

Inspection of Castle Primary School

Mow Cop Road, Mow Cop, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 4NE

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Castle Primary is a friendly and welcoming school. Relationships between adults, pupils and their families are positive. Leaders create a nurturing environment. Parents, pupils and staff believe that there is a real community feel to the school. One parent's comment was typical of many when they stated, 'With it being such a small school, staff know all of the pupils well.' Pupils feel cared for, valued and safe. Leaders have high expectations of pupils. Pupils rise to these expectations and trust staff to help them with any worries that they may have.

Pupils behave well during lessons, when moving around the school and at playtimes. They are polite and well mannered. They look after each other. Older pupils support younger ones, both at playtimes and in their learning. This promotes the caring ethos of the school. On the very rare occasion that bullying happens, pupils know adults will deal with it quickly.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities that enrich the curriculum. These opportunities promote pupils' confidence and sense of responsibility. For instance, some pupils act as team leaders and school councillors. Pupils take pride in this work and take these duties seriously.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They want pupils to be successful. The curriculum is broad and interesting. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn, especially in subjects such as reading, mathematics and physical education. However, in some subjects, the key knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember is not as clear. As a result, some pupils struggle to remember what they have learned.

The curriculum starts in the early years. For example, children use recipe cards in the 'mud kitchen' to carefully add ingredients, counting out the numbers carefully. This helps to secure their understanding of mathematics. Staff in the early years know children well. They focus on developing early language skills. The learning environment is designed to immerse children in learning. Learning activities help children to practise and remember what they have learned over time.

Subject leaders know their curriculum well. Most check what pupils can remember. However, some subject leaders are new to their role and have not yet checked the impact of their curriculum on pupils' learning.

Reading is at the centre of the curriculum. Staff find creative ways to develop pupils' love of reading. For example, when 'secret storytellers' read to pupils in class and when pupils review books for their peers in 'bookflix' recommendations. Older pupils also help to instil a love of reading for younger pupils through reading with them weekly. Leaders ensure that staff who teach early reading are well trained. Leaders quickly provide support to any pupils who struggle with reading. Staff make sure

that the reading books pupils take home match the sounds that they know. Parents are also advised on how to support pupils to learn phonics at home. Leaders' and staff's actions help pupils to develop into confident and fluent readers.

Teachers use assessment strategies well. They systematically check that pupils have understood what has been taught. When gaps in knowledge are identified, teachers skilfully adapt their teaching to ensure that these gaps are closed.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They enjoy the activities that teachers plan for them. Lessons are calm and purposeful, and there is little disruption to learning.

Staff, supported by the multi-academy trust (MAT), identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and accurately. Staff ensure that these pupils receive regular support and have access to all that the school offers.

Leaders place a high priority on enhancing the curriculum to engage pupils and to prepare them for later life. This is especially so in sports, drama and music. There are strong links with many organisations, such as a local opera company. Pupils relish the opportunity to learn outside. They enjoy visiting forest school, toasting marshmallows and 'simply being'. Leaders have placed a huge focus on promoting pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils enjoy regular mindfulness sessions and those who need extra support receive it. The school's values of kindness, respect and tolerance are understood and appreciated by pupils. As one pupil said, 'It is important we treat everybody equally.'

Those responsible for governance are informed, evaluative and actively involved with the school. The MAT and governors have a clear understanding of their roles and are active in driving improvements. Alongside this, they have also supported leaders and the school community well.

Safeguarding

There is a healthy culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, maintain the belief that 'it could happen here'. They ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to protect children. Staff understand these procedures and are vigilant to spot any potential concerns. Leaders work closely with external agencies, when required, to help keep pupils safe.

There is a strong emphasis on pupils learning strategies to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not defined the precise knowledge

that they want pupils to learn. Consequently, pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that they identify and sequence the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn in these subjects.

- In some subjects, leaders are new to their roles and have not evaluated the impact of the curriculum. They do not have a full understanding of how well pupils learn in these subjects. Senior leaders should work with subject leaders to monitor what pupils know and remember in these subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	141732
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10285050
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Wootton
Headteacher	Jill Mason
Website	www.castleprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher. He also met two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He met with three members of the MAT, including the chair of the MAT.
- The inspectors viewed a range of safeguarding documentation. They examined checks on safer recruitment and spoke with members of staff to check their safeguarding knowledge.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and viewed examples of pupils' work. An inspector also spoke to the subject leaders for history, music and computing.
- An inspector observed children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 read to a trusted adult.
- The inspectors spoke with members of staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- The inspectors considered the responses, including the free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. An inspector also spoke to parents and carers at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school improvement priorities, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, behaviour records, attendance records and minutes of meetings held by the governing body.

Inspection team

Barry Yardsley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rob Johnstone

Ofsted Inspector

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