

Inspection of Castlethorpe First School

Castlethorpe, Castlethorpe School, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK19 7EW

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Inspection dates: | 13 to 14 May 2025 |
| The quality of education | Outstanding |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Outstanding |
| Leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Early years provision | Outstanding |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding |

What is it like to attend this school?

Every morning, when the school bell rings, pupils walk through the gates with a palpable sense of enthusiasm. They are very happy and feel extremely safe. This is because staff create an exceptionally nurturing environment. The school's values of 'inspiring learners, growing together' sit at the heart of all that it does. From the moment children start in Reception class, they are immersed in a culture that develops superbly their independence and confidence.

Staff have very high expectations of pupil's behaviour, and their academic and wider success. The vibrant curriculum brings pupils' learning to life and supports them superbly to secure a deep knowledge of the subjects they study. Pupils are thoughtful and highly considerate towards their peers, staff and visitors. They are proud of their work and demonstrate impeccable attitudes towards their learning. Pupils achieve highly and are exceptionally well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school fosters an inclusive atmosphere where pupils appreciate diversity and celebrate differences. Pupils develop a commendable sense of character. They have a deep understanding of different faiths and cultures. They proudly take on leadership roles such as play leaders. Pupils work together in harmony and help each other across the school at social times.

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

Children make an excellent start to their education in Reception class. They settle extremely well and quickly into the school's highly effective routines for learning. There is a sharp focus on developing children's communication and language skills and wider vocabulary. The school creates a rich and stimulating environment in all areas of learning. This supports children extremely effectively to pursue their ideas and explore the world around them. Children are engrossed in their learning, are attentive and focus well on the activities they choose. Consequently, they are very well prepared for their learning in key stage 1.

High quality reading is the hallmark of the school. From the word go, pupils are immersed in an environment that helps them secure their phonics knowledge and comprehension skills. Teachers deliver the phonics programme precisely. They provide books which hook pupils' interests, stimulate their imagination and help them practise the sounds they are learning. Younger children listen to the stories and poems that staff read and share throughout the school day with delight.

The school has implemented an ambitious curriculum that details the specific knowledge and skills pupils will learn. Staff have excellent subject knowledge and deliver the curriculum expertly. They model new learning consistently well across all subjects. Consequently, pupils progress through the school's curriculum extremely well. Pupils who struggle to keep up with any curriculum aspects, including phonics, are quickly identified and expertly supported to help them catch up. They become confident and able readers, writers and mathematicians.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to access the full curriculum. Teachers identify quickly any additional needs pupils may have. The school provides extremely effective resources and support for staff to ensure that they can help all pupils to access the curriculum, including those pupils with SEND. As a result, all pupils achieve highly.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. This is because the school's expectations for their conduct are very clear and consistently applied. Lunchtimes are extremely calm and purposeful occasions. Pupils all get along and say this is a kind school. They enjoy their learning and want to come to school. Attendance is high and when it is not, the school offers swift support and challenge to parents and carers to ensure their children attend school regularly.

The provision for pupils' wider personal development is exceptional. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep healthy and safe. They demonstrate their values, friendship and courage well. Visits to castles, museums and the zoo bring learning to life. Guest visitors help pupils develop a strong awareness of cultures, as well as developing their curriculum knowledge. The school ensures that pupils have opportunities to discuss and debate different viewpoints. All pupils have access to a popular after school provision. Additionally, pupils benefit from a broad range of experiences, including exposure to music, dance, guest speakers and forest school activities. The school celebrates children's talents and consequently, their character development is very strong.

Governors demonstrate a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities, providing valuable strategic oversight. Staff are extremely proud to work at the school. They agree that their well-being is considered highly effectively and they value working with others across the federation. Because of this work there is the ability to share expertise and knowledge amongst a wider group of staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

| | |
|--|--|
| Unique reference number | 110213 |
| Local authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 10341269 |
| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 32 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing | Victoria Morgan |
| Headteacher | Emma Wallace |
| Website | www.castlethorpeschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 27 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Castlethorpe Infant School is part of the Village School Federation. An executive headteacher oversees the day-to-day running of the school.
- The school provides its own wrap around care.
- The school currently does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, senior teacher and other staff including the school business manager and the special educational needs coordinator (SENDCO).
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also considered a range of evidence from writing and topic books.
- The inspector met with representatives of the local governing board and the local authority.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils and observed behaviour at lunchtime.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record, took into account the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector took account of a range of other information, including the school's own self-evaluation, the school development plan, school policies and minutes from the governing board.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed through the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. He also took into account the online Ofsted pupil and staff surveys

Inspection team

Simon Woodbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025