

Castle View Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111116
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	288862
Inspection date	25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	145
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr K Robinson
Headteacher	Mrs Lodzia Morris
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001
School address	Mead Way Halton Brook Runcorn Cheshire WA7 2DZ
Telephone number	01928 563970
Fax number	01928 581417

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most pupils who attend this smaller than average school come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The vast majority are of White British origin and only a tiny minority speak English as an additional language. Higher proportions than normal are entitled to free school meals or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some year groups the proportion of pupils who have joined or left the school at times other than at the start of the school year is considerably above average. Awards of Healthy School status and of the Sports England ActiveMark have been gained. The school has a stable staff but because of demographic factors the number of pupils on roll has declined steadily since the last inspection in 2001.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It provides excellent value for money. Typical of parents' views is: 'This is a brilliant school, the children are very polite and respectful. The headteacher and staff are very approachable and its work is focused on the child and parents.' This sums up well many of its strengths.

The school's leaders and managers, very ably led by an excellent headteacher, are highly ambitious for the pupils, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. They are determined that all pupils should achieve as well as they possibly can. Overwhelmingly, this ambition is fulfilled because of extremely well focused planning, rigorous performance management and perceptive self-evaluation of the school's provision.

Many children enter Nursery with poor all-round skills. They make outstanding progress in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) because of the excellent provision. Pupils also make rapid progress in Years 3 to 6 and leave the school attaining high standards in English, mathematics and science. In Years 1 and 2 pupils' progress is good overall, but the achievements of the more able pupils could be better in writing and in mathematics. However, by the time these pupils leave Year 6 they achieve extremely well in all subjects.

While paying due attention to pupils' academic achievement the school does not neglect their personal and social development. A rich curriculum and excellent teaching promote pupils' basic skills very effectively. Stimulating activities and a wide range of interesting visitors and subject specialists add much value to pupils' knowledge, understanding and confidence, and to their ability to relate very well to each other and to adults. Although pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent, the school could do more to provide them with first-hand knowledge of the richness of different cultures. The very flexible, effective way in which teaching mixed-age groups is used to fully meet the needs of all pupils is a key contributor to their excellent achievements. Equally strong is the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. This is particularly effective for the most vulnerable pupils and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The very analytical way in which pupils' progress is checked means that help is given very promptly so that those pupils in danger of falling behind keep up with the rest.

Pupils fully appreciate how well they are provided for and respond very enthusiastically by behaving impeccably in lessons and sensibly around the school. They appreciate the health benefits of eating sensibly and exercising regularly. Pupils are keen to attend the many after-school clubs on offer and participate enthusiastically in the many very stimulating lessons. 'Teachers are friendly and give you lots of help'; 'we are like a big family'; 'we are one of the best schools in the country' are pupils' testaments to how much they value their school. Because the school knows itself well, and has improved so much since the last inspection, it has outstanding capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievements of the more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 in writing and mathematics.
- Through first-hand knowledge, better promote pupils' understanding of the richness of different cultures and of their contribution to our society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress, entering Nursery with well below average skills and leaving Year 6 with standards in English, mathematics and science that are significantly higher than average.

Children enter Nursery with poor standards, especially in their ability to communicate through speech and language and to recognise number and understand mathematical ideas. They make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage but still many enter Year 1 with standards below those expected in most areas of their learning.

Most pupils continue to progress well in Years 1 and 2, building securely on their basic skills in English and mathematics. However, recent data indicates that the achievements of the more able pupils are lower than in the past. Progress accelerates considerably in Years 3 to 6 because of the solid foundations laid earlier, outstanding teaching and the high expectations of senior management. In these year groups, regardless of ability, all pupils' achievement is outstanding, considerably exceeding the average progress of pupils nationally. Particularly effective interventions and support ensure that pupils who find learning more difficult attain at least expected standards and that a far higher proportion than normal reach the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. National data indicates that over the last three years the achievements of Year 6 pupils have been in the top 1% of schools nationally. The school's challenging targets for its performance in the Year 6 national tests have been consistently met or exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Although they are well aware of their own culture, and differences between major faiths and customs of other cultures, they have little first-hand knowledge of how minority ethnic groups enrich our society.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and show this through their excellent behaviour, attitudes and willingness to assume responsibility. Their participation in out-of-class activities is also excellent. They know how to lead healthy lifestyles, and realise that the good quality of relationships contributes much to their emotional well-being. Through the school council, the pupils have a strong voice in influencing the school's work. Because they have very good basic skills, work harmoniously in teams and take a delight in problem-solving, they develop excellent workplace skills. After a period when pupils' attendance was a concern, it has now improved to average levels because of a successful strategy implemented by senior managers in partnership with external agencies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

There is much outstanding and good teaching. The high quality of teaching is complemented by successful support, both in and out of the classroom. This is particularly effective for pupils who find learning more difficult or behaving well a struggle. As a result of this excellent provision

the vast majority of pupils make outstanding academic progress and develop as very effective young citizens.

The teaching of English is exceptionally good because of a concerted drive by senior and middle leaders to improve this aspect. A Year 6 lesson observed exemplified this excellence. Pupils improved their descriptive writing considerably as a result of the teacher flashing images onto the whiteboard to stimulate their use of dramatic language. Throughout the school, the pace of learning, teachers' very good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils' work rate and behaviour contribute significantly to positive and productive learning. Pupils' learning is considerably enhanced by specialist teachers in the arts, French and sport. An area of development is to provide more challenge for the more able pupils in Years 1 and 2.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum fully meets requirements, meets the needs of pupils very well and promotes their basic skills most effectively. The creative use of mixed-age classes, especially in Years 3 to 6, provides exactly the right diet for pupils and makes a very good contribution to their excellent achievements, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are rich experiences that stimulate pupils and enhance their love of learning. This is particularly evident in the arts and in sport. Many opportunities to link learning across subjects are seized to bring, for example, Shakespeare's plays to life for the pupils. The use of drama groups, musicians and visiting specialists promotes pupils' love of the arts and their better understanding of health and safety issues. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is particularly stimulating and plays a large part in their outstanding progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents and pupils loudly and understandably praise the quality of care, support and guidance provided. It is indeed excellent and ensures that pupils are safe, healthy and happy and make excellent progress. Systems to safeguard and protect pupils are fully in place. Procedures to encourage good attendance and punctuality are increasingly successful; those that ensure pupils' very good behaviour and high achievement are particularly strong and productive. Very effective links established with external agencies result in excellent provision for the more vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

'It all stems from the top' was a typical comment from parents and governors. The high quality leadership demonstrated by the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders is a key factor in the success of this school. The headteacher's calmness, openness and determination enable staff and pupils to develop and flourish. Leadership responsibilities are delegated effectively, performance is managed rigorously and improvement is constantly sought and achieved. The leadership of English is particularly effective and this has resulted in high standards and achievement in this subject. Governors are highly effective, supporting the school well and keeping a watchful eye on the school's finances. Effective partnerships with other schools, the local authority and other agencies all contribute well to the outstanding success of this school.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1

The quality of provision

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

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Castle View Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 2DZ

I would like to thank you very much for the way you made me feel so welcome when I visited Castle View recently. I very much enjoyed being with you in your lessons and talking with you about your school. You told me that it is a brilliant school and I agree with you that it is excellent. You have really good teachers who help you to make very fast progress so that most of you reach high standards by the time you move to secondary school. You are very polite, get on really well together and develop as super young citizens. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have a lovely start to their schooling. There are many very interesting activities provided for you both in and out of the classroom. I was most impressed with the quality of your artwork around the school, and the specialist teachers you have for music, French and sport that help you to reach high standards in these subjects. Your headteacher and the other adults who run the school have a very good knowledge of how you are all getting on and how to help those of you who need more support to do well.

There are a couple of things I have asked the school to do to make it even better. A few of you in Years 1 and 2 who find learning a bit easier than most can be helped to achieve even more. I have also asked the school to give you more opportunities to find out how other cultures make our lives richer and more interesting.

Thank you again for being so friendly, polite and enthusiastic.