



Castle Hill Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124663
LEA SUFFOLK LEA
Inspection number 281775
Inspection dates 17 January 2006 to 18 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Robert McKeown LI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Dryden Road
School category	Community		IP1 6QD
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01473741929
Number on roll	164	Fax number	01473741888
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Judy Palmer
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Sheri Wilks

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 17 January 2006 - 18 January 2006	Inspection number 281775
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Castle Hill is a community infant school situated in the north of Ipswich. All children enter the reception classes in the term in which they are five. Almost all children are from White British backgrounds. There are no children at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The number of children who have special educational needs (SEN) is typical for this size of school. Castle Hill has a higher proportion of pupils with statements of SEN and 9 children who are learning in the school's special support class. Most children start school with standards which are below those expected for their age. The school has gained a number of achievement awards and many of its outstanding features and innovative approaches are shared with other schools. The headteacher has led the school for seven years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Castle Hill is an outstanding school which provides an exceptionally good education for its children. Inspectors and parents support this view and the school rightly considers its overall effectiveness to be excellent. The quality and standards in the reception class are outstanding. All children are given a very good start in the reception classes and they continue to make good progress throughout the school. Many children in Year 2 exceed the standards expected for their age. Teaching and learning are consistently good and some of the teaching in the Foundation Stage and in Year 2 is outstanding. Children with additional needs make very good progress. Provision for children's personal development is outstanding. Children enjoy coming to school and they involve themselves enthusiastically with all that it offers them. Standards of care are excellent and every child is valued. Improving the attendance of a small number of children is an ongoing priority. Leadership and management of the headteacher and the school's leadership team are exceptionally effective. The school's success is founded on excellent teamwork. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all children reach their full potential. Governors work effectively with staff and give the school their full support. The school has moved forward well since the last inspection and its capacity to sustain success is strong. It offers very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to strengthen links with parents to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, standards are above average. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2005, results were significantly above national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents a good improvement on the results in previous years. The school met its challenging targets in reading and mathematics but not in writing. Girls' results were better than boys' and improving boys' writing is a priority this year. When children enter the reception classes, the school's data indicate that standards are below average. Children make good progress in reception and some make outstanding progress. By the time children enter Year 1, most are achieving at the level expected for their age. Children who have three terms in reception usually make better progress. Boys' progress was particularly good last year and they achieved standards which were higher than those typical in the local authority. This was the result of outstanding teaching and a focus on improving boys' attainment. In Years 1 and 2, progress continues to be good because teaching continues to be very effective, particularly in Year 2. All children with additional needs are making very good progress including those who do most of their learning in the special support class. In the last three years, standards and achievement have improved in reading, writing and mathematics, although the school recognises there are still improvements needed in writing. Actions to be taken to raise standards and achievement are clearly identified in the school's improvement plan.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are exceptionally strong. Relationships between staff and children are outstanding. Children enjoy coming to school and they involve themselves enthusiastically with all that it offers them. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and children's attitudes to learning are very positive. Children feel safe and secure. They know that they can share their feelings with their teachers and other adults and they have many opportunities to express their points of view. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively. The excellent support provided by teaching assistants and other support staff ensures that all children feel valued and included. For example, at lunchtime children can take time out from play to share their feelings in a well-organised nurture club. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school operates a very good reward system to celebrate all the good things children do. Assemblies and lessons in personal, social and health education contribute well to children's very good spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. An active school council makes suggestions for school improvements and older children act as school buddies, helping those who are new. Children develop a good range of basic and personal skills to ensure their future social and economic well-being. They gain a good understanding of the importance of helping others by raising funds for charities and sponsoring a child in India. The school is part of national and local award schemes to promote healthy lifestyles and care of the environment. Free fruit and vegetables are available to all pupils, and children participate in two hours of physical activity each week. The school is involved in a local partnership which promotes participation in sports activities. Attendance is satisfactory but below the national average and the school is working strenuously to improve it.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good. Some teaching in the Foundation Stage and in Year 2 is outstanding. A key feature of almost all teaching is the very good planning of lessons which takes account of the wide range of children's abilities. This ensures all children are challenged well. Teaching assistants are highly trained, work in close partnership with teachers and make a very valuable contribution to the good progress children make. In the very best lessons the pace of learning is very brisk, expectations are very high and the rate of progress is very good. The school is always looking to make learning more effective and has adopted new ideas that are proving successful. For example, lessons have a high practical content which appeals to all learners and fires their interests so that they are engrossed in their work. Teachers extend children's learning through effective questioning and discussion. Some children have limited vocabulary but teachers give them confidence to use and improve their thinking and speaking skills. Teachers' assessments are very thorough and are used well to plan work for children of all abilities. Teachers encourage children to assess

their understanding and evaluate their own work. They are very successful in helping children to know what they need to do to improve. Much is also done to encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning. For example, in hearing their children read and in taking an interest in exciting projects to enhance their own knowledge and understanding of what their children are learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is meticulously planned so that children enjoy their learning and make particularly good progress in a very rich and stimulating environment. The organisation of the curriculum is adapted very well to meet the needs of all children. Initiatives to improve writing skills, such as 'Hand Gym', and the constant drive to encourage children to meet challenging targets are having a very positive impact on children's learning. Links in learning are promoted very well. For example, linking work in design and technology to literacy. Very good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT), the outdoor area and educational visits, such as trips to local castles, to introduce new topics in exciting ways. Visiting art and music specialists inspire children to produce work of high quality and ensure that able and talented children receive high levels of challenge. Children enjoy an excellent range of enrichment activities outside lessons including art and crafts, cooking, sports, singing and computers. There is a high take up for all these activities which enhance children's learning and enjoyment. The very good programme of personal, social and health education helps children learn how to stay safe and healthy and to care for others.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support given to children are outstanding. All staff ensure that children learn in a very positive environment. The school works hard to provide opportunities for children and parents to learn together. A weekly 'Dads and Lads' club ensures boys are provided with good role models. This has increased boys' motivation and their interest in learning. Teachers and support staff, with the help of outside agencies, work together very well to ensure all children with additional needs receive excellent support. Arrangements for promoting children's safety and welfare are exemplary. Child protection procedures are well-known and closely followed by all staff. Children are confident about taking any problems to their teachers and know that any incidents, such as bullying or racism, will be dealt with firmly. There are very good systems for monitoring children's progress so that teachers identify quickly those children in need of additional support. Parents are promptly notified if there are any issues or concerns. An overwhelming number of parents say that they are impressed by the high level of care and quality in the education that their children receive. The school's principle aim, 'Together we make the difference' is exemplified in all it does.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The dedicated and inspirational leadership of the headteacher is excellent. She manages a team of highly committed teachers and support staff whose aim is to provide the best possible education for children at Castle Hill. The deputy headteacher is highly committed to improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning through her research work in school. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all children reach their full potential. Self-evaluation and its effectiveness are outstanding. School improvement planning is sharply focused on raising standards and on creating the best possible environment for children's personal development and well-being. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is entirely accurate and takes into account the views of parents, children and governors. Procedures for performance management are very good and the administrative team supports the school very well. The school's talented leadership team rigorously monitors the school's performance to set challenging targets. Curriculum subject leaders regularly observe lessons and provide detailed feedback on the quality of teaching and on how well children are learning. Subject leaders also make presentations to keep colleagues, parents and governors well-informed about the quality of provision. The school's Foundation Stage co-ordinator provides outstanding leadership. She and other key members of staff use their considerable expertise to introduce innovative and exciting teaching approaches, some of which are shared with other schools. Accommodation and resources are very good. There are up-to-date resources to develop children's skills in using ICT and this represents a significant improvement in provision from the time of the last inspection. The school now has a regularly used and well-resourced outdoor play area for Foundation Stage children. The governing body discharges its responsibilities well. Many governors are recently appointed and they have quickly established a good understanding of their role. They take an active interest in the quality of education provided by the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed the two days we spent with you. Overall, we think your school is excellent. Mrs Wilks makes sure that everyone does their best to make your school the best it can be. All the adults care for you very well and keep you safe. Your teachers organise exciting lessons so that you enjoy your learning and have fun. They give you lots of opportunities to talk about what you are learning and to give your opinions. We were very impressed with the displays of work in your classrooms and around the school. You are all trying very hard to make sure you do well in your reading, writing and mathematics. We enjoyed talking to you about the things you do at Castle Hill. There are lots of good things going on. We liked the new computer room and the fact that you can come in at lunchtime and have some quiet time. You have many good clubs to go to like cooking, art, football and computers. We think that having a 'Dads and Lads' club is a really good idea. We were impressed with your behaviour and the way you care for each other. Having 'star awards' is a great idea. There was one thing we asked Mrs Wilks to do. It was to make sure you all come to school as often as you can and that you don't miss too many school days. You have a lot to look forward to in the rest of this year, make sure you do your best and enjoy every minute.