

Castle Hall School A Specialist Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107784
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	356242
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	John Peckham HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	865
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Nicholson
Headteacher	Mr A Pugh
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Thirty one lessons, taught by 29 teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with groups of staff, members of the governing body and students. Inspectors looked at policies and procedures, the results in external examinations over the last three years and information about the progress and attainment of students still in the school. They also took into account 173 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, as well as questionnaires from students and members of the school staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which the school has overcome the difficulties created by the proposal to close the school.
- The quality of learning and progress across the school.
- The extent to which the school's policies and practices of inclusion, equality and community cohesion impact on the lives of its students.
- The extent to which the school's curriculum provides for the needs of all students.

Information about the school

Castle Hall School is a slightly smaller-than-average secondary school serving the town of Mirfield. The majority of students attending the school are of White British backgrounds and there are higher-than-average numbers of students from other backgrounds, mostly Indian and Pakistani. The percentage of students whose first language is not English is much higher than the average for secondary schools, although none are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average. Castle Hall School has experienced some turbulence in the last three years following a proposal from the local authority to close the school. The closure proposal has now been overturned, but the uncertainty during this period created some challenges for the school in recruiting and retaining staff. The school has been a specialist language college since 1995 and holds the International School Award. It also has Healthy School status, has achieved the Financial Management in Schools standard and recently won an award for the quality of its extended provision. It also has the Bill Goler award for good practice in the inclusion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

The students in this school are polite, friendly and welcoming; they and their parents and carers have high aspirations and expectations for their educational success. They are supported by an orderly and exceptionally safe environment, which enables them to achieve examination results above the national average. The uncertainty about the school's future between 2008 and 2010 contributed to poorer examination outcomes for students in 2010, particularly in English. While results overall remained above average, the attainment of these students when they joined the school was also above average, indicating only satisfactory progress. The school's assessment information indicates that students currently in Year 11 are now making better progress.

Students are well cared for in the school; they feel very safe and they and their parents and carers are very positive about the school. There are good systems to ensure that incidents of bullying or other poor behaviour are dealt with. Students are confident and appreciative of the skill with which the behaviour of a very small number of challenging students is managed. The school's specialist status as a language college has a very clear impact on the school environment (where multilingual signs abound) and ethos. There is a good range of foreign visits supported by opportunities to study several languages, including Japanese.

There are many good teachers and inspectors observed some outstanding lessons, particularly in Key Stage 4. In these, characterised by very positive relationships, the learning objectives are clear and students know exactly what they need to do to be successful. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and are able to adapt the lesson in the light of the students' progress. In a mathematics lesson, for example, where students were learning about 'moving averages', the class was re-grouped part-way through the lesson to enable some students to make faster progress and others to receive greater teacher support. In other lessons, however, progress is not good. Sometimes students are unclear about how to improve, insufficient allowance is made for differences in ability and the marking of students' work is variable in quality. Whole-school systems for monitoring students are good, and there are very effective strategies to identify and support Year 11 students whose progress is causing concern. The effective use of this assessment data is, however, not yet fully embraced by all teachers or at all levels. As a result, the identification of underachievement is sometimes not made early enough.

Senior leaders have a very accurate and perceptive understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses and the key issues raised at the last inspection have been effectively dealt with. However, evaluation systems are not sufficiently embedded at middle leadership level to ensure that quick and effective action can be taken if concern arises about the progress of groups of students. As a result, despite some significant

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strengths in leadership and management, the school's capacity for improvement is only satisfactory.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning so that it all equals the school's best practice, through:
 - improved lesson planning that includes both activities and expectations to match the differing needs of all students
 - consistent monitoring and marking of students' work
 - better use of assessment data so that the progress of each student is regularly monitored by teachers
 - more consistent in-lesson assessment of students' understanding and progress to help both students and teachers shape future learning
 - clearer learning objectives and assessment criteria that are more closely linked, so that students understand better and can describe more clearly what they need to do in order to improve.
- Ensure middle leaders rigorously and frequently monitor key progress data and take appropriate action to prevent underachievement at the earliest opportunity.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students have a positive approach to their learning and mostly enjoy coming to school. They are appreciative when they have access to teachers with good subject knowledge and are able to be active and participant in their learning. In an outstanding Year 11 English lesson, for example, an activity of 'stepping inside' a character from the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* was used. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge generated probing questions which challenged students to think deeply about their responses. The students were able to use the practical nature of the activity to build a thorough appreciation of racial and historical perspectives in the book. Thanks to the teacher's clear guidance, they could also relate their responses to the assessment criteria for GCSE and build a very good understanding of how to improve their attainment. In technology, there is some excellent practice in linking the learning in the lesson to National Curriculum levels of attainment. This enables students to understand and describe how they can improve their grades. In many lessons, however, students do not build up the skills to evaluate their progress.

The progress of some students, particularly those in Key Stage 3, has been affected by staffing difficulties where, for example, classes have been taught by several temporary teachers. The school has enabled good catch-up for most in Year 11, but some noticeable skill and knowledge gaps exist lower down the school.

Current assessment data indicate that there are no significantly underperforming groups of students. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. In many cases, they make progress fully in line with their peers; they have

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access to good guidance and additional support from well-trained teaching assistants and staff on the special educational needs team.

Students behave in a polite and responsible way, even when not being directly supervised such as at break and lunch time. They have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, and make healthy choices in relation to eating and physical activity. The concerted efforts of students, their parents and carers and the community to keep the school open built upon a tradition of students making a proactive contribution to the school and community. Students initiated, for example, a project to raise £10,000 to build a sensory garden for blind children in India, as part of which five students travelled to India. At the start of this year, students requested the opportunity to show support for victims of the Pakistan flooding and raised over £2,500.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The skills of teachers are variable, leading to a wide range in the quality of teaching. The school has taken specific action to improve the quality of planning and use of assessment, and some improvements are evident in the school's own monitoring. Lesson objectives, however, are not always clear or precise and sometimes the marking of students' work is infrequent and cursory. In these lessons, although students know their targets and current performance, they struggle to explain how they can improve. In some lessons, insufficient allowance is made for the needs of students with different abilities, although where there

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is good practice teachers provide a range of different activities to suit ability and learning style.

Action has been taken where possible, through re-grouping and other forms of intervention, to enable as many students as possible to have access to the best teaching. Students benefit from a good curriculum, which has been thoughtfully adapted to provide a broad range of experiences to match the changing needs of students. It is enriched but not dominated by the language specialism, and some students are able to benefit from vocational and other opportunities through local partnership arrangements. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities including the 'Do Something Different' extended school provision.

The school has good systems for the care, guidance and support of students. Transition from primary school and into post-16 education is well managed and the school's efforts to improve behaviour and attendance are effective. Students whose personal circumstances give them additional needs are well provided for and students are confident that adults will deal with any concerns they may have.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior team have provided a clear vision for improvement which is understood by all staff. They have also given strong and consistent leadership to the school through the uncertainty of the closure proposals. As a result, the adverse effects of this have been much less severe than might otherwise have been the case. The governing body has provided clear direction and strong support through this time and fulfils its functions well. The leadership of teaching and learning has strengths, but procedures to ensure an even quality of provision are not wholly effective. There are good policies and a very thorough process of departmental review every two years. This is not frequent enough, however, to provide effective monitoring of the work of all staff. Managers do not yet take full advantage of the wealth of assessment data available to them to track progress of all year groups throughout the year.

The school has seen a significant change in the ethnic backgrounds of students entering the school. This has been well managed by the school and has enriched the students' experience, reinforced the parental backing for the school and strengthened its support for community cohesion both in and beyond the school. The school monitors carefully the participation and outcomes for students from all backgrounds to check equality of opportunity. Careful thought and planning have been invested to ensure that the

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curriculum has been appropriately adapted. The school's procedures for safeguarding are thorough and well implemented.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers expressed appreciation and support for the school and its work. Where individual concerns were highlighted, they tended to relate to staffing difficulties and frequent changes in teachers, an issue referred to earlier in this report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Castle Hall School A Specialist Language College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 173 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 865 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	39	100	58	5	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	72	42	98	57	3	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	77	45	88	51	6	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	40	95	55	5	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	69	40	99	57	3	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	33	99	57	12	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	25	108	62	16	9	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	68	39	96	55	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	33	107	62	7	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	66	38	94	54	11	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	32	109	63	5	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	65	38	103	60	4	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	49	83	48	6	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Castle Hall School and Specialist Language College, Mirfield WF14 9PH

Thank you for the friendly welcome which you gave me and the other inspectors during our visit, especially those of you who gave up time to talk with us. We were impressed by your behaviour and by the positive approach which most of you have to your schooling.

We found a satisfactory but well-led school in which you feel very safe. You are confident that teachers and others will provide you with good care, guidance and support. You benefit from a good curriculum that offers a wide range of experiences, supported by many additional activities beyond the school day. There is much good teaching and the school provides you with many opportunities to catch up and improve, especially in Year 11. We noted that teaching and learning have been affected by the proposed closure of the school, especially where classes have not been able to have a regular teacher.

We have asked the school to continue to improve opportunities for you by doing the following.

- Helping all learning to be as good as the best, through:
 - better planning for the needs of all of you
 - regular marking of your work
 - regular monitoring of your progress
 - using this information to adapt your lessons as you learn
 - making learning objectives and assessment criteria clearer, so that you understand better and can describe more clearly what you need to do in order to improve.
- Evaluating frequently the progress of all groups, to promote improvement.

Thank you again for your welcome and for the contribution that so many of you make to your school and to others. I wish you the best in your studies and examinations, and for those of you about to leave school, best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Peckham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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