

Castlecroft Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 104311 |
| Local Authority | Wolverhampton |
| Inspection number | 324015 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 May 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Judi Bedawi |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 277 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 84 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Margaret Simpkins |
| Headteacher | Patricia Keech |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 March 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | 21 March 2006 |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Windmill Crescent Castlecroft Wolverhampton WV3 8HS |
| Telephone number | 01902 556606 |
| Fax number | 01902 765639 |

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|--------------------------|--------------|
| Age group | 3–11 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 May 2009 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Castlecroft is a larger than average one form entry urban primary school with dedicated Early Years Foundation Stage provision. Fifty-two children attend part time in the Nursery and 32 children attend full time in the Reception class. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. However, the school is funded to provide for 12 visually impaired pupils, with nine currently on roll who are fully integrated into school classes. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average, due to the visual impairment provision. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, although a small but increasing number come from minority ethnic groups. The school was accredited with Healthy Schools status, Activemark and Gold Artsmark in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Castlecroft Primary is a good school. It provides a good quality of education for its pupils, who blossom, academically and personally, within this vibrant, happy learning community. As one parent said, encapsulating the overwhelmingly positive parental views about the school, 'I just wish I was six again so I could go there!' The approachable and enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and she works very successfully so that the school continues to get even better. The new deputy headteacher and other senior leaders work together with the headteacher as a high performing team who have ensured that new initiatives take the school to even greater heights, in order to benefit pupils. The exceptionally effective governing body has a very clear overview of the school's work that enables it to keep a close watch on the school's improvement and hold it fully to account.

From a broadly average starting point, children make a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, making good progress and moving into Year 1 well prepared for learning. The cracking pace of learning in Year 2 boosts progress through well planned intervention work, so that standards and achievement are above average as pupils move into Year 3. This represents an improving picture since the time of the last inspection. The positive impact of good teaching and learning continues throughout Key Stage 2, accelerating in Year 6, where there is much outstanding practice, especially in the quality of marking, which is having a very positive impact on pupils' consistently good progress. This good practice is not widespread and marking is too variable in other years. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach above average standards overall, though standards are better in English and science than mathematics. School leaders are aware that some pupils struggle with mathematics and find it hard. In Year 6, well chosen, targeted strategies are supporting pupils' quickening progress. Strategies to improve the satisfactory standards and achievement in mathematics are not yet being consistently implemented across the school and this requires attention. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including visual impairment, make exceptional progress and achieve very successfully from very low starting points. This is because specialist teaching, management and the sensory curriculum are all having an excellent impact on supporting their personal and academic development.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Boys and girls equally love school and attendance is above average. They appreciate the value of keeping healthy, with many involved in sporting activities and choosing healthy meals and lunchbox food. Pupils' behaviour, their close friendships and the respect for staff and visitors is excellent. They feel very safe, seeking help, if needed. Pupils say that they find learning is mostly fun, particularly using information and communication technology (ICT) in different subjects. The curriculum is good with considerable strengths, such as in art, music, science and multicultural education. Pupils are excited about the approaching visit to Normandy. Families highly value the well attended before and after school clubs managed by the governors.

Outstanding pastoral care ensures that all pupils are valued and nurtured. Partnerships and other school and agency links impressively extend the quality of support and well-being. Assessment and academic guidance is good. Year 6 pupils have specific learning targets and know the levels they hope to reach in forthcoming tests. In other years, pupils' targets are not always well matched precisely to individual learning and achievable next steps. As a result, pupils do not know how to independently improve their work. The school's capacity to improve is good, shown in the positive track record of improvements and the high level effectiveness of the senior leaders and governing body.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter the Nursery with skills that are typically at the level expected for their age. However, the intake is changing with a rising proportion of children, including some in the current Reception class, having less well developed early social, language and number skills. As a result, strategies such as the teaching of phonics are in place to ensure that children continue to make good progress. Leadership and management are good and are instrumental in moving things forward and ensuring children's personal and social development is outstanding. Tracking, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of children's progress are thorough and used well to identify individual needs. Parents are well involved in their children's early learning.

Children enjoy the 'Bugs' topic because learning and play activities are well planned and balanced so they quickly become engrossed in activities that seamlessly link to the outdoor environment. Children talk about different insects in class and then try to find them in their outdoor habitats. This allows children to discover for themselves and to extend their prowess in physical and creative development. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is further enriched by exploration of the wormery and the school butterfly farm. Learning is carefully matched to children's diverse needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with visual impairment, who are fully involved, aided by excellent sensory resources and the support of their teaching assistants and other children. Strengths in teaching motivate and inspire children to do their best. Well crafted questions make them think hard. Staff skilfully nurture and develop children's confidence and emotional well-being, so that their personal development, behaviour and relationships with other one another are excellent. Welfare matters are well addressed by all staff and lead to children feeling settled and ready to take full advantage of the exciting opportunities provided. This has a positive impact on developing basic skills so that children's learning really takes off and they make good progress, particularly in their early writing. Children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics to the same good level as in English, paying particular attention to developing pupils' calculation skills and their application of numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Improve consistency in the quality of informative marking so that pupils know how to improve their work and reach a higher level.
- Make better use of assessment information to set precise academic targets, with clear timescales, so that pupils in all years are clear about how to improve their progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their broadly average but increasingly varied starting points, boys' and girls' achievement is good in English and science and leads to above average standards being reached by the end of Year 6. However, achievement in mathematics is satisfactory rather than good and reflected in the average standards seen. A key reason for this is because, until recently, there was no mathematics audit in place to drive forward improvement. Following identification of strategies to resolve weaknesses in mental mathematics and problem solving, improvement is starting to appear in Year 6 but is still embedding in other years. School leaders are aware of the need to raise standards in mathematics and have plans well in hand to do this. Pupils make generally

good progress as they move through the school. In Key Stage 1, progress slows, but due to well planned teaching and rapid catch up and intervention strategies in Year 2, pupils are on track to reach above average standards in reading and writing as they move into Year 3. Pupils' progress is good throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the fully integrated pupils with visual impairment make outstanding progress due to excellent specialist teaching and support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love school. A parent asking about their child's day was told, 'I had the best day of my life!' The enjoyment and pride that pupils have in their school is clear to see in their delightful smiles and their desire to learn. They work and concentrate very hard, rising eagerly to challenges set by their teachers, and this really develops their thinking skills. Attendance is above average with classes eager to be awarded the 'Golden Gnome' for the highest weekly attendance. Pupils appreciate the healthy breakfast club and participate in many after school activities. They enjoy sport including swimming at the nearby secondary school. Girls have their own football team. The green team and the school council, following their election, take school and wider community duties seriously, with a 'Green Day' focused on school sustainability, while council members recently helped to interview candidates for the job of deputy headteacher. Year 6 pupils train to be visually impaired guides. Pupils know how to stay safe and take great care to look out for each other. As a result, behaviour is excellent. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, reflected in their relationships, discussions and written work about thought provoking sculpture and in the breadth of multicultural links with other cultures and countries. Pupils' economic well-being is good rather than outstanding because pupils' skills in numeracy are less well developed. Nonetheless, the oldest pupils say they feel very well prepared for the next stage of their education, but sad at having to move on.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teaching is characterised by close partnerships between teachers and their skilled teaching assistants that ensures pupils' needs and aspirations are generally well met. There is outstanding practice in the specialist teaching and support for pupils with visual impairment and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that results in their highly successful learning. In Year 6, teaching is typically outstanding. The very best practice includes well planned activities with ongoing assessment, questioning that challenges pupils' thinking, and a lively pace that keeps pupils on their toes. In almost all lessons, expectations are high, leading to pupils being well motivated and challenged, but this is sometimes less evident in the teaching of mathematics. Additionally, although there is good practice in the school, specifically in Year 6, marking in mathematics in other years and subjects is inconsistent so that pupils are not always sure how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils' diverse needs are well provided for within the broad and flexible curriculum. It includes outstanding features such as the very well adapted sensory curriculum for pupils with visual

impairment and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is integral use of ICT across the curriculum. Stunning high quality art work in a range of media is displayed throughout the school, reflecting different cultures, including pupils' larger than life sculpture of Reubens keeping a friendly eye on the hall. Music is exhilarating with dramatic Dhol drum beats resounding along school corridors. Pupils enjoy the excitement of practical science. Themed days and weeks feature regularly, as do trips such as the annual trip to Normandy in France or more locally, to the Second World War museum on Cannock Chase. There are established sporting links with nearby schools which enhance pupils' personal development well. The school is very aware that gaps and inconsistencies in the delivery and provision of mathematics, particularly in calculation, problem solving, mental mathematics and its development in other subjects, is a focus for ongoing improvement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The extent and quality of pastoral care and support offered to pupils, including those who are most vulnerable, are outstanding. School staff are always ready to listen. Families and carers have good access to many external agencies and professional expertise at times of need. Safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements.

Academic guidance is good overall, based on accurate assessments and good tracking systems to identify pupils' progress. However, the good assessment information is not consistently used to set specific targets for individuals that are clearly written to support their next step development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and her very effective leadership team are strengthened through the partnership with governors and the good distribution of skills that come together to ensure that the school is well focused on raising achievement and standards to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils. Middle managers take on their roles well and are increasingly involved in developing, monitoring and reviewing their subjects and preparing to carry out audits, following the findings of the recent full mathematics audit and the emergent impact on standards and achievement in the subject. Excellent governance is the hub of the school's success. Governors are prepared to take measured risks but with a clear strategic overview of the school's direction and needs, such as the astute leadership appointments made in recent years, so that vital skills gaps are filled and the school is ready to fly high. The school knows itself well with leaders regularly assessing performance and efficiently spending limited funds where there is most need. Analysis of achievement data is rigorous, but there is room for better use of average point scores to provide a clearer view of comparisons against national standards. The school development plan has clear priorities, including on site development of a new children's centre. Community cohesion is good with strong links through, for example, family learning, an audit and evaluation of impact, alongside good attention to equality and diversity. Partnerships are excellent through school links, trips abroad and specialist support for pupils with visual impairment.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 1 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| 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**

11 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castlecroft Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV3 8HA

On behalf of the inspection team, I want to thank you for making our recent visit to your friendly school so enjoyable and telling us so much about it. We were really impressed with how hard you work and how much fun you have learning. We can see how much you love school. We very much enjoyed looking at 'Gertrude' the cow and your bigger than life size statue of the artist, Reubens.

We think that you go to a good school. Your achievement and the standards you reach in science and English by the end of Year 6 are good. This is because everyone in your school does a good job in teaching and looking after you. We think that the way that you behave and treat each other with such care is outstanding. We like the way that you are trying to improve your school environment and how well you support big decision making, such as interviewing the new deputy headteacher. There are three areas that you can improve on. You all have to work, with your teachers, to get better at mathematics calculations and build on what you already know to use mathematics skills in other subjects. You need to ask your teachers to tell you what you do well and what you can do better when they mark your work so you can aim even higher. Finally, we think it would be helpful for you to ask your teachers to use the good information that they have about your learning to set very clear learning targets that you understand and can work on without too much help so that you make even better progress.

We are sure that you will enjoy working with your teachers to achieve these goals.

Yours sincerely

Judi Bedawi

Lead inspector