

Castle Camps CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110784
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325218
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Best

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Paula Fox
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Sheehan
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 March 2006
School address	Church Lane Castle Camps Cambridge CB21 4TH
Telephone number	01799 584270
Fax number	01799 584442

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller-than-average village primary school draws over two thirds of its pupils from the nearby town of Haverhill, with others coming from Castle Camps and the surrounding villages. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Children start in the school's Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception Year, many having attended one of a number of pre-school groups. The proportion of children joining the school other than at the usual time is much higher than average and the school is oversubscribed. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to other primary schools and includes pupils with specific learning, communication and behavioural difficulties.

The school hosts a pre-school group and after-school provision on its site. These are not managed by the governing body and were inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where parents are rightly pleased with the outstanding quality of pupils' personal development and well-being. Numbers in each year group are relatively small and the high proportion of pupils joining this expanding school, other than at the usual times, makes comparisons difficult from one year to the next. However, from starting points that are often below those expected nationally when they start in the Reception class, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6. A key factor in this is the warm, welcoming nature of pupils and staff, who ensure that newcomers settle quickly into school routines, make friends and have their differing needs met. Pupils have an excellent understanding of staying safe and a good appreciation of the importance of keeping healthy.

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical development where most exceed the expected goals by the time they start in Year 1. Good foundations are laid in Reception, but pupils' reading, writing and calculating skills are below average on entry to Year 1. They continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics to reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in reading and mathematics, and broadly average in writing and science. Throughout the school, standards in writing are lower than those in reading, particularly for boys. Pupils do not sufficiently write at length, in different styles or for a range of purposes across the subjects. The school provides a good curriculum which includes well-supported sporting and musical activities together with a good range of visits and visitors. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching and learning are good. Excellent working relationships between staff and pupils are the result of effective class management and organisation. As a result, pupils take mature responsibility for working on their own or in small groups. In the best practice, good quality and constructive comments guide pupils' next steps in learning. Support staff guide and encourage pupils, enabling them to make good progress. Care guidance and support for pupils are good. Staff know their pupils very well and provide highly effective pastoral care. Safeguarding requirements are met and links with parents are strong. Recent improvements to the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress in learning as they move through the school provide an effective basis for raising standards, particularly for those capable of reaching the higher levels. Staff have not yet fully developed their analysis and use of this information.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Staff and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Targets are challenging yet achievable. Progress towards these is regularly monitored by senior staff and evaluated by the governing body, who effectively call the school to account. The headteacher steers the school well, particularly in developing a strong sense of community both within the school and the wider community that has successfully promoted the smooth integration of pupils, parents and carers from outside the village. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage Grade: 2

When they start in Reception, the school's assessments indicate that children's overall skills and experiences are below those expected for their age, particularly in language, communication and early mathematical skills. Children make good progress and by the time they move to Year 1, many have met or exceeded a number of the early learning goals, particularly in their physical development, creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and personal and social development. However, aspects of children's early reading, writing and calculating skills remain below the expected levels.

Children settle quickly into well-organised daily routines and make rapid progress in their personal and social development. They are enthusiastic about learning and get on well with adults and each other. Children listen attentively and increasingly respond to questions with longer answers that reflect their widening vocabulary and understanding of language. A particular strength in the school's provision is the focus on practical learning through play. The well-equipped and attractive all-weather outdoor area provides a host of opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and understanding across the six areas of learning. They sustain their concentration well and describe accurately what they are doing or what they have discovered.

Staff provide children with a good range of interesting and suitably challenging activities. They make good use of questions to tease out children's understanding and model language well. Children needing additional help with their learning are well supported and good attention is given to all children's welfare and well-being. The leadership and management of the provision are good. Staff work well as a team and systems for checking on children's progress are straightforward and effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for boys, by increasing the opportunities for pupils to write at length and for a range of different purposes in English and in other subjects.
- Embed systems for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school and more sharply focus teachers' analysis and use of information to increase pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards Grade: 2

The number of pupils in each year group is statistically small and this can affect comparisons of one year with another. This was the case in 2008 where a dip in standards interrupted an otherwise improving trend in the broadly average results from previous years. In the current Year 2, standards are back on track and pupils are making good progress. At the end of Year 6, standards in 2008 were above average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in science. In writing, results were below average and this reduced the overall English results to broadly average. Although there has been much movement of pupils in and out of the school in Key Stage 2, appropriately challenging targets were exceeded in 2008 other than

in English at the higher levels. Pupils' progress is good, and overall results show an improving trend since the last inspection.

Over time, differences in the performance of boys and girls are not significant. In certain years, such differences are marked, as in writing in Year 6 in 2008. Pupils at risk of falling behind and those with learning difficulties are well supported and make good progress. Overall, more able pupils make good progress. By introducing new systems for tracking pupils' progress, the school is seeking to identify and support at an earlier stage those pupils capable of achieving the higher levels in their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There are particular strengths in their moral and social development - the bedrock of pupils' excellent behaviour and their outstanding contribution to the school community. These qualities successfully promote pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school and above-average attendance, and are especially evident in the ways in which they value and support each other. This is particularly evident in the positive response of pupils who find it difficult to concentrate or work with others. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare and they are well aware of what to do should incidents arise. The play leaders from Year 5 work well with younger pupils so that all organise their own break-time games effectively. The school council, with its elected representatives from all classes, meets regularly. Pupils have taken a central role in designing and building 'Camps Island', a substantial paved area where they can sit and talk or read quietly during breaktimes among the flowers and vegetables they grow. Pupils' sales of this produce and fund-raising for charities, together with their good information and communication technology (ICT) and other skills, successfully aid their preparation for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to learn and work well together. They listen carefully to instructions and carry these out promptly. Teachers' good use of questions to tease out and extend pupils' understanding is matched by pupils' thoughtful answers. Pupils appreciate the helpful comments teachers make about their work and, particularly in the older classes, demonstrate how these have helped them improve their work. Most pupils know their personal targets for improvement and, at the end of lessons, successfully summarise what they have learnt. In lessons, staff make good use of information about what pupils know and can do to reinforce or extend learning. However, in planning their lessons teachers often identify too many learning objectives because their analysis of tracking information about pupils' progress does not focus sharply enough on the next steps in learning for different groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A two-year curricular plan provides effectively for pupils in mixed-aged classes in both key stages. Key Stage 2 pupils learn French and visiting specialists provide instrumental music tuition. The school is working to develop closer links between subjects, and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught ICT and other skills in year groups, which enable adults to give more attention to fewer learners. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects are more limited. Visits and visitors, including residential trips for pupils in Years 5 and 6, make an important contribution to pupils' personal development and wider learning. The school actively promotes pupils' understanding of global issues, such as sustainability. As a result, pupils take an active role in recycling, energy saving and composting. Many extra-curricular activities cater for different ages and interests, and are well supported by pupils. These include a Lego club, ukulele band, football, netball and the gardening club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff undertake regular training in first aid and safeguarding procedures. Policies for promoting pupils' welfare, health and safety and attendance are comprehensive and well implemented. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good, with pupils identified promptly and well supported by staff. Parents are particularly pleased with the high standards of pastoral support the school provides and pupils do not hesitate in saying they know who to turn to for help when needed. The school has improved its systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress since the last inspection, with recent changes enabling sharper identification of pupils who may be falling behind or are capable of higher standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is well supported by an experienced staff team who undertake their subject and other responsibilities effectively and share his clear vision for the school's development. Regular discussions and reviews about how groups of pupils are progressing inform decisions about the deployment of support staff and different approaches to teaching and learning, such as the year-group skills lessons in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. The governing body is well informed about the school's work, including pupils' performance in statutory and non-statutory tests, and it manages the school's budget prudently. A number of governors are regular visitors to the school, supporting visits and other activities. Consequently, they have a first-hand knowledge of its day-to-day work. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. It is a very strong and supportive community where relationships between parents, staff and pupils are highly valued and secure. Links with the local church and village community are well established and the school works well with outside experts and its partner schools to support pupils' achievement and welfare. Pupils' knowledge and respect for those from different cultures and faiths are effectively developed through the curriculum and their appreciation of sustainability issues provides them with a world-wide perspective.

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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?	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?	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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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.

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well 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

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

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	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



23 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Camps Church of England Primary School, Cambridge, CB21 4TH

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school last week. I am particularly grateful to those of you who showed me their work and told me about what goes on in lessons and around school. Your behaviour is outstanding and you are keen to work hard. Well done! I was delighted to hear from those of you who have joined the school other than in Reception about how you have been warmly welcomed and quickly settled down. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and a good appreciation of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise.

The staff care for you very well and your parents are rightly pleased that you feel happy and secure. The school provides you with a good range of activities that you enjoy. Visits and visitors help you to learn more about a variety of subjects. Teaching is good and you make good progress. By the end of Year 6, your standards in reading and mathematics are good. However, across the school your writing is not as good, especially that of boys. I have asked the staff and governors to improve this, particularly by giving you more opportunities to write at greater length in English lessons and in other subjects.

Many of you explained your individual targets and told me how helpful you find the comments your teachers make when they mark your work. Recently, the staff have improved the way in which they keep track of how you are getting on. I have asked them to increase the use they make of this information when planning their lessons to help you make even better progress.

Keep working hard and enjoying school!

Yours sincerely

Mike Best
Lead inspector