

Caston Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Street, Caston, Norfolk NR17 1DD

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The high expectations of the headteacher have driven up standards across the school. She has established a strong ethos, which demands that everyone gives of their very best at all times.
- Standards, which were inadequate at the previous inspection, have risen year on year and pupils' attainment is now broadly average.
- Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding and other pupils are closing rapidly.
- Governors and school leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is now good. Teachers plan and teach exciting, stimulating and challenging lessons.
- The school has effective arrangements for keeping pupils safe. Pupils are polite, well behaved and treat each other with respect.
- The school is a well-ordered and purposeful environment. The creative and exciting curriculum is evident from eye-catching wall displays, themed assemblies and a genuine sense of engagement. Pupils are developing positive attitudes to learning, which is enabling them to make accelerated progress.
- Leadership of the early years provision is good. This area of the school has been transformed and children are making rapid progress because of consistently good teaching and a stimulating and engaging environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards at Key Stage 1 are low and the gaps which exist in pupils' learning from previous poor teaching are closing, but not fast enough.
- School leaders do not routinely check the progress of pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The attendance of a very small minority of pupils is lower than average and this is impacting on their progress.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by regularly checking the progress of all pupils in subjects beyond mathematics and English, and use this information to continue to raise standards across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to raise outcomes by ensuring that teachers use assessment information effectively to address the gaps in pupils' skills and understanding in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of the very small minority of pupils with persistently low attendance so that they make at least as much progress as their peers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Governors and school leaders have acted decisively to secure the future of Caston Church of England (CE) Voluntary Aided (VA) Primary School. The school is now a partner in the recently formed Dove Federation with Parker's CE VC Primary School. The school has been transformed since it was put into special measures at the last inspection in May 2014.
- Leading by example, the energy and vision of the headteacher have established a 'can-do, will-do' ethos across the school. Her drive and commitment have won over parents, pupils and school staff and she has restored the 'heart' of this village school. Parents, staff and pupils are proud to be associated with the school.
- The school has a strong Christian ethos, which promotes values of care and responsibility. School leaders are working closely within each class to develop the core values of challenge, curiosity, ambition, perseverance, rigour, risk-taking and resilience. The promotion of these values is making a positive difference to the attitudes that pupils have developed towards their learning.
- Parents speak in glowing terms about the school. They recognise the positive changes that have been made since the last full inspection. They talk about the good progress their children are currently making under the guidance of school staff. They find the school warm and welcoming and many attended a celebration assembly, observed during the inspection, led by class 1. The school provides parents with useful and supportive information about the progress their children are making as well as how they can help at home. Reading journals are well used to provide an effective link between home and school, and regular homework is well targeted to support learning.
- The school has an accurate view of its own performance and leaders have correctly identified those areas for future development needed to secure further gains in the outcomes for all pupils.
- School leaders have ensured that effective professional development has been at the centre of their model for school improvement. All teaching and non-teaching staff have received high-quality training which is impacting in the classroom through their work in phonics (the sounds that letters make), reading and writing.
- There has been extensive training and checking of standards between the schools within the federation, and school staff regularly teach on both sites. This has impacted on the morale of all staff, who now feel part of a vibrant and exciting family and, as a result, the quality of teaching, assessment and learning is improving. A number of staff have been recently appointed to new posts of responsibility across the two schools. It is too early to assess the impact of these staff on the quality of teaching and learning across the schools.
- The curriculum is exciting, broad and balanced and has been well crafted to meet the needs of all pupils. During discussions with pupils, it was evident that they enjoy their lessons far more now because of the variety of experiences they are offered. The quality and range of work the pupils have recently undertaken is evident from the displays of Anglo-Saxon and medieval artwork that the pupils have completed under the guidance of a visiting artist. Class 1 pupils' homework on inventions produced some remarkable devices and showed additionally that parents are enjoying working closely with their children.
- Pupils within Caston CE VA Primary School have benefited from joint visits with Parker's CE VC Primary School. These have included visits to the Royal Norfolk Show, to How Hill and Birchham Windmill, as well as the BBC Proms Ten Pieces concert in King's Lynn and to the Houses of Parliament. The impact of these visits has been to successfully promote British values amongst the pupils.
- The school has received extensive support from the diocese, the local authority and a national leader of education (NLE). The local authority and diocese have ensured, through the work of the improvement board, that leaders have been held to account for the quality of teaching and the progress of all pupils. The work of the NLE in supporting the early years provision and in enabling the school to have an accurate view of its own performance has been vital to the improvements that have been gained. There is sufficient capacity within the federation to maintain this forward momentum.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to train teaching assistants and to provide one-to-one reading support for targeted pupils. As a result, gaps are closing rapidly between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers within the school and nationally.

- The sports premium funding has been used effectively. An experienced physical education specialist from within the federation is training school staff as well as providing a broad sports curriculum within the school. The opportunities for pupils to enjoy sporting activities have widened as a result, and more pupils are now involved.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is an area of strength within the school. It is hard to find an area of the curriculum where these elements are not central to the work the pupils are doing. It was particularly noticeable during the inspection in class 1, where children in Reception Year are quickly integrated into the school's ethos of cooperation, tolerance and respect. During a science lesson, the children were making predictions about the question 'Do oranges float or sink in water?' They talked sensibly together about what they thought would happen, wrote their predictions down and then conducted the experiment in pairs, in a calm and orderly manner.
- School leaders do not routinely check the progress of all pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, they are not sure about the progress pupils are making in subjects such as science, geography, art, history and music.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have undertaken an extensive programme of training to ensure that they are well placed to lead the school and hold senior leaders to account. They are an impressive group with a wide range of skills and experience that are being used effectively within the school.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, and speak knowledgeably about their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding and the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They fully understand the importance of checking the performance of teachers to ensure the quality of teaching remains at least good.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The procedures for safeguarding pupils are appropriate and the right checks are made on the suitability of staff to be employed at the school. Staff and governors have received appropriate training. Child protection procedures checked during the inspection were found to be effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection and is now good. Teachers and teaching assistants are effective at helping pupils develop basic skills in English and mathematics.
- Teachers plan exciting lessons with different levels of challenge. Pupils often choose a more difficult task and are encouraged to take risks with their learning, resulting in accelerated progress. Teachers ask effective questions which check pupils' understanding and prompt them to think more deeply about their learning.
- Teachers have checked the quality of the work their pupils produce with that in other schools. They now have an accurate picture of what their pupils can do. This is helping them to plan more challenging lessons, which are well suited to the needs of the pupils.
- The whole-school writing policy is well used in all classes. The opportunities to write are regular and often. During the inspection, the pupils in class 2 were writing letters to a friend in Spain, using examples from Spanish Christmas culture, and in class 3 pupils were using technical vocabulary extracted from the text about earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis. In both classes, pupils were using the learning objectives given out at the start of the lesson to track their own progress effectively.
- Pupils use the useful feedback from their teachers during SODA ('start of the day activities') time to correct misconceptions and extend their learning. Marking and feedback are regular, concise, well targeted and effective at raising standards.
- The school's phonics policy is well established. The school has organised pupils into ability groups. As pupils become confident in one group, they are quickly moved on to the next. It is not unusual to have pupils from four different years in the same group because their needs at that point in time are similar. Children in Reception and pupils across the school use their phonics strategies successfully to access unfamiliar words.

- The school has used the success of its phonics strategy to further extend the teaching of reading. Inspectors heard a number of pupils read aloud during the inspection. All the pupils had chosen their own reading book, with guidance from their teacher, and they read widely and often. The books were all well chosen to support the next stage in their reading. Well-used and regularly monitored reading diaries also provide further evidence of an effective reading strategy. As a result, achievement in reading is accelerating rapidly.
- The teaching of mathematics across the school is effective. The quality of work indicates that most pupils are making good progress. The school uses 'maths cafés' to encourage parents to get more actively involved in their child's learning. This has been effective at raising expectations, and standards are improving rapidly.
- The curriculum offers many opportunities for pupils to explore subjects such as science, geography, art, history and music. The quality of work the pupils are producing in these subjects is high and indicates that they are enjoying their lessons and making good progress.
- Teaching assistants have been well trained and are using this training effectively within the classroom. They are carefully directed by the teachers to have the maximum impact on learning. Pupils' misconceptions and gaps in learning are quickly identified and addressed. As a result, teaching assistants are playing a vital role in ensuring that standards are rapidly rising.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 are currently not making the same gains as their peers nationally. Gaps exist in their learning due to weaker prior teaching. Teachers do not always set work that ensures pupils' rapid progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe at school and recognise that the school is a safer and more welcoming environment. All of the older pupils are 'buddy group leaders'. They take these roles very seriously and during the inspection a buddy group leader was observed taking control of some boisterous play by a few younger children and skilfully turning it into a calm, fun and cooperative activity. These leaders have been well trained and are having a significant impact on behaviour across the school. An active school council and committed library monitors are further examples of pupils taking on more responsibility around the school as their confidence has grown.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying and understand how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They are confident that if difficulties do arise, they have the support they need from the adults working within the school. Relationships within the school are positive, affirming and respectful. This creates an environment in which accelerated learning takes place.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and feel that lessons are not too hard or too easy, but just about right. Parents speak about the eagerness with which their children want to come to school and how much they now enjoy it.
- There were no examples of poor behaviour seen at any point during the inspection and there are no recorded incidents in the school bullying log this year.
- Pupils use SODA ('start of the day activities') time effectively. They read the marking and feedback carefully and use green pens to make corrections to their work.
- The presentation of pupils' work is good across the school. Children in Reception and pupils new to the school soon learn that the school has very high expectations and respond quickly to these.
- The attendance of the majority of pupils is good. However, attendance rates are below the national average and the attendance of a very small minority is causing concern. The school is working closely with these families to ensure that attendance rates are rising. This work has been partly effective but the school needs to ensure that these pupils attend more regularly.

Outcomes for pupils **are good**

- Attainment at Key Stage 2 for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with disabilities and those with special education needs, is broadly average. In 2015, the proportions making expected and exceeding expected progress in writing and mathematics were close to or above national figures.
- Standards in writing, reading and mathematics have been rising steadily year on year since 2013.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school is good. In almost all year groups the gaps in achievement between these pupils and their peers within school are closing rapidly. Some gaps do remain in reading and writing, although from their starting points most are making expected progress.
- The school is using phonics (the sounds that letters make) every morning to ensure that any gaps in pupils' learning are being addressed quickly. This is highly effective as these pupils can now use these skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- The progress of the most-able pupils is accelerating because they are being challenged to think more deeply about their work. The school is ensuring that they are working in groups, often of mixed age, which will support this progress.
- The school manages transition well. Home visits take place when children start in class 1. These visits enable the school to gain valuable information about the child and his or her needs before starting school. 'Move Up' days are used in the summer term to support pupils as they move from one class to another. As a result, pupils are ready to start work immediately after the summer break and their teachers already have useful information to ensure they plan challenging work. Pupils in Year 6 speak confidently about their transition to high school. The Year 6 curriculum is preparing them well for this transition. Collaboration between the two schools within the federation has meant that Year 6 pupils have made new friendships before they move up to high school together.
- Recent work to support the reading of disadvantaged pupils has yet to be fully evaluated in order to measure the impact of this strategy.
- The very small minority of pupils who have low attendance are not making the same progress as other pupils in the school or nationally.
- Attainment at Key Stage 1 is below national figures, notably in writing, despite pupils now making good progress from their starting points.

Early years provision **is good**

- The effectiveness of the early years provision is good.
- Children arrive in the class from 8.40am and are immediately engaged in an activity of their choice. Some pick up books, which they look at, or share with each other or an adult. The children are calm and focused and have learnt quickly from the older children about the class routines and expectations. Each child has individualised targets, which are shared at the start of the next session. Movement between tasks is almost flawless and children are often given a 'job' to do. This job is a structured task but they get to choose when they complete it within a fixed time. The teacher and teaching assistant are skilfully developing responsibility, resilience and respect in the children.
- The environment is bright, inviting and carefully structured. The provision, both inside and outside the classroom, enables the children to explore their environment in a safe and creative manner. Science displays are designed with well-crafted prompt questions to encourage the children to think about the world around them.
- The quality of teaching is at least good. The teacher and teaching assistant work collaboratively. They use information about each child effectively to plan learning tasks, which stimulate and challenge all the children.
- The behaviour of children in the early years is good. Regular prompts and encouragement ensure that the children are developing positive attitudes to learning and take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour from the outset. The atmosphere is always purposeful and calm.
- Children are making good progress from their starting points. Teachers have an accurate view of each child's development and use this to plan the next stage in their learning. This was not the case in the past. As a result, gains in learning are rapid. Children are confident in their learning and happy to take risks with reading and writing because they feel safe and well supported.

- The leadership of early years is good. The setting leader has ensured that the curriculum will help the children to acquire the basic skills they will need when they enter Key Stage 1.
- Safeguarding arrangements within the early years provision are good.

School details

Unique reference number	121111
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10005302

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Cross
Headteacher	Laura Sproston
Telephone number	01953 483304
Website	www.caston.norfolk.sch.uk
Email address	office@caston.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 May 2014

Information about this school

- Caston Church of England VA Primary School is smaller than average in size.
- Approximately 40% of the pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- A very large majority of the pupils are White British.
- The school federated with Parker’s Church of England Primary School on 3 June 2015 and is now part of the Dove Federation.
- The school has a federated governing body which first met on 8 June 2015.
- The school is supported by a national leader of education (NLE) who is currently employed by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as a section 8 one-day monitoring visit inspection and was converted to a full section 5 inspection before the end of the day. The monitoring inspector returned the following day to complete the section 5 inspection.
- The inspector observed teaching in all of the classes, as well as the phonics groups.
- A range of documents was analysed, including those related to safeguarding, behaviour, pupils' progress, attendance, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, and its policies for managing teachers' pay and improving teaching and learning.
- Pupils' books, especially those in writing and mathematics, were looked at closely.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, a representative from the local authority, subject teachers and a group of Year 6 pupils.

Inspection team

Pete Sewell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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