

Place Farm Primary Academy

Camps Road, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 8HF

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The board of directors, governors, Principal, head of school and deputy headteacher have worked extremely well together to establish this new school.
- They are highly ambitious for its long-term development and are fully aware of its strengths and areas for development. They have set demanding targets to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.
- The partnership with Castle Manor Academy brings many benefits in terms of expertise that add much to pupils' learning and their aspirations for the future. It eases anxieties when it is time for pupils to change school.
- Teaching is good throughout the school, and is sometimes outstanding in Reception and Years 4 and 5.
- Staff have responded well to carefully-chosen training that has improved the ways in which they help pupils to learn effectively.
- Pupils achieve well from low starting points, particularly in most aspects of English.
- Pupils feel proud of their school. They take pride in it and look after it. They feel safe, behave well and have good attitudes to learning.
- The 'nurture group' and methods for managing pupils with challenging behaviour are extremely successful. This allows teachers to help individual pupils without being distracted.
- Parents who responded to the survey were very supportive of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers give harder work to the more-able pupils, or show pupils clearly how to improve their work when marking it.
- Pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English. Undemanding worksheets sometimes fail to extend their learning, and mental mathematics is a relative weakness.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write for a range of purposes or at length.
- The roles of team and subject leaders are unclear. They do not yet fully support senior staff in the drive for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a substantial part of 21 parts of lessons and made brief visits to another three. Sometimes they were accompanied by the head of school or the deputy headteacher.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, assemblies and playtimes, and while they were moving around the school.
- Pupils in Years 1, 2 and 6 read to an inspector, and others from all age groups shared their views of the school. Their previous work in literacy and numeracy was reviewed.
- Meetings were held with the Principal of the Castle Partnership Academy Trust, the head of school, deputy headteacher and Partnership Assistant Principal, and other 'core' leaders in charge of teams and subject areas. Meetings were also held with the chair of the board of directors for the trust, and members of the school's own governing body.
- The responses of 30 parents and carers who completed the online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. In addition some parents met with an inspector to share their views of the school.
- Documents reviewed include the school's improvement plan, reports to the board of directors of the Castle Partnership Academy Trust, minutes of governors' and directors' meetings, arrangements for safeguarding, and records of pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. In addition the school's website was viewed.

Inspection team

Kath Beck, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Judith Harrison	Additional Inspector
Matthew Klimcke	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Place Farm Primary converted to become an academy school on 1 June 2012. When its predecessor school, Place Farm Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The school is part of the Castle Partnership Academy Trust, which also includes Castle Manor Academy for pupils aged 11–18.
- The appropriate authority for the school is the board of directors of the Castle Partnership Academy Trust. The school has its own governing body that deals with issues specific to the school. Some members of the governing body are also on the board of directors. The head of school has been in post for just over one year.
- Place Farm is larger than most primary schools. The number of pupils is growing rapidly. Following reorganisation within the local authority the school now has pupils in Years 5 and 6. National tests were taken by pupils in Year 6 for the first time in 2012. In September 2013 there will be an additional class for Reception children.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those with a parent or carer in the armed forces) is above the national average. The school receives pupil premium funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and a few looked after children.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club each day of the week in term time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring more-able pupils are challenged consistently in all year groups
 - reducing the use of worksheets, especially in mathematics, that limit opportunities for pupils to think through their own ideas
 - telling pupils through marking what they do well and what would make their work even better, and giving them time to respond to teachers' comments and correct their mistakes.
- Raise achievement in writing and mathematics by:
 - increasing the range of opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes and at length
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to enhance their skills in the rapid recall and application of mental arithmetical facts such as multiplication tables.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of team and subject leaders
 - enhancing their expertise so they contribute fully to the school's development, and influence pupils' attainment and progress across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in Reception with knowledge and skills, especially in communication, language and literacy that are much lower than those expected for their age. They make good progress, especially in personal, social and emotional development and early reading skills. They rapidly improve their ability to express their ideas when talking to adults or to one another.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. They use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make well to help them to write and read new words, and enjoy reading often to an adult in school or at home. Pupils are helped to understand mathematical concepts through the use of practical resources and aids to visualisation, such as number lines. Consequently standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, although few pupils exceed the levels expected for their age.
- In Years 3 to 6 pupils continue to make good progress. They write confidently, but do not have opportunities to write for a range of purposes and at length to extend their skills. They read a wide range of literature, and particularly enjoy visiting the school library to select new fiction and non-fiction books.
- The school's first ever Year 6 national test results were above average in English, but average in mathematics. Pupils know the correct methods to use to calculate accurately and solve problems. They are not all proficient in the rapid recall of mental facts, such as multiplication tables that would help them to do this quickly.
- Pupils who benefit from additional pupil premium funding make good progress, and in some individual cases it is outstanding. In 2012 their attainment at the end of Year 6 was on average two terms behind their classmates in English and mathematics, but this is similar to the gaps seen for similar pupils nationally.
- The school is strongly committed to ensuring that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. The nurture group enables pupils to manage their emotional and behavioural difficulties so they become confident learners. The individual difficulties of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified meticulously, and teachers and learning support assistants help them make good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils benefit hugely from high-quality specialist teaching by staff from the partner school, Castle Manor, especially in art, music and physical education. Those with particular gifts excel in these subjects. Some extend their talents beyond the school, for example in drama groups.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents, teachers, directors and governors are right to believe that teaching is mostly good. It is not yet outstanding, particularly because of inconsistencies between classes and year groups in the level of challenge for more-able pupils.
- In the nurture group, Reception, Years 4 and 5 and when pupils are taught by specialists, teaching is outstanding. Excellent subject knowledge, inspirational teaching methods and high expectations motivate pupils of all abilities to achieve highly. In a Year 5 geography lesson pupils drew extensively on previous learning about ordinance survey maps to collect evidence for a land survey. They collected evidence about the best sites to build new homes and facilities in a

village, and confidently debated the differing viewpoints of villagers and property developers.

- Staff in Reception use an extensive range of resources, including modern technology, to develop children's skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They frequently talk with children to enhance their language development. 'Bug hunts' and observations of flowers growing in the garden promote children's curiosity and rapidly develop their knowledge of the world.
- Teachers usually build well on the knowledge and skills pupils have learned before to set work at the right level of difficulty and ask probing questions to assess and deepen pupils' understanding and correct any misunderstandings, although the effectiveness of these approaches varies between classes. Close cooperation with learning support assistants means they are clear about what the pupils should achieve by the end of each lesson and help to support good behaviour.
- In response to disappointing results in the phonics (sound that letters make) screening test in 2012, the school carried out a thorough analysis of its approach. Essential reading skills are taught daily in the youngest classes and are used to assist older pupils in improving their reading skills.
- Pupils are taught well how to calculate numbers using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Clear demonstrations and a good range of resources help them to visualise number patterns and properties of shapes. However, skills in mental mathematics are not so well taught and pupils are sometimes given undemanding worksheets to complete unaided. This adds little to their understanding, particularly for the pupils capable of reaching higher levels in their work.
- Teachers promote pupils' communication skills through very effective use of 'talk partners'. Pupils enjoy sharing their ideas with one another and this helps them to clarify their ideas before writing them down. Teachers also promote the correct use of grammar and show pupils ways to express their ideas imaginatively. Often pupils record their ideas and new learning on their whiteboards.
- The school has rightly begun to review how pupils' work is marked. Some staff tell pupils what they have done well and the next step they need to take to improve their work, but this is not consistent. Similarly, not all staff make time for pupils to respond to their comments or correct their mistakes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Staff, parents, directors and governors all report considerable improvements in pupils' behaviour since the schools in the Trust have worked in close partnership. Staff have shared expertise and implemented new behaviour management techniques very successfully.
- The behaviour support team not only assists pupils but also develops the skills of staff in managing pupils who find behaving well difficult. Some pupils have individual staff who act as their mentors in times of difficulty, and also attend the nurture group. This, together with a close working partnership with parents, has resulted in a marked improvement in their behaviour. It is rare for lessons to be interrupted, or for any pupil to be prevented from coming to school for a short time because of their behaviour.
- Pupils know that they must treat everyone with courtesy and respect, and they say they feel proud of their school. They demonstrate good manners, walk around the school sensibly and show high levels of respect to one another and to staff. During breaks from lessons they play happily together. When asked if this was typically the case one child said, 'Yes. We are not

allowed to fight here.'

- Lively and engaging lessons promote pupils' enthusiasm for learning. In their eagerness to complete work in the time available, it is not always presented to a high standard. The completion of worksheets seldom engages pupils and does not secure their concentration as effectively as when they have the opportunity to think of ideas for themselves.
- In their responses to the questionnaire parents were confident that their children feel safe in school. Pupils are taught to be aware of different kinds of bullying. They said that they were not aware of any bullying in school, but knew that they could talk to any member of staff if necessary. Parents and pupils receive training in how to stay safe when using the internet.
- The school works in close partnership with a wide range of professionals to ensure the safety of those pupils whose circumstances are known to make them vulnerable.
- The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced considerably, and is now very small. Attendance overall is usually average, but has been affected by a severe and extended outbreak of a winter sickness virus this year.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because the roles of the team and subject leaders are no longer clear or effective enough now that the school is rapidly increasing in size. These leaders are having training to gain the skills they need to be able contribute fully to the school's development.
- The Principal, head of school and deputy headteacher are uncompromising in their drive to bring about the highest levels of achievement and personal development for all pupils. They are determined to make the school outstanding, and have identified the right priorities to raise pupils' achievement in a school improvement plan that has clear, measurable actions and timescales.
- Leaders frequently check teaching to identify strengths and areas for development. Coaching and personalised training programmes have raised the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good with some that is outstanding. Rigorous appraisal systems for developing the skills of all staff clearly link the quality of teaching with pupils' progress, pay and career progression. The targets set for staff are based priorities for the whole school as well as individual needs.
- The strong partnership with Castle Manor Academy has brought many benefits. Specialist staff equip pupils with skills in some subjects that they may not otherwise develop. Students working with small groups in lessons provide good role models and raise pupils' aspirations for the future. The 'familiar faces' of staff and students from the secondary school ease the anxieties of pupils and their families when it is time to change school.
- The wide range of taught subjects encourages pupils to develop particular talents and satisfy their curiosity about the world around them. Rich learning experiences include working alongside a professional chef, an artist and a writer, visits out and cooking recipes from the Second World War. Discussions about issues such as whether a zoo is an 'ark of conservation' or 'an unnatural prison' contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Almost all parents who responded to the survey would recommend the school to others. They

work closely with the school to ensure their children attend regularly, arrive on time and behave well. They help their children with their homework and listen to them read. A Friends Association works with staff from both schools to raise funds and extend the school's role in the community.

■ The governance of the school:

- The board of directors and the governors have a very clear view of the long-term development of the schools involved in the Trust. They work closely with the leaders, and are equally ambitious in their pursuit of excellence and their aim to make a real difference to pupils' lives.
- Detailed information from reports and visits gives them a good awareness of the strengths and areas for development in all aspects of the school's work. They are skilled in interpreting performance information to compare the school's success against others in the locality and nationally. This, together with relevant training and extensive expertise in business, education and finance, enables them to ask challenging questions and hold the school fully to account. They set demanding targets for pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching, and regularly check the progress made towards these and the aims in the school improvement plan.
- The directors are involved appropriately in managing the performance of the headteacher and staff, and ensure that pay rises are linked to pupils' achievements. They manage finances well and monitor the budget meticulously. They know how well additional funding such as the pupil premium is spent on improving pupils' achievements in English and mathematics.

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	138161
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	409390

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors, Castle Partnership Academy Trust
Chair	Graham Hepworth (Acting chair of governors)
Headteacher	Madeleine Vigar (Principal) Delyth Reed (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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