

Castor CofE Primary School

Stocks Hill, Castor, Peterborough, PE5 7AY

Inspection dates 26–27 June 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well from their different starting points and are reaching standards this year that are above last year’s national average.
- Children get off to a good start in Reception because the activities engage them well.
- All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, achieve well because teaching is consistently good across the school.
- Teachers make sure that all pupils, especially the most able, are given work which enables them to do their best.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school.
- Pupils have a real thirst for learning and behave impeccably. All parents who responded to Parent View agreed that behaviour was at least good.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils’ learning.
- The new headteacher has had a considerable impact in driving improvement. As a result, teaching has improved and pupils’ achievement is rising.
- Subject leaders are developing well in their roles and have a good understanding of their areas.
- Governors have improved since the previous inspection and fulfil their roles effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking in mathematics is not as strong as it is in English.
- Teachers do not always give pupils the time to act upon their advice in books or check they have made improvements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons, including ten jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Members of the inspection team heard pupils read and, with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and subject materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with: senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other staff; the Chair of the Governing Body and the Vice-Chair and three other governors; and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 43 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke informally to parents in the playground. They also considered two letters from parents.
- The inspectors considered the 15 staff questionnaires that were completed.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Wood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (which in this school provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- The school has mixed-age classes in Key Stage 2.
- There have been several changes of teaching staff since the previous inspection, including the headteacher. A new Chair of Governors was appointed in September 2013.
- During the inspection pupils were making sculptures as part of an arts week.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching outstanding by improving the consistency and impact of marking through:
 - bringing the quality of marking in mathematics up to the same standard as that in English
 - giving pupils time to act upon teachers' advice in their books and following up their responses to make sure they have made a difference to improving their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join Reception with a range of skills which are generally in line with those typical for their age. They achieve well because they experience a rich tapestry of activities that stimulate them both indoors and outside. Members of staff take every opportunity to enhance children's learning.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught well. In the 2013 Year 1 national reading check, almost all pupils reached the required standard. It is a similar position this year.
- Current standards in Year 2 are up on 2013 and above last year's national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The current Year 2 pupils have made good progress over time because teaching has had a consistently positive impact on their learning.
- For the current Year 6, standards are above last year's national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is an improvement on the 2013 results, when standards dropped in reading and mathematics. This was because pupils had not been prepared properly for the tests so the results did not reflect their true ability. Also this year group has received inconsistent teaching while in Key Stage 2.
- This year preparation for the tests has been much better and provisional results show that pupils have achieved well. Across the school, work in books and performance information show that pupils are making good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from well-planned support tailored to their specific needs. The school has clear evidence to show the positive impact of the additional help on individuals and groups of pupils.
- There were no pupils in Year 6 in 2013 supported by the pupil premium. Eligible pupils in general make good progress because they receive additional teaching that helps them to catch up with their classmates. They are also given every opportunity to take a full part in all the school's activities such as after-school clubs and visits. This promotes their personal development well.
- The profile of reading has been raised because of the renovation of the school library and the purchase of new books, many of which were recommended by the pupils themselves. A large number of reading volunteers ensure every child reads regularly. Younger pupils use their phonic skills well to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils discuss with enthusiasm the books they enjoy reading.
- Attainment in writing has risen because, following training, teachers have a much better understanding of the levels of attainment. They work with colleagues to agree how good different pieces of writing are. This in turn helps them to guide pupils in improving their writing.
- Specific projects, such as with a group of Year 5 boys, have been particularly effective in raising standards. In this case, the boys pursued their interest in football and wrote persuasive letters to Peterborough United, culminating in a visit to a game. Both their reading and writing scores rose considerably as a result of their involvement in this initiative.
- In mathematics, a focus on problem-solving has helped pupils to understand mathematical

concepts and solve problems systematically. This has enabled them to apply their knowledge in real-life situations.

- Teachers make sure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged to reach the higher levels of attainment. This ensures these pupils make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved and is now consistently good. Teachers make clear to pupils what they want them to learn and show them how to succeed in their understanding. They use a wide range of approaches, including probing questions, to encourage pupils to think deeply about the topics they are studying. For example, pupils considered what it would be like to live in Victorian times.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support to individual pupils in particular and are also having a positive impact on the learning of groups of pupils, too, because they have been well trained.
- Pupils say of their teachers, 'They encourage us a lot. They really push us and keep us on top of our homework.' They say that they find learning interesting and enjoyable. In Year 1, a marauding pirate running through the classroom thrilled pupils. They spent the remainder of the lesson writing open-ended questions to ask the pirate.
- Books show that pupils make good progress over time. There is good quality homework and pupils make interesting links across subjects. For example, they wrote leaflets about explorers including Marco Polo, the trader from Venice.
- Teachers regularly mark books. The effectiveness of marking has improved as the year has gone on, but there remains some inconsistency in its impact on improving pupils' work. Marking is not as strong in mathematics as it is in writing. Also there are variations in how effectively pupils act upon the teachers' advice. This is not always followed up by teachers to make sure guidance has been taken on board.
- Where pupils of the same year group are split across different classes, for example in Year 4 and Year 5, there are similarly high expectations of their work in line with their abilities. Pupils have the same positive experiences whichever class they are in.
- Teaching helps Reception children to make good progress. Adults give them clear guidance about what they expect, for example when writing a message in a bottle if shipwrecked on a desert island. Children's learning journals are of a high quality and reflect the thorough procedures that record children's achievements. These are presented in an attractive way that makes them easily accessible to children and their parents.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They have a considerable thirst for knowledge and very positive attitudes to learning. They cooperate very well and support one another. Behaviour is managed consistently well by all staff so that there are no incidents of poor behaviour.
- Pupils enter wholeheartedly into all they do. This means they greatly enjoy learning. They have had a major input into reviewing the school's values and embrace them through their behaviour and attitudes.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say there is no bullying. They have a very good understanding of different types of bullying, including name-calling. They know how to keep safe on the internet. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils know how to avoid risk and what to do in the event of a fire. They take responsibility as play leaders, school councillors, office helpers and lead 'buddy groups' in houses.
- About 70 pupils contributed to their community by taking part in the 'Great Eastern Run' to raise large amounts of money for charity.
- Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' great enjoyment of school, and has improved year on year. This is because the school has worked hard with families to reduce absence.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has been the catalyst which has ignited the flame of the school's recovery and created the momentum for change. Together with the energetic deputy headteacher he has formed a strong team which is highly ambitious for the school to continue to improve.
- Leaders' relentless approach has galvanised staff into improving rapidly so that teaching is consistently good and attainment is rising. Rigorous new procedures ensure that all staff are held fully to account for pupils' progress.
- Teachers are given challenging targets to improve their performance and leaders check the quality of teaching thoroughly. Senior leaders expect much of subject and other leaders, who are clear about their roles. They take an active part in checking how well pupils are doing and are having a positive influence in their areas or responsibility.
- Leaders form an accurate view of what the school does well and how it can improve. The headteacher has encouraged all groups within the school community to contribute to development plans, including pupils. This gives them a stake in being part of the school's success.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because some of the new measures have not had time to become secure and teaching is not yet outstanding.
- Parents are very happy with the work of the school. They particularly like the fact there are more clubs and sports tournaments since the new headteacher took over.
- The range of topics and subjects engages pupils well, and takes into account their interests and aspirations. Pupils' experiences are enhanced by many new clubs, visits and visitors. The new headteacher has put the school on the sporting map as pupils now take part in a wide range of competitions and are enjoying success. Some pupils have taken part in the county championships for tennis and netball.
- The school is spending its sports premium on a school sports partnership, specialist dance and physical education teachers who are working alongside teachers, and kit for tournaments. This has led to a greater participation in sports by pupils, more confidence for teachers in taking sports, and a higher profile for sport across the school.

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well through assemblies, prayer areas, close links with the parish church and visits to different places of worship. It has used the World Cup as a means of finding out about the cultures of participating countries.
- The school ensures that all pupils are fully included in its activities and promotes equal opportunities for all. It makes sure that there is no discrimination.
- The local authority has provided a good level of support for the school, especially in checking the effectiveness of leadership and management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have developed rapidly under the new Chair and Vice-Chair. They visit regularly to gain first-hand understanding of how well the school is doing. They know about pupils' performance and the quality of teaching. They are involved in setting challenging targets for the headteacher and overseeing the management of other teachers' performance. They make sure that nobody receives a pay rise unless it is justified by pupils' progress. Governors keep a close eye on spending, including the impact of the pupil premium and sports premium. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. They are a reflective group of governors and seek out training for themselves so that they are in a strong position to ask probing questions of senior leaders.

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	110824
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	442620

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 of pupils on the school roll	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Murrell
Headteacher	Mark Ratchford
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2011
Telephone number	01733 380280
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Email address	head@castor.peterborough.sch.uk

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