

Castlethorpe First School

North Street, Castlethorpe, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK19 7EW.

Inspection dates 6 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher, a very effective governing body and all staff working together ensure that pupils get an excellent education.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are potentially vulnerable and those who find learning difficult, are supported very well and make outstanding progress.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 are consistently well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is of a high standard. Over time it is never less than good and much of it is outstanding.
- Teachers' expectations of the pupils are high. Teachers regularly mark and talk to the pupils about their work and suggest ways in which it can be improved. Clearer and more effective guidance is given in the Year 2 class.
- The curriculum is well organised. Pupils in the different classes follow common themes and share experiences.
- Parts of the playground have been remodelled to provide a stimulating learning environment. Best use has not been made of the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area to support children's learning. It is not as supportive of the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills as the classroom.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils want to learn and show respect for each other at all times. Their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe is excellent.
- Pupils' attendance is well above average.
- The school development plan is well thought out and based on an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development. It is used well to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The governing body checks carefully the progress pupils make and has a good understanding of the school's performance. Systems to ensure that the pupils are kept safe are well established.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of shorter visits to lessons and heard some of the pupils in Year 2 read.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils, an external educational consultant and a local authority representative.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan.
- The inspector took account of the 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and nine questionnaires returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

David Wynford Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds. No one speaks English as an additional language.
- Pupils are taught in two classes. Each morning Reception children and Year 1 pupils work together while Year 2 pupils are taught as a group. During the afternoons, Reception children are taught as a group while pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught together.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion identified for additional support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well below average.
- The school has not received any pupil premium funding. This is because there have been no eligible pupils attending the school in the last six years. Pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and other eligible groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make the outdoor learning area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage as supportive as the classroom setting in promoting their learning in literacy and numeracy.
- Extend the excellent marking and feedback practice in the Year 2 class to the other classes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge similar to those expected for their age. By the end of Year 2, standards are consistently exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents excellent progress.
- Children settle well into the Early Years Foundation Stage. They quickly form good relationships with their classmates and adults. By the end of the year, most are working above the nationally expected levels in all areas of learning.
- The children make excellent progress because the teachers know the children well. They build on the children's ideas and interests. As a result, the children respond positively and work hard in lessons.
- Good use is made of the outdoor and classroom areas to help the children learn in a safe and secure environment. However, the outdoor area is not as supportive as the classroom in promoting the children's learning in reading, writing and mathematics. There is a lack of dedicated areas to help consolidate and extend the children's learning in literacy and numeracy.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Current Year 2 pupils are on track to reach well above the expected levels by the end of the year.
- Pupils in Year 2 read fluently. They use a wide range of strategies, including the use of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and context clues to help tackle unfamiliar words. They talk knowledgeably about the stories they are reading and recommend books to their classmates. They know to use dictionaries to find the meaning of words.
- Although the outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check for the last two years suggest that pupils' skills are average, this is not reflected in their reading levels. The school has responded well to the results from the screening check and has introduced changes in the way phonics are taught. Current data suggest that outcomes this year are likely to be higher.
- Pupils write for a range of purposes and in different styles. They bring their writing to life by adding adjectives and adverbs. More able writers in Year 2 are already using similes and metaphors. Pupils' writing skills are consolidated and extended in other subjects.
- In mathematics, pupils know and use a wide range of terminology. They enjoy undertaking mathematical tasks. For example, pupils in Year 2 worked with sustained concentration to construct three-dimensional shapes using straws and various methods for securing them. They measured carefully and talked confidently about the number of sides, edges, faces and vertices of the shapes they were constructing. One pupil quickly identified one shape as a 'square-based pyramid'. Other pupils offered explanations why they could not construct a sphere or a cylinder using straws.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are potentially vulnerable, have a disability or special educational needs or are identified as a more able pupil make excellent progress. This is because the school is committed to an equality of opportunity. Staff ensure that all pupils' progress is checked carefully, and where there is any danger of the pupils slipping behind they are offered effective support from the class teacher and the very able teaching assistants.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in sporting activities and have a good understanding of how sport contributes to a healthy lifestyle. They look forward to the weekly visits to the nearby village hall and have benefited from the expertise of sports coaches. Pupils' interest in sport has been increased and some pupils have joined privately-run sports clubs. The sports funding is being spent wisely by the school.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- In all classes, teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding, including the teaching of literacy and mathematics. As a result, all groups of pupils are making rapid and sustained

progress.

- Teachers agree the themes and topics to be followed and discuss what is expected of pupils in the different year groups. They exchange observations and assessments of the pupils' learning. As a result, lessons are well planned and the work is pitched at the right level across the full range of ability.
- Expectations are high. Teachers make sure that pupils successfully build on their earlier learning. They manage pupils' behaviour well and encourage pupils to share their ideas with each other and with the adults. Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance learning. For example, in the Reception class, children record their sentences and listen to what they have said before committing themselves to paper.
- The way that Year 1 pupils respond to the morning and afternoon sessions is particularly impressive. They work confidently in the mornings while sharing the same classroom as the Reception children and are at ease during the afternoons while they are working with Year 2 pupils. This is because the teachers work together effectively to plan lessons, make the best use of resources and the time available.
- Teaching assistants support work in small groups effectively and help the pupils to make progress. All staff strive to ensure that all pupils, including those with a disability or special educational needs, are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils.
- Teachers regularly discuss the pupils' work with the pupils. They celebrate what has been done well and suggest ways in which the work can be improved. Records of these discussions and very helpful written comments, particularly in the Year 2 pupils' books, provide pupils with reminders and clear guidance on how to improve their work further. This effective practice is not as well established in the other classes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. Pupils work with sustained concentration and have a very positive attitude towards learning. This contributes significantly to their rapid progress.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They behave well at all times. Pupils are polite and well-mannered in the way they speak to adults and to each other. They move around the school sensibly. Displays and equipment are treated with respect. There is no litter. They know about different types of bullying, for example name calling, fighting and racial bullying.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school meets requirements for safeguarding. A member of the governing body checks to make certain that procedures are followed and the site is safe.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of potential dangers when playing in certain areas and when walking to the village hall. They know who to talk to if they are worried and that support will be given.
- Pupils' attendance is well above average. There are very few examples of pupils arriving late for school. There have been no incidents of inappropriate behaviour, racist incidents or exclusions since the last inspection.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher sets high expectations. She works very effectively with all staff to ensure teaching is of a high standard and pupils make excellent progress. All staff undertake their roles well and contribute much to the development of the school. They have a clear view of what they need to do to secure improvements and help the school improve further.
- The headteacher and staff have worked closely with an external consultant to improve outcomes for pupils. Teachers have responded well to initiatives to improve their teaching. They have attended courses and have regular meetings with the headteacher to discuss their teaching and

pupils' progress. Teachers are asked to explain if any pupil is not on track to reach their challenging targets. Additional support is provided, if it is needed.

- The school development plan is based on an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It is used effectively and provides a clear path for the school's continued development. The governing body regularly checks the progress towards the targets. The headteacher is asked to give reasons if the school is not on track to reach the targets.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are given many opportunities to enrich their education, for example through educational visits and celebrating festivals from different countries and religious backgrounds. In all classes, there is a focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Whole-school themes and special events help draw the school together and aid pupils' learning.
- The primary sports funding is being used to employ sports specialist staff, for training teachers and extending the range of after-school sporting clubs. As a result, staff are more confident in teaching a range of sports and pupils are eager to become involved.
- Local authority officers monitor the school's performance. As the school has consistently achieved above average results, there has been no further support offered.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors attend courses regularly to enhance their skills in checking the school's performance and in ensuring they fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively. They have a clear overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and ask searching questions of the leadership team. Governors check on pupils' standards and compare them with local and national data. They have a good understanding of the school's performance. Governors know about the strength in teaching and if any additional support is needed. They understand how targets are set for teachers to improve, and know the process for rewarding good teaching. Governors will not accept discrimination of any sort.
 - The school's finances are monitored well. The governing body checks the school's spending at least twice a term and makes sure that the primary sports funding is spent as intended. Governors know about pupil premium, how the grant is generated and its purpose. They are aware that the school has not received any such funding. Governors and the headteacher are keen to promote good relationships and make the school the centre of the local community.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110213
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	431427

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Spyrou
Headteacher	Julie Baldwin
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2009
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