

Castleway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105002
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	318490
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Lesley Traves

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Clitheroe
Headteacher	Mr S Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
School address	Castleway North Moreton Wirral Merseyside CH46 1RN
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Introduction

When Castleway Primary School was inspected in May 2006, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to provide an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. Subsequently, Ofsted inspectors have made five visits to monitor the school's progress. This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Castleway is a smaller than average size primary school, serving an area of high social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils attending the school live in the local authority housing nearby. Almost all are of White British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), including those with statements, is above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The school now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The committed, focused leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, coupled with the unwavering support of staff, governors and parents have been crucial factors in bringing about improvement. High quality support from the local authority has effectively underpinned improvements. The school meets one of its foremost aims in enabling its pupils to become confident, responsible individuals: personal development is a strength. Pupils behave well in all circumstances and show great respect and consideration for the staff who work with them and for other pupils. Older pupils are mature and sensible. They enjoy being trusted to help around school and support the younger children. They work diligently and are keen to learn, particularly when lessons are practical and challenging. They demonstrate great pride in their school and in their own words say that it is, 'getting better all the time'.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is a significant improvement and a direct result of better teaching and increasingly robust procedures for checking on pupils' progress. However, there is still some underachievement from the past at Key Stage 2 that the school is working hard to eradicate. There are also some classes where progress could be accelerated. Standards remain below average in both Key Stages 1 and 2. Whilst they are showing signs of improvement, they could still be higher, particularly in writing. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, and is improving. It is consistently good in Reception and in Years 2, 5 and 6. There are also some examples of outstanding teaching in Reception, Year 6, in information and communication technology (ICT) and for some older pupils with LDD. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations and consistent challenge. It engages pupils and fires their enthusiasm. Where teaching is satisfactory, expectations are generally lower and work set does not quite meet the needs of all pupils as well as it should. Consequently, pupils' rate of progress dips a little. Pupils with LDD flourish because they receive good quality, targeted support.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving as teachers increasingly plan activities that stimulate and challenge pupils. Initiatives such as, 'The Big Write' have been enthusiastically received by staff, pupils and parents alike. Investment in this is starting to pay off in pupils' improved attitudes to writing throughout the school. Provision for ICT is a particular strength. However, in Year 1, the curriculum is not planned effectively enough to build on pupils' past experiences in the Foundation Stage. It is too formal and lacks the richness and opportunities for play that pupils of this age need. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about how to keep safe and live healthy lifestyles. As a result, they are keen to take part in the range of sporting activities on offer and know what healthy food choices to make, although they confess that they sometimes slip up.

Parents are confident that the school takes good care of their children. High quality pastoral care is at the heart of the school. Staff work particularly effectively to develop pupils' self-esteem and help them overcome any difficulties they face. In turn, pupils say that they feel safe in school and know that there is always someone on hand to share their problems with. The high emphasis given to this area from the earliest stages underpins pupils' strong personal development particularly well.

The leadership team has set a clear direction for the future, based on a much-improved understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Thorough systems for checking on all aspects of the school's work and moving it forward have been established. Middle managers are developing their leadership skills and are taking an increasingly active part in school improvement. Governance is effective. Currently, leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. However, because the school has moved forward in key areas, it has shown that it has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the Reception class, their skills are well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and language and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They get off to a strong start as a result of consistently good teaching. Children are provided with a wealth of lively and exciting first hand experiences, which capture their imaginations and encourage a love of learning. They have plenty of opportunities to learn and play out of doors, although these are somewhat limited by the restricted space available. Children develop good levels of independence and the ability to work together: they concentrate hard on the tasks in hand because of the high expectations staff have of them. Effective use is made of assessments of children's learning to identify particular needs and ensure that support is provided. Nevertheless, despite making good progress, when they enter Year 1, their skills and abilities are still below average overall and a significant proportion has a lot of ground to make up. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed to ensure that children's individual needs are well met and they learn effectively. However, although children are well prepared socially for the move to Year 1 and staff share academic and personal information, better use could be made of this at transition to ensure that previous learning is built on more carefully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly in writing.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching to enable pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Improve the curriculum in Year 1 to fully meet pupils' needs.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, pupils' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory and this represents an improving trend. This is a direct result of better teaching and improved ways of checking on how well pupils' are doing. The good progress identified in Reception and Year 2 at the last inspection has been sustained. Standards are showing signs of improvement from their low levels although they remain below average. In the national tests in 2007, standards in mathematics improved at Years 2 and 6. However, standards in writing dipped significantly and detrimentally affected the overall English scores. Standards also improved in science by Year 6 and reading scores for this group of pupils were the best the school has ever achieved. Despite the improvements, progress is not yet consistent throughout the school, particularly in Year 1 where pupils do not build as successfully as they could on their earlier learning experiences.

Consequently, they still have a lot of ground to make up in Year 2. Pupils build steadily on their previous learning in Years 3 and 4. Progress then accelerates rapidly in Years 5 and 6 and this is helping to close the previous gaps in learning, although some underachievement remains. Pupils with LDD are making good progress because of the investment the school has made in planning programmes to better meet their individual needs and in providing them with strong support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy school life and are pleased that their lessons are becoming increasingly exciting. They particularly relish practical activities. They often become totally absorbed in their learning, especially when working in the ICT suite. Pupils behave well and get on well together both in lessons and around the school. They understand the school rules and are clear about what is expected of them. This ensures a happy, orderly environment in which pupils develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem. They show respect for each other and have good relationships with staff: they follow the good examples staff set for them. Consequently, the older pupils act in a very mature and sensible way and, in turn, set good examples for the younger pupils to follow. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall. Pupils are very willing to support the school community and others further afield through representing their classmates on the school council and working as 'Fair Trade Ambassadors': they enjoy making a difference. However, these types of opportunities are not widely available to all pupils. Attendance is satisfactory and the school works diligently to improve it.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The proportion of good teaching is greater, particularly at Key Stage 2, where teaching was previously the weakest. Some examples of outstanding practice are emerging. No inadequate teaching was observed. Throughout the school, teachers plan lessons securely and set clear learning objectives for different ability groups within their classes. They are making increasingly good use of assessment information to set appropriate targets for pupils. Strong relationships and effective pupil management ensure positive attitudes and behaviour, which underpin learning well. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning for all pupils, but most notably for those with LDD and in ICT lessons. Where teaching is at its best, lessons are stimulating and challenge all pupils to the limit. Expectations are high and learning takes place at a cracking pace, keeping pupils fully engaged. As a result pupils progress rapidly and gaps in learning are being closed, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Although the school has started to share this good practice more widely, there are still pockets of weaker teaching. Where teaching is less effective, tasks given do not fully meet the needs of all pupils. Sometimes, the discussion sessions at the start of lessons are interesting and challenging, but the activities that follow are lacklustre. In these lessons, expectations are not as high and the pace is slower. As a result, progress dips a little.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is improving as the school develops a clearer understanding of the learning needs of different groups of pupils. For example, provision for pupils with LDD is carefully planned and well resourced. As a result these pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Programmes aimed at developing all pupils' social and emotional well-being are having a particularly positive effect on overcoming barriers to learning for a significant number. In addition, 'The Big Write' initiative is assisting staff in tackling underachievement in writing, whilst boosting pupils' confidence and enjoyment of the subject. Its impact on boys' attitudes is particularly noticeable. The ICT curriculum is a strength: high quality learning experiences are enabling pupils to reach above average standards by Year 6. The school is at the early stages of linking subjects together to make learning more relevant for pupils. Whilst some good practice is emerging, staff recognise that there is much more to be done in this area. The curriculum in Year 1 lacks the richness, excitement and sufficient play opportunities to fully meet the needs of these pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff take good care of the pupils, who confirm that they feel safe and secure in school. There is particularly strong support provided for vulnerable pupils and those with LDD. All staff are well trained to meet their needs and make good use of partnerships with other agencies. Parents greatly value this aspect of the school's work. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements. The school places particular emphasis on supporting pupils and their families through the range of high quality, accessible information provided for them. Parents welcome this and state that they feel effectively involved in their children's education. Academic support and guidance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Robust procedures to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress are now established. This information is being used increasingly well to accelerate progress and raise standards. Pupils have a much better understanding of what they are aiming for because targets are set and shared with them. However, teachers' marking does not always consistently indicate to them how well they have done or what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management at all levels have improved. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have led the school through a challenging period with determination and commitment. They have focused rigorously on driving up standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning, although inconsistencies still persist. They have ensured that morale has remained high, fostered strong teamwork and have enabled other staff to develop their roles in bringing about school improvement. Thorough procedures for evaluating all aspects of the school's work have been put into place. Middle managers and governors are becoming increasingly adept at this process and are more closely involved in planning for the future. Subject leaders have a secure understanding of school performance data and how to use it to bring about improvement. Some are leading improvements in their areas effectively through the guidance they give to colleagues. Subject leaders for English and mathematics are at the

early stages of monitoring classroom practice, but are already seeing some improvements as a result. The school has laid the foundations to enable other subject leaders to undertake this work. The governing body has significantly improved in its role as critical friend and now provides challenge as well as support. It has made astute financial decisions to enable the school to recruit and deploy staff to best effect.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing to tell you what we thought about your school following our recent visit. Firstly, I want to thank you for being so friendly and helpful to me and Mrs Hughes. We decided that your school has improved so much that it no longer needs the extra help it has been getting. We have decided that you now get a satisfactory education and we agree with you that there are some things about your school that are good.

We are really impressed with the way in which you behave well, both in your lessons and around school. We are also pleased that you get on with each other, help each other and show respect for your teachers and all the other staff. We agree with you that they take good care of you. We also agree that your lessons have become more interesting and enjoyable and we particularly like the way that this is encouraging you to work harder. It was especially good to see how much you were enjoying information and communication technology.

We have asked Mr Hughes and all the staff and governors to do some things to help the school improve even more.

- We want you to do better in all your subjects but particularly to improve your writing. (We know how much you like 'The Big Write' so this should help you.)
- We want all of the teaching to be as good as the best, so that all lessons are really interesting and challenging for you.
- We have asked your teachers to make sure that Year 1 pupils have lots of exciting, practical activities similar to those for the Reception children.

You can help with some of these by always working hard and doing your best in every lesson.

Most of all, we want you to keep on enjoying school and learning well, so that you all become, 'Successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.' just like your school motto says.