



# Castlethorpe First School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 110213  
**LEA** Milton Keynes LEA  
**Inspection number** 278383  
**Inspection dates** 27 April 2006 to 27 April 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Steven Hill AI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Castlethorpe
<b>School category</b>	Community		Milton Keynes
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 8		MK19 7EW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 510342
<b>Number on roll</b>	50	<b>Fax number</b>	01908 510342
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr David Barker
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elsa Steel

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small school for pupils aged from 4 to 8, who are organised into two classes. Most come from the village of Castlethorpe. From next September, the school will lose its Year 3 pupils due to Local Authority re-organisation. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and all have English as a mother tongue. Pupils' social circumstances are relatively advantaged. Very few pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. Mobility is low. Attainment on entry varies considerably and overall is slightly above average. Since September 2005, the school has been in federation with another school 9 miles away. The headteacher, who was already the head at the other school, works half-time at Castlethorpe.

## 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 with some outstanding features. It gives good value for money. Pupils consistently achieve well and attain high standards because of good teaching, an interesting curriculum and excellent provision for care, guidance and support. Teachers make very good use of the skilled teaching assistants to help pupils learn. They are very good at matching work to pupils' needs in English and mathematics, drawing on the careful tracking of their achievement. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good, and the adults ensure that children get the full range of activities and make good progress.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy school, behave exceptionally well and have excellent relationships with each other and with adults. Staff have a very good understanding of pupils' academic and pastoral needs and work very hard to respond to these. Parents appreciate this, and strongly support the school. The school is working successfully to enhance their involvement. One wrote that 'this is a lovely well behaved school which teaches in an innovative and exciting way'.

The school is well led and managed, and runs very smoothly. The clear vision of the new headteacher, supported by the hard work of staff and governors, has maintained high standards during recent changes. The school has an accurate view of its own strengths and weaknesses, and the inspector agreed with all elements of the school's self-evaluation except for pupils' personal development, where the school had under-estimated its strength. The recent federation with another school has been handled expertly by governors and staff. The school is starting to consider how the potential benefits can be realised.

The weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been rectified and pupils' standards in information and communication technology (ICT) now meet national expectations. There is some good use of ICT in lessons, and the school has correctly identified that expanding this has the potential to improve pupils' achievement across the curriculum. The school is well placed to build on its strengths and improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make more use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- Consolidate the links with its partner school to enhance provision across the Federation by sharing expertise from the two schools.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well across the school and reach good standards. For the last three years, for example, all Year 2 pupils have reached the expected levels in national assessments and about half have exceeded them. This consistent good achievement is because of good teaching and the pupils' own positive attitudes.

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and virtually all meet the expected standards by the time they reach Year 1. They continue to do well throughout the school and reach high standards by the time they leave. The school uses its careful tracking procedures to set challenging targets, which are generally met. The small number of pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress because of the extra help they receive. All groups of pupils achieve similarly well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The school modestly assessed this aspect as good, when it is in fact outstanding. Pupils' excellent behaviour in class, their strong desire to learn and their pride in their achievements contribute significantly to their progress. Relationships are extremely good and pupils get on very well with each other and with staff. They are confident in expressing their ideas, do so thoughtfully, and listen respectfully to each other. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy school because, as one pupil said, 'Teachers teach us new things every day'.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, and cultural development is good. Their social development is excellent. They work very effectively independently, and collaborate very well when required. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and are proud of the fact that the school has achieved a Silver Healthy Schools award. Their very good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, as well as their positive attitudes and hard work, augur well for their future progress and economic well-being. They contribute well to the community, willingly helping each other and undertaking responsibilities conscientiously. The school council is starting to have an impact, and pupils feel able to contribute their ideas through this.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good, and some lessons are outstanding. Teachers manage pupils well and have high expectations of work and behaviour. Crucially, pupils know that they and their views are valued. They like and respect their teachers and try hard to please them by working hard and behaving very well. Teachers are good at questioning pupils to guide their thinking. Very good use is made of the teaching assistants, who also show high levels of skill in helping pupils to learn.

A significant strength is the high quality of teachers' assessments. Teachers use this information to ensure a careful matching of work to pupils' different abilities, so that tasks are challenging but manageable. As a result progress is consistently good. Pupils' progress during lessons is checked so that little time is wasted if pupils misunderstand something.

The best lessons feature a very brisk pace and interesting and exciting tasks that generate huge enthusiasm from pupils, such as when pupils in the older class became

engrossed in writing about the feelings of characters in a story. Similarly, a lesson on symmetry with Year 1 pupils had them fully involved in using a computer program, and in using the art technique of 'pouncing' to consolidate their understanding. (The pouncing involved making patterns by carefully pricking holes in paper.)

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has an interesting and diverse curriculum, which engenders enthusiasm for learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is particularly well developed in providing for the specific needs of different abilities. The ICT curriculum has improved considerably and pupils are developing good skills, for example through using digital movie cameras. Some good work goes on in using ICT in other subjects, and the school has correctly identified the need to extend this to raise standards further. The school has been working effectively to develop the creative elements of the curriculum. A successful example, based on materials from the National Gallery, resulted in exceptionally good work in creative writing about gods, goddesses and monsters, and well as lively and meticulously executed masks in papier-mâché. There is a good range of enrichment activities both during and after school. For example the visit to the Church to participate in the 'christening' of Emma (a teddy-bear) by the Vicar enhanced pupils' learning in religious education.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding feature of the school. Staff know pupils' needs very well and work hard to meet them. This is a major factor in pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development. The careful tracking of pupils' achievement means that they are given work that challenges them and enables them to make good progress. Any pupils who are falling behind are identified and extra help is given to help them catch up. This is a significant factor in the high standards achieved.

Pupils' pastoral needs are monitored well, and parents praise the way the school deals with any problems their children have. Pupils are confident that staff care for them as individuals, and will sort out any problems they have. Thorough systems are in place to safeguard pupils, including risk assessments, and child protection procedures are rigorous and up-to-date.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The school has a very clear view of its strengths and weaknesses, because the quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' progress, are monitored very well. Effective action is taken to deal with any issues that arise. Parents' views have been surveyed and those of pupils are starting to impact on the school in a formal way through the school council.

The new headteacher has worked very effectively in setting up the links with the federation partner and consolidating the teamwork in the school. Staff have worked well as a team in dealing with this change, and in preparing for the change in age group from September. This has been used as an opportunity to introduce more creativity and greater coherence into planning across the school. The responsibilities of staff have also been rationalised. The school is now well placed to build upon its successes, particularly through the potential benefits in the links with its federation partner. Staff say they are looking forward to this.

Governors have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and sound systems to be involved in its development. They fulfil their responsibilities well. They were particularly effective in initiating and helping implement the decision to set up the federation and in ensuring that parents were kept properly informed.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Children

Thank you for all your help when I visited your school. I enjoyed watching your lessons and talking to you. You told me that you enjoy school and I could see why. This is what I found out.

Castlethorpe is a good school because the adults are good at helping you to learn. I was very impressed by how well you behave in lessons and how sensible and friendly you are. You all work hard, and you are especially good at reading, writing and maths. You are good at other subjects too, and I particularly liked the models of gods and goddesses you had done. You are getting better at using computers, and your teachers have plans for you to have lots more practice with them in different subjects. The adults in school look after you really well, and keep a careful eye how you are getting on, so they can help when you have problems. The headteacher, the staff and the governors are good at organising the school, and they are all looking forward to working with your new partner school in Emberton. They think that you could all learn a lot from each other, and I agree.

For the school to get even better, I think that you should have more practice using ICT in all your lessons. I also agree with your teachers that everyone in your school should carry on working with your new friends at Emberton, so that you can all share ideas and help each other. I hope that you enjoy the rest of term, and that the children in Class 2 carry on enjoying themselves and working hard when they move to their next school in September.

Best wishes,

Steven Hill

(Your Inspector)