

Caston Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121111
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358929
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Robert Nichols
Headteacher	Leonie Smith
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2008
School address	The Street Caston, Attleborough Norfolk, NR17 1DD
Telephone number	01953 483304
Fax number	01953 483149
Email address	office@caston.norfolk.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Inspection number	358929

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspection team visited eight lessons and observed two teachers. Inspectors held meetings with representatives from the diocese and the local authority, members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and spoke informally to parents and carers on the playground. They observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring such as lesson observations, and analyses of pupils' work and other assessment information. The inspection team scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 27 parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well does the school cater for the very wide range of abilities in mixed-age classes?
- How consistent is the approach of all staff to behaviour management?
- Is monitoring of teaching and learning sufficiently rigorous to bring about rapid improvement?

Information about the school

Caston is smaller than the average primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. These are mainly for behavioural and emotional difficulties. In September 2010 the number of classes reduced from three to two. There have been several changes to staffing in the past year. The school has Healthy Schools 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Caston is a satisfactory school. Under the determined leadership of the headteacher and with the purposeful support of the governing body, the school has dealt with an unforeseen series of very challenging events that have involved the whole school community, including a major flood over the winter and serious personnel issues. The committed and united staff team have all pulled together extremely well to ensure that any negative impact on pupils' learning has been minimal, and have gone far beyond the extra mile to ensure the school has run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Parents and carers are positive about the school's work, and vouch for the enjoyment it gives their children despite all the difficulties. One, speaking for many, commented, 'All staff are extremely approachable and friendly, they all work terribly hard to make sure the children are happy, safe and well taught.'

Pupils make satisfactory progress and attainment is broadly average. It is stronger in mathematics than in writing, and the school has moved to tackle this by introducing more drama into lessons to give pupils more enthusiasm for writing and broadening the range of opportunities for pupils to write across different subjects. This is in the early stages, but pupils already comment on how they find their learning more interesting, and attainment is rising. The school has improved the way it assesses pupils' progress. There is a more detailed and frequent analysis of how pupils are performing and timely interventions when any appear to be falling behind. The guidance given to pupils, especially through marking in exercise books and target-setting, is inconsistent. While Year 6 pupils, in particular, are clear about their levels of attainment and what they need to do to improve their work, this is not the case for all year groups.

Strengths in the teaching include the enthusiasm of all staff and their active involvement of pupils in their learning. With the move from three to two classes this year, there is an extremely wide range of abilities in both classes, and while teachers work hard to plan to meet all their needs, occasionally the pitch of work is not precise enough to move learning forward at a rapid pace. Most pupils behave well, but inappropriate behaviour is occasionally allowed to interrupt learning. Staff use a variety of approaches to manage rare instances of challenging behaviour, but some pupils perceive, and inspectors agree, that these are not consistently applied.

Previously good systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have been affected by the additional demands placed on the headteacher and the governing body in recent months, resulting in some slippage in the frequency of monitoring. While self-evaluation is generally accurate, the evaluation of teaching and learning is not always rigorous enough. The governing body contributes to the formulation of the school development plan and does some informal monitoring, but does not have a structured approach to measuring the impact of initiatives for improvement. In view of pupils'

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

satisfactory outcomes, and the effective work of the school's leaders and governing body in dealing with recent difficulties, the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of attainment in writing across the school by:
 - building on the work to make writing more relevant and exciting for pupils
 - ensuring marking and target-setting show pupils how to improve their writing.
- Give pupils consistently good learning experiences by:
 - ensuring that teaching always takes full account of pupils' differing abilities, especially in mixed-age classes
 - reviewing procedures for managing pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to ensure a consistency of approach among all staff.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - making the monitoring of teaching and learning more systematic and rigorous
 - ensuring that the governing body evaluates the effectiveness of measures to bring about improvement in a more structured way.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve satisfactorily, attendance being broadly average. Pupils said how much they liked the 'hands-on work' they do. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoyed making models of an aeroplane to demonstrate how hydraulics work. Pupils were very interested in constructing a 'working volcano' using food dye, bicarbonate of soda and vinegar. Children join the school with a wide range of abilities, but overall they are broadly at the levels expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and attainment is broadly average but rising, especially at Key Stage 1, where the increased use of drama has been piloted this year. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, make satisfactory progress overall, although there is some variation in the rate of their progress at times. Teaching assistants ensure that pupils do not become dependent on them, and expectations are at an appropriate level. Work is planned carefully to meet individual needs and is linked to their education plans.

Pupils say they feel safe at school, a view supported by all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire. Most pupils are confident about expressing any concerns to adults. They run a healthy tuck-shop and there is a high take-up of healthy meals. Pupils promote health and well-being through activities related to anti-bullying and the 'let's get cooking' club. They take part in plenty of exercise, including hosting local sporting tournaments. Pupils' good contribution to the school and wider community is seen through their willingness to take on responsibility, for example in looking after the school's hens. Despite the low number of pupils on roll, they raised over £2,000 for a local good

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

cause through their own fund-raising efforts. There are close links with the parish church, where the handbell club performs, and which recently celebrated a school 'Royal Wedding' of its own. This was supported well by the local community, though did not attract quite such worldwide interest as the one that followed it. The social and moral development of the great majority of pupils is good. Pupils develop their social skills through family groupings at lunch, with the older pupils helping the younger ones. Links with schools in France and Milton Keynes give pupils experience of how other children live in different places and cultures. The school prepares pupils satisfactorily for secondary school, with increased links since the last inspection. They are equipped with the expected basic skills for later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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

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

How effective is the provision?

Careful organisation ensures that teaching caters satisfactorily for pupils of a wide range of ages and abilities in a single class. This is due partly to the skilful use of teaching assistants in supporting groups of pupils, and also due to the amount of teaching the headteacher takes on herself, especially since the move to two classes in September. At times, work is not pitched exactly at the right level to challenge all pupils, and questioning is not always targeted at pupils of different abilities. Accurate tracking of pupils' progress is conducted at regular intervals and staff know the pupils well. However, this is not always translated into good guidance in their books to show them how to improve,

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

especially in writing. Pupils are set targets, but they are not all fully aware of what these are.

The curriculum is being adapted to take account of the increased number of year groups in the Key Stage 2 class, with topics that interest and motivate the pupils, such as 'volcanoes'. There are opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills across subjects, for example when they wrote eye-witness accounts of the eruption of Vesuvius, and newspaper reports of their 'Royal Wedding'. This is not so well developed in mathematics. French is taught imaginatively to the younger pupils, with plenty of action and no English spoken. While pupils have plenty of opportunities to participate in art and sport, there are fewer opportunities to practise music, especially in terms of learning instruments. Pastoral care is generally effective and there is good support for pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, but an inconsistency of approach means that the impact is less marked for pupils with social, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Some aspects of the guidance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are too informal, and the impact of specific initiatives is not always measured systematically.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership and has built a committed staff team who contribute equally to the school's happy and friendly ethos. Changes in teaching staff have slowed the rate of development, especially at Key Stage 2. For example, a peer observation programme did not take place when one of the two teachers went on long-term sick leave. The headteacher's teaching load has increased this year, so monitoring has not been as systematic and rigorous as in previous years. Lesson observations are too descriptive and do not give clear summaries of points for development. Nonetheless, because of the skill and dedication of all staff, outcomes for pupils are broadly satisfactory and improving.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is well informed and it has taken a key role in ensuring the continuity of provision for pupils during a very unsettled period. While it is involved in compiling strategic plans, it is not sufficiently involved in tight monitoring of the effectiveness of key priorities for improvement. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily, and ensures that all pupils are fully involved in its life and activities. There is good engagement with parents and carers, who are fully behind the work of the school. An attractive and fully updated website provides a wealth of information for parents and carers, and they work together with pupils in producing home projects, such as a shoebox diorama of a scene from a favourite book. The school

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

provides workshops for parents and carers and seeks to involve them at every opportunity.

The school promotes safeguarding procedures well, taking prompt and decisive action when concerns arise. Record-keeping is particularly effective, and all staff benefit from up-to-date training. The school analyses accident reports to identify potential 'hot spots' and replaced an area of gravel that was causing a lot of grazes as a result. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school reaches out well to its local area, although its action plan is at an early stage. Links with schools at home and abroad provide some insight into other environments for pupils, but they have less experience of meeting people from a wide range of different cultures and backgrounds.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Reception benefit from the interaction of older Key Stage 1 pupils in their class, and this helps to accelerate their social development. They have free access to a spacious outdoor area, and receive a balanced curriculum covering the six areas of learning.

Assessment of their achievements is good, and recorded in attractive albums that contain many photographs, observations and quotations from the children themselves. Children's progress is satisfactory. Their performance in calculation is not as strong as in other areas of numeracy, and this is being tackled with plenty of practical activity, such as counting 'dinosaur bones' and the support of a peripatetic specialist. There is good support from the experienced teaching assistant, who makes learning exciting for the children. Expectations are not always high enough within a group that contains a wide range of ability. While performance information is kept for the Foundation Stage Profile, this is not presented in a way that clearly shows progress over time. There are good links with parents and carers, who are positive about the experiences their children are having.

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	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Parents and carers, including those spoken to informally in the playground, expressed much satisfaction with the school. All those who responded agreed that their child enjoys school, the school keeps their child safe, the teaching is good and that they are happy with their child's experience of school. Inspectors found that whilst teaching contained good elements, it was satisfactory overall. A small number of parents and carers queried the progress their child was making and how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that pupils make satisfactory progress overall, and that behaviour is generally well managed, although there is some inconsistency in the approaches adopted by different members of staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Caston Church of England Voluntary Aided 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 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 53 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	63	10	37	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	67	9	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	52	12	44	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	56	10	37	2	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	63	10	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	44	14	52	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	52	10	37	1	4	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)	15	56	11	41	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	70	7	26	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	52	10	37	1	4	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	48	13	48	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	59	10	37	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	74	7	26	0	0	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



9 May 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Caston Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Watton, NR17 1DD**

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school and for sharing your views with us, both in conversation and through the questionnaires. It is good that you feel confident about making your opinions known. Your school is satisfactory, which means it does some things well but there are other things for it to improve.

Here are some of its strengths.

You feel safe at school and make healthy choices.

You help out around the school willingly, and are involved in the local community.

You are very good at raising money for good causes.

You have a strong sense of fairness and do your best to get on well together.

The school works well with your parents and carers.

The school is good at making sure you are kept safe.

We have asked your teachers to build on the work they are doing to make writing interesting for you, so that it improves. We have also asked them to make sure you know how to improve your work through the way they give you guidance in your books and through setting targets. We agree with you that adults do not always deal with unacceptable behaviour in the same way, and we have asked the school to look again at its procedures so that everybody is singing from the same hymn sheet. We have also asked them to make sure the work they set for you is always just at the right level to ensure you make good progress. We have asked the headteacher and the governing body to keep a careful eye on how things are going and to keep detailed records of what they find out. You can all help by continuing to make your views known to staff, and telling them ways they can make the school even better.

Thank you once again for your help. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.