

Castle Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105150
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	331265
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Jones

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	214
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marion Kershaw
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Curley
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Castle Hill Street Tonge Moor Bolton Lancashire BL2 2JT
Telephone number	01204 332766
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

When Castle Hill Primary School was inspected in February 2008, it was given a Notice to Improve and asked to address issues related to pupils' standards and achievement; access to an outdoors curriculum for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage; leadership and management and pupils' attendance levels. It was subsequently visited in October 2008 when it was judged to be making satisfactory progress.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves a relatively disadvantaged urban area. The school offers Early Years Foundation Stage provision in its mixed Nursery and Reception class. Almost all pupils are White British, with a small number of pupils at an early stage in learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is above average as is the proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It has some good features. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

There has been a clear focus on improving the school's overall effectiveness since its last inspection in February 2008. As a result, the school has made good progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified at that time. In particular, it has worked successfully to ensure that leaders and managers at all levels are firmly and effectively focused on driving up standards. It has formed strong partnerships with governors, the local authority and other schools and agencies to improve its effectiveness. Just as significantly, pupils and a growing number of parents and carers share the commitment to improvement. Its leadership rigorously monitors the school's work and this has resulted in improvements to provision, particularly to the quality of teaching. Self-evaluation is accurate and helping to steer the school in the right direction. As a result, its effectiveness is steadily increasing. The good impact of this strong leadership and management can be seen in pupils' satisfactory and improving achievement and in the good care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils. It now provides satisfactory value for money.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and standards are rising. This is because the strategies for improvement introduced by the school's leadership are beginning to have an impact. For the first time in a number of years, standards in Key Stage 1 are close to national averages in reading and mathematics, and progress in these subjects is good. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is satisfactory and improving. However, the legacy of previous underachievement is still evident in the low standards achieved at the end of Year 6. The school recognises that it still has some way to go in raising standards in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils provide visitors with a warm welcome to the school and are polite and considerate. Their enjoyment of school has increased as behaviour has improved and work in lessons has become more relevant to pupils' learning needs. Behaviour is good. Attendance has improved as a result of the school's strenuous efforts to forge links with parents and carers. While the rate of attendance remains below the national average, it continues to rise steadily. Pupils have opportunities to eat healthily and take regular exercise and have satisfactory awareness of how to keep safe. The school council plays an active part in school life, but overall there are not enough opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school or in the wider community. This hinders their personal development.

Teaching is satisfactory and has improved considerably since the last inspection. This is the result of an intensive drive by school leadership to improve teachers' subject knowledge and skills. The more effective focus on improving pupils' basic skills has also been a significant factor in the school's growing impact on achievement. However, more able pupils do not make the best possible progress because they are not always given enough opportunities in lessons to fully stretch and develop their skills and abilities.

Care, guidance and support for all pupils have a high priority. There is a family atmosphere in the school and staff have done their utmost to make the building warm and welcoming. Pupils say they know who to turn to for support should they be upset or troubled. The school has improved its assessment and target setting procedures since the last inspection.

Given the school's improved performance, the accuracy and continued positive impact of its self-evaluation and the part played in this by leadership at all levels, it demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle into school life quickly and start learning effectively because of the school's close partnership with parents and satisfactory provision. They make satisfactory progress overall from very low starting points in all the areas of learning. Progress is quickest in numeracy and physical development. The development of communication and language is stronger than the development of literacy skills, especially in terms of writing. By the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are working towards the levels expected for their age. Children gradually become aware of themselves as individuals, learn to share and take turns in using the learning resources.

Teaching is satisfactory with some strong elements. Teachers and their assistants work closely together to ensure that learning is purposeful. For example, a good lesson in developing communication, language and literacy started with work on the carpet, discussing characters in a story, but as soon as children's attention began to wane they were led to reading and writing activities in the outdoor area. The curriculum is adapted sensitively to meet children's needs and is satisfactory. Resources are freely available and appealing to children, encouraging independent learning. These opportunities are well balanced by a good range of adult-led activities. Recently improved assessment procedures are developing positively and the information collected is increasingly being used to ensure that the curriculum meets children's needs. Children's health is always given a high priority and all welfare requirements are met. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The outdoor learning environment has improved well since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that more able pupils are given opportunities to develop the skills and abilities they need to make the best possible progress.
- Create more opportunities for all pupils to take positions of responsibility to help to improve their personal development.

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

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 build on their satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are now making good progress in reading and mathematics to reach broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. Standards remain low in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 although progress is satisfactory and improving. The legacy of previous underachievement continues to have an impact in Key Stage 2, particularly on the older pupils. Provisional results in the 2008 national tests show that standards remain low and this is reflected in the current Year 6, although these pupils are making satisfactory progress in relation to their

very low starting points. However, in other year groups a clear picture of rising standards and improved achievement is emerging, especially in Years 3 and 4. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very small number who speak English as an additional language now make satisfactory progress. This is because they are provided with effective support from teaching assistants and are benefiting from a number of well targeted initiatives to enhance their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Moral development is strongest, with pupils displaying a clear sense of right and wrong about issues such as bullying, justice and fair play. Behaviour is good both in lessons and around school, including at break times. Pupils say that adults deal well with any disruptive behaviour in lessons. Pupils develop a positive commitment to diversity and equality as they learn about the multicultural nature of society. Enjoyment of school life is satisfactory. The school is doing all it can to raise attendance. Rates have improved significantly since the last inspection and the school acknowledges that this upward trend must continue because attendance is still below average. Parents are supportive of the school's work and recognise the improvement in attendance since the last inspection. They say 'Staff are pleasant, helpful and approachable'. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and safe practices satisfactorily. They enjoy taking part in a good number of physical activities and do well in local competitions. Pupils' contribution to the community is satisfactory overall. The school council has made some good suggestions for school improvement, especially to the outdoor environment. Also, pupils of all ages are keen to fundraise for charities and good causes. However, there are not enough positions of responsibility on offer to raise pupils' personal development to higher levels. In view of pupils' satisfactory achievement, inspectors judge that they are now satisfactorily prepared for future economic well-being. The involvement of a member of parliament in an assembly during the inspection provided a good example of the school's strong links with its local community and its efforts to raise pupils' aspirations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and rapidly improving. Better behaviour and relationships are making effective learning possible, with staff increasingly successfully meeting the demands of the challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils. Praise and encouragement and an effective reward system are used well to help motivate pupils of all abilities to work hard and take pride in their achievements. In the best lessons, there are high expectations of pupils and the pace of learning is brisk. Staff work hard to provide pupils with attractive and stimulating displays and resources, and computers and electronic whiteboards add variety to lessons. Staff are becoming increasingly skilled at matching work to the needs of lower and average ability pupils to improve their achievement. However, this is not always the case for the school's most able pupils. In many lessons, they spend too much time being taught with the whole class rather than working together or individually on tasks that challenge and extend their skills. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they could.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and is making an increasing impact on pupils' achievement and on their personal development. The school has concentrated on ensuring its curriculum is focused upon raising pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy and these efforts are beginning to make a real difference. Work has also begun on developing a topic based curriculum in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. This promotes a more creative approach to learning and aims to build pupils' individual skills. It has been received enthusiastically by pupils who say that it makes learning more interesting and relevant. Opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills are provided in lessons in English and in 'Philosophy for Children'. The school is aware of the need to feature these opportunities more strongly in the rest of the curriculum to further enhance pupils' achievement and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Representative views from pupils include, 'Staff really care about us. Teachers are happy to explain, explain and explain until we understand the work'. Day-to-day pastoral support and guidance is a strength of the school. The school has developed effective strategies to raise attendance and promote good behaviour. For example, weekly attendance targets are agreed with parents, in certain cases through the involvement of the home and school liaison officer, who then reports improvements to the parents on a postcard. Behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection, moving from satisfactory to good because of the consistent use of rewards and sanctions. The incidence of fixed period exclusions has decreased markedly. Strong links with many external agencies ensure pupils' care and well-being. Vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils for whom English is a second language receive effective support to ensure that they achieve as well as other pupils. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils meet current government requirements and health and safety is carefully managed. In this safe and supportive environment, the vast majority of pupils reach challenging targets. Their work is regularly and carefully assessed, and pupils are becoming increasingly involved in assessing their progress. The school acknowledges that opportunities are occasionally missed when marking pupils' work to communicate the next steps necessary to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

It has taken good leadership and management for the school to make the improvements required by the last inspection. The energetic and visionary leadership of the headteacher has been a driving force in this process, very well supported by the skills and expertise of the deputy headteacher and by a motivated, hard working staff. Morale is high and there is a strong sense of teamwork. Thanks to a comprehensive programme of professional development, the quality of teaching and learning has improved with a subsequent positive impact on achievement. The ability of all leaders and managers to drive up standards was an issue at the last inspection. This has improved significantly and is now a strong element in the school's good capacity to improve further. Subject leaders are now fully involved in checking the quality and progress of the school's work and helping to ensure that classroom practice is effective. Better use is being

made of data to measure pupils' progress and to set and adjust challenging targets, which are used well to help improve standards. The school's strategic planning provides a clear and practical path to future improvement. The good impact of the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity is seen, for example, in the way in which it is successfully tackling previous barriers to learning presented by the challenging behaviour of a few pupils. The school is developing further links within its locality but community cohesion overall remains satisfactory. Efforts are being made to develop contacts more widely but these are at a very early stage of development. Governance has improved significantly since the last inspection. The highly effective Chair of the Governing Body leads a team of skilled and experienced governors who now take a major role in the work of the school. While offering unwavering support and encouragement, they are also asking challenging questions and have high expectations of the school's performance.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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 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

Leadership and management

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?	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**

Inspection of Castle Hill Primary School, Bolton, BL2 2JT

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit very much. I would like to share our findings with you.

When inspectors visited Castle Hill in February last year some of you will remember that they gave your school a Notice to Improve. We have decided that your school is now satisfactory and you are making satisfactory progress, so the Notice to Improve has been removed. This is the result of the hard work of staff, governors and yourselves. We were pleased with your good behaviour at all times. Your school takes good care of you. You told us that you feel safe and are enjoying school more. Your attendance has improved. You appreciate the opportunities your school gives you to stay healthy and to take part in sport and music and to visit interesting places. Members of your school council have helped to improve the playgrounds.

We would like you to do even better with your work and so we have suggested three things that will help.

- We feel that although you are making better progress now, we would like you to reach even higher standards in English, mathematics and science.
- We would also like your teachers to make sure that those of you who are quick learners have more opportunities to work together and by yourselves. This will give you more challenges and the chance to learn new skills and make even more progress.
- Finally, we are asking your school to find more ways of giving as many of you as possible the chance to have take responsibility and make decisions. This will give you more confidence, improve your skills and better prepare you for the future.

Everyone at Castle Hill wants the very best for you. You can help by trying your best at all times.