thoughtful and considerate young people you already are.

Good luck to you all for the future.

Yours sincerely

Terry McDermott

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