

Castleway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105002
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336402
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Leszek Iwaskow HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Pete Henry
Headteacher	Mr Steve Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, observed all seven teachers and held meetings with staff, governors, pupils and representatives from the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies and procedures, data and analysis about pupils' current and past performance, schemes of work, subject leaders' files, pupils' work, lesson plans, monitoring reports and 44 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- attainment and progress in English and mathematics as well as a range of other subjects, including religious education
- the quality of learning to determine whether teaching has improved since the previous inspection and whether it meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to succeed
- whether the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils
- the effectiveness of leadership at all levels in planning for and managing change and improvement.

Information about the school

Castleway is a smaller than average primary school. The number on roll is declining. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Almost all are of White British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. There are, however, no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved Healthy Schools Status, the Activemark Award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The school is also a Fairtrade school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Since the last inspection the school has made too little progress. Overall, standards are well below average and achievement is inadequate. Although there are pockets of good teaching, the overall quality of teaching across the school is satisfactory and lacks the strength to eradicate the legacy of underachievement. Information from assessments is not used well to plan work that matches the needs of all pupils and this slows learning. The curriculum is not being managed effectively and pupils are getting a very fragmented experience across many subjects. The school is not meeting statutory requirements in several areas, including religious education. Leaders and managers at all levels lack a clear vision for the school or a coherent plan to bring about improvement. The quality of provision is not monitored effectively and weak practice has not been challenged. Support and training has not led to sufficient improvement in many areas because managers have not maintained the impetus or sustained the effort needed to embed good practice into the culture of the school. The governing body has not been sufficiently involved in asking for answers and challenging the poor or erratic rate of progress, particularly in terms of standards in English, mathematics and science.

Nevertheless, there are positive aspects of the school's work. Children get a good, start to their schooling in Reception. Parents and carers are confident that the school provides a safe and welcoming environment for pupils. Pupils are friendly and open; behaviour around the school and in most lessons is satisfactory. Some strategies are beginning to make a difference to the achievements and aspirations of some pupils. These include the 'Big Write', where pupils write creatively each week on a topic related to areas they have studied recently in subjects other than English, and the 'Aim Higher' initiative which enables pupils to spend a day at a university to raise their awareness of career options linked to higher education.

Pupils are enthusiastic and the majority have a clear desire to learn. When they are stimulated by good teaching they respond positively and show what they can achieve. Where a subject is well managed, such as information and communication

technology (ICT), most pupils make good progress because incremental steps are planned and activities are well structured to build on previous learning. Unfortunately, in many of the other subjects this is not the case. Enrichment opportunities are also limited and pupils get very little exposure to the diversity of the world in which they live. They are keen to take responsibility and have a greater involvement in the day-to-day activities around the school. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to engage actively in changing their school and community for the better.

Leaders and managers have not been consistent in providing the vision, drive and energy to enable the school to move forward. As a consequence, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is limited. However, there are some positive aspects such as examples of better classroom practice, the enthusiasm of pupils, and the support of parents, carers and the local community that provide a platform on which future success can be built.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in core and foundation subjects by:
 - improving teaching so that more lessons are consistently good or better and engage and challenge pupils
 - ensuring that assessment informs teachers' planning and is used effectively to support learning for all pupils
 - developing and delivering a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, provides them with a wide range of positive experiences and effectively promotes community cohesion.

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels including the governing body take responsibility and are accountable for:
 - developing and sharing a vision for the school's improvement and sustaining the momentum to achieve this
 - monitoring the school's work rigorously and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses accurately to provide a secure basis for coherent improvement planning
 - ensuring that the curriculum meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Achievement is unsatisfactory because progress is erratic and inadequate overall as pupils move through the school. By the time they complete Year 6 standards for many remain well below national expectations in many subjects. Few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment. In many of the foundation subjects such as art, music, geography, history and religious education, pupils make poor progress because they receive only limited opportunities to study these subjects. However, pupils make good progress in developing their computing skills because the ICT curriculum is well organised and well taught. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and they feel safe and secure. Attendance has improved and is close to the average, although there are still a very small number of persistent absentees. Behaviour is satisfactory and pupils are orderly around the school. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are better when they are engaged and interested in the activities. For example, in a good lesson on 'mystery numbers' the teacher enabled pupils to learn by taking them clearly through a logical sequence of clues to reach a correct solution. Pupils understood what they needed to do and were motivated to work together to solve more problems. Their attitudes are more passive and uninterested where the teacher tends to talk for too long and learning then becomes less effective. Relationships around the school are positive and on those few occasions when problems occur, pupils say that these are 'quickly sorted out by teachers'. Pupils understand that they should eat healthily, although some choose not to do so. The school provides sufficient time for physical activity during lessons but few additional opportunities at other times and after school.

Pupils have only limited opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the local community. The school council does not meet regularly and is ineffective and there are few opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibilities except as monitors. Apart from some seasonal activities such as carol singing or harvest festival, there are also few opportunities for pupils to engage productively with the local community. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. Older pupils, especially, have a strong sense of fair play as, for example, when they expressed their concerns about inconsistency in the way rewards and punishments were managed. They do not have much first-hand experience of people from different cultures and have a limited understanding of the diversity of life beyond their immediate area.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	4
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Although some good teaching was observed, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. There are disparities between classes so that as pupils progress through the

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

school they get mixed experiences resulting in underachievement overall. In a minority of lessons where teaching was observed to be good:

- planning was clear and teachers had a good understanding of what they wanted pupils to achieve
- pupils understood what they needed to do because the teacher clearly explained the task
- effective use was made of visual stimuli to engage and enlighten pupils about a particular idea or point
- learning tasks were clearly structured and progressively built up pupils' understanding and skills, often providing greater and more complex challenges which intrigued and engaged pupils and particularly stretched the more-able.

Generally, however, where teaching was weaker:

- it tended to lack structure with no clear links between tasks
- planning focused on the content and not the learning
- teachers controlled rather than stimulated pupils
- low-level tasks occupied pupils rather than interesting them in their learning
- teachers' talk dominated and restricted opportunities for pupils to express themselves and develop their own speaking skills.

An easier to use system to monitor pupils' progress has been put in place but it has not had an impact on raising standards or been used to inform classroom and additional support effectively. Apart from in mathematics, pupils are unclear of what they must do to improve and what they can achieve.

Pupils said that they particularly enjoyed those lessons where they could work practically with classmates. Well-structured activities such as the 'Big Write' were popular because pupils were familiar with the process and were able to write creatively, using their imaginations. Boys particularly benefited when the topics related to their specific interests. For example, Year 5 boys were stimulated and engaged when they wrote creatively using their science topic on 'space' as a context. The work produced was often of a higher standard as a result. The use of assessment is poorly developed, inconsistent across the school and not part of the established culture in the classroom. Information from assessments is rarely used by teachers to inform planning. There is an over-reliance in too many subjects on commercially produced schemes and planning which have, in many cases, not been adapted or modified to meet the specific context of the school or the needs of all pupils.

Despite the generally satisfactory teaching, pupils do not make sufficient progress in many subjects because of the fragmented, inadequate curriculum and because they are not being taught what they should be. Pupils are not receiving their full entitlement in many subjects, especially art, music, history, geography and religious education. The overall curriculum plan lacks clarity and what is being delivered in many of these subjects is not being managed or monitored. The result is that pupils get a very incoherent experience which does not allow them to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding progressively in these areas. For example, from Year 4 onwards pupils can choose to learn a musical instrument. Those who do not, or those who drop out, do not receive their music entitlement because little alternative provision is planned for or provided. Where there has been an attempt to

teach integrated topics, planning often lacks progression and cohesion and outcomes for pupils are mixed. In contrast, ICT stands out because it is well ordered and is taught discretely in each year. Progression in computer skills is well planned with a majority of pupils making good progress. The curriculum is also poorly enriched by out-of-classroom experiences. Opportunities to develop a wider understanding of other faiths, cultures and the world beyond the local area through the curriculum, and especially through geography, history and religious education, are not exploited. Visitors to the school are rare and cultural experiences linked to dance, drama, art and music are also limited.

The majority of parents and carers are happy with the care provided by the school. They feel that they are kept informed about their children's progress and welfare. Pastoral care is responsive to pupils' needs. Staff are approachable and pupils are happy to go to them with any needs or concerns. A start has been made to raise pupils' aspirations and a small number have been involved in the 'Aim Higher' programme.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management at all levels have not been sufficiently focused on the school's improvement and are inadequate. There is no clear or shared vision for the school and no cohesive planning in place to drive forward improvements. There is no evidence that the school knows its own strengths and weaknesses. Decision making and accountability are poorly developed and entrenched weak practice has not been challenged. Little progress is evident against the areas for action highlighted at the last inspection. Standards have declined in mathematics and English and are particularly low in science and many other subjects. Teaching remains satisfactory and issues linked to the curriculum have not been tackled. The governing body has not held the school to account for these failings. It does not possess the relevant expertise to support the school's work and to evaluate its effectiveness. The school has been the recipient of regular support from the local authority. There has been some positive impact in terms of some improvement in mathematics. However, often the impetus of training and advice has not been sustained by managers in order to change and improve practice. There have been some stand-alone successes such as 'Aim Higher' and the 'Big Write' but these have not been part of an integrated drive to improve provision and raise standards.

Safeguarding is satisfactory with requirements met. Partnerships with others are satisfactory and relationships with parents and carers are positive. Equality of opportunity is promoted. Pupils feel part of the school community. However, their experiences beyond their immediate locality are limited. Currently, community cohesion is not actively promoted by the school and there has been no audit of

provision. Exposure to other cultures through the curriculum and enrichment opportunities is limited. Resources, including staffing, have not always been best deployed to achieve value for money.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

In Reception the well organised curriculum and good teaching ensure that most children make good progress to enable them to enter Year 1 at levels close to those expected for their age. Learning is good because adults provide time for the children to investigate and explore. Good use is made of visual stimulation to engage children in their learning. For example, in one lesson effective use was made of dinosaur models to bring a story to life and help children to begin to understand connections in food chains. In another lesson children responded well to the well-structured approach to the teaching of letter sounds. This is having a positive effect on their confidence in recognising letters and words. Everyday activities are well organised and there are ample opportunities for children to engage in a wide range of both indoor and outdoor play activities. A good balance is provided between activities directed by the adults and those that the children choose for themselves. Assessment is used well to track their progress. There is an appropriate focus on developing social and communication skills and children learn and play well together. Ongoing observations of children at play are collated by all adults. These are informative and used effectively to plan children's next steps in learning. Children are helped to feel safe and secure and there are improving links with the adjacent Year 1 class which shares the outdoor facilities. Children mix well with these older pupils and this prepares them well for entry into the main school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. There were very few written comments and these referred to personal or specific points linked to individual pupils. Most of these were positive about the care the school provides.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Castleway Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	70	12	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	70	12	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	61	16	36	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	64	15	34	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	64	13	30	3	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	57	18	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	59	18	41	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	48	20	45	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	52	20	45	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	57	17	39	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	43	24	55	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	59	16	36	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	66	12	27	3	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 April 2010

Dear Children and Pupils

Inspection of Castleway Primary School, Wirral, CH46 1RN

Thank you for making the inspectors welcome. We enjoyed talking to you about your experiences in school. You frequently asked us what we thought about your school and this letter is to tell you what we found. We observed lessons in all your classes and looked at a lot of your work. This led us to the conclusion that your school needs to improve and it has been placed in 'special measures'. This means that, although your school does some things well, in some very important areas there are weaknesses which need to be sorted out quickly to make your time in school much more worthwhile.

We found that the standards you reach in almost all subjects need to improve. The teachers will be working hard to help you achieve this. For their part, they are going to make lessons even more interesting and make the tasks they set more challenging in order to make you think hard. You enjoy working with computers and find lessons involving them particularly rewarding and interesting. However, we noticed that you seem to do much less work in some other subjects such as music, art, history, geography and religious education. You would benefit from more opportunities to learn outside the classroom. Therefore we have asked the teachers to look at their planning and make sure that you get your fair share of lessons in the full range of subjects and that you are provided with a wider range of interesting experiences.

Your teachers will be provided with help and support to carry out these improvements and inspectors will visit the school regularly to check the progress everyone is making. You, your teachers, parents and carers, and the governors will all need to work together to ensure that this happens.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Leszek Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector

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