

Castlefield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110522
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337518
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2010
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	369
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edward Collins
Headteacher	Matthew Flannigan
Date of previous school inspection	5 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who spent at least half their time looking at learning. They saw 24 lessons taught by 16 different teachers and looked at samples of pupils' books. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school plan and information about pupils' progress. They also talked to governors and staff in leadership positions. Inspectors took into account the views of 36 school staff, 114 pupils and 109 parents and carers expressed in their responses to questionnaires.

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

- pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school and how well teaching contributes to their learning particularly focusing on reading and writing at Key Stage 1
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning
- the effectiveness of the school in bringing about improvements in the curriculum so that it is motivating and meaningful for pupils.

Information about the school

Castlefield is larger than most primary schools. Most pupils are from minority ethnic groups predominately of Pakistani heritage. As a consequence, a much higher proportion than is usual has English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Their wide range of needs includes physical disabilities and behavioural, language and emotional difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are included in the Nursery and Reception classes. Extended services are provided through a breakfast club which was evaluated as part of this inspection. The school has recently achieved Healthy School status.

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

Castlefield is a good school. Satisfactory at its last inspection, it has improved markedly in many areas of its work. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers recognise these achievements. This was summed up by one parent who wrote, 'I am proud of this school and especially proud of the headteacher and the improvements he and his staff have made.'

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes but despite this do not reach the levels expected for their ages. As they move up the school pupils' progress is good and their attainment is now broadly average by the time they leave. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection when attainment was significantly below average overall. These improvements have been driven by the highly effective leadership of the headteacher, supported by his senior team and governors. They all share a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on self-evaluation that is searching and rigorous. There is no complacency and successful actions have been taken to address deficiencies based on a systematic review of its performance. This has raised the levels of achievement for all groups and confirms the school's good capacity to continue improving.

Very positive relationships across the school, coupled with the high priority placed on treating each child as an individual contribute to their good personal outcomes. This is evident in pupils' good behaviour and their interest in and enjoyment of learning. They are adamant that they feel safe and are very knowledgeable about healthy lifestyles. Pupils want to do well and say that personal targets are helping them improve their performance. However, there are still missed opportunities for them to be involved in assessing their own progress at reaching their targets so they can develop a better understanding of how well they are doing. Consequently, pupils sometimes have less guidance on the next steps in their learning.

Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and learning and an exciting curriculum. Indeed, everyone who responded to the parental questionnaire indicated that teaching was good. Children quickly become eager learners in the Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress in all areas of their learning. Pupils' accelerating progress in Years 1 to 6 is also the result of the consistency in the good learning and an increasingly creative curriculum which engages and motivates them.

However, there is room for even more improvement, as senior leaders' evaluations of the school's work show. Pupils do not do quite as well in English as they do in science and mathematics. The school recognises, for example, there are still missed opportunities, especially at Key Stage 1, for pupils to talk purposefully in lessons so they

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can develop their confidence and accuracy in using language to provide a firmer platform for writing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for pupils, especially at Key Stage 1, to talk purposefully in lessons to develop confidence and accuracy in using language.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning by involving them more in assessing their own progress so they can develop a better understanding of how well they are doing.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their learning, work well together and respond well to their teachers' high expectations. They make thoughtful responses in lessons and are good at helping and supporting each other in pairs and small groups. Pupils always try hard, behave well and want to do their best. As one older pupil said, 'I do well when the learning is fun and the work is not too hard and not too easy' and the school is really good at this now.' All groups of pupils, including the most able, those most vulnerable and those speaking English as a additional language make good progress and attain levels that are broadly average overall because of the good support they receive in lessons. Higher ability pupils, for example, enjoyed challenging themselves during mathematics investigations in Year 6. They helped each other test out their ideas and find solutions. On another occasion, a group of Year 4 children enthusiastically explored the structure of rhyming verse. They excitedly read the poems out loud, counted the syllables in each line and discovered how different rhythms are used to create different effects. However, attainment is not quite as high in reading and writing as in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. Although pupils enjoy the activities provided for them many lack confidence and accuracy in using language when talking with the teachers or their peers.

Pupils feel safe and are well cared for at school. They are confident that there is always a trusted adult they can turn to if they are upset or worried. Pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of healthy diets and the importance of taking regular exercise. This is recognised through the award of Healthy School Status. The breakfast club run by the school is enjoyed by pupils, provides healthy foods and adds much to their personal development.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is demonstrated in the positive way that pupils from different ethnic backgrounds work and play together harmoniously. School councillors take their responsibilities seriously and are adamant that they are listened to. Attendance is improving because of the school's very rigorous monitoring of attendance and punctuality. While basic skills are broadly average, pupils work together cooperatively and leave the school prepared suitably for their future education.

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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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

'I am really pleased and impressed with the huge changes and progress made at the school over the last couple of years', was a view expressed by one parent and echoed by many. Parents and carers understand that teachers want their children to succeed and value the way staff respond to their varying needs and concerns. The school provides good support to pupils and their families needing extra help and guidance. Their needs are carefully assessed and their support programmes ensure that they make good progress. Systems for keeping track of pupils' progress, although new, are being used well to set challenging targets for improvement. However, more time is needed to fully embed these improvements.

Pupils understand what they must do and achieve by the end of each lesson because teachers are good at sharing the lesson objectives with them. Teaching is best when pupils are given opportunities to review their previous learning, clarify any misunderstandings and to consolidate new ideas. Those who need additional support with language, literacy or numeracy receive effective help from teaching assistants and have full access to the activities. Adults are good at modelling responses to questions so

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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that pupils using English and an additional language experience the accurate use of language as well understanding devices such as irony. Teachers' marking often gives pupils a clear idea about how to improve their work. However, pupils are not always sufficiently involved in assessing their own work.

The curriculum is adapted well for the many different groups represented within the school. All pupils enjoy a good range of additional opportunities through, for example, sport which develops their skills and interests as well as contributing to their health, well-being and enjoyment of their education. The school recognises there could be more planned opportunities for younger pupils to develop confidence and accuracy when speaking during lessons.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong impact of leadership is seen in how effectively the headteacher and senior managers are embedding ambition and driving improvement. They have successfully rebuilt the confidence and self-esteem of pupils and adults and taken effective actions to raise achievement. As one member of staff wrote, 'The headteacher is a great motivator and has worked hard to raise standards'. This is seen by all as a significant success and an excellent foundation for future learning and progress.

Leaders and governors take very seriously their responsibility to promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination, and the success of this commitment is evident in the way barriers to learning have been effectively tackled. Consequently, standards are rising, achievement is good and pupils are reaching their challenging targets. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Links with the wider community are good. Arrangements for developing national and international links with communities are developing well due to the good forward planning but are not yet fully in place.

Governors are knowledgeable and experienced and provide a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders. They ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures are good and that all statutory requirements including child protection and risk assessment are regularly reviewed and approved. The well-managed breakfast club adds much to the pupils' enjoyment of school, encourages punctuality and attendance and makes a good contribution to their personal development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the school their skills and understanding are at very much lower levels than expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They quickly adapt to school routines and learn to play and work together very effectively. They make good progress in all areas of their learning although most fail to reach the expected levels for their age when they join Year 1. Adults care for the children well. Consequently, they enjoy being at school, behave very well, play well together and develop good attitudes to learning. The adults are an experienced team who work closely with parents and other agencies to provide good support for children who may find learning more difficult. Good use is made of assessment to track children's learning and to identify the next steps they need to take to move on. There is a good balance between activities that are led by the adults and those that the children choose for themselves. The provision is well led and managed and teamwork is a strong feature of this setting. Adults are continually seeking ways to improve the learning. For example, they have recently increased the activities both indoors and outdoors to encourage children's early writing skills. Opportunities are, however, sometimes missed to extend pupils' speaking to develop their confidence at using spoken English.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, its friendly atmosphere and the care given to pupils. They speak especially highly of the positive impact of the new headteacher and the changes he has made at the school. Parents were pleased about the improvements to behaviour and the headteacher's good relationships with pupils. Inspectors fully endorse these views. The very small number of constructive parental criticisms were shared and discussed with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Castlefield 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 109 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 369 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	58	44	40	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	69	63	39	36	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	63	58	39	36	7	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	51	49	45	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	56	48	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	53	50	46	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	50	55	51	0	0	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)	43	41	58	55	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	48	53	49	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	53	48	44	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	50	49	46	5	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	64	61	39	37	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	64	38	35	1	1	0	0

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.



12 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castlefield School, High Wycombe HP12 3LE

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking to so many of you. We were pleased to hear that you like your school very much. Almost all your parents are happy with the school too.

Yours is a good school, where staff and governors are working hard to make it even better. This means that there are lots of things that it does really well, but also that there are some things that could be even better.

Your headteacher and teachers have made your school an attractive place to learn. We agree with the comments of your parents and carers when they say that you like school and that it is a welcoming, caring place where you feel safe. You get on well with each other and help the school to run smoothly. Many of you said that you found the work of the school council very helpful.

We have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities, especially those of you in Year 1 and 2, to talk purposefully in lessons so that you can gain confidence and improve your accuracy at using language. We would also like to see you all given more chances to assess for yourselves how well you are doing at reaching your targets so you have an even better understanding of how to improve your work.

Each of you can play your part in making this school even better by continuing to work hard to meet the targets teachers set you.

Yours sincerely

John Earish

Lead inspector

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