

# Castle Lodge School

Independent school standard inspection report

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Castle Lodge School is a small independent special school for residential students that opened in 2005. It is run by the Castlecare group. All students are boys aged between 11 and 17 years with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Students are looked after by their local authorities and placed by them for varying lengths of time. They typically join the school with a history of disrupted education and generally, they have statements of special educational needs. The school was last inspected in June 2009.

The school seeks to re-engage students with education and develop their interpersonal and study skills. The school's key aims include building students' self-esteem, ensuring that they realise their full educational potential and enabling them to continue in mainstream education or training after the age of 16. All students receive therapeutic help and the school believes in an individual and holistic approach to addressing their needs.

## **Evaluation of the school**

Castle Lodge School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. The education and residential staff teams work closely together to provide a safe and secure environment in which students can swiftly re-engage with education and make outstanding progress in their personal development. Significant improvements in assessment, coupled with good teaching underpinned by excellent working relationships, enable students to make good progress in their academic learning. The combined academic and therapeutic curricula make outstanding overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, reflected in students' outstanding behaviour and very high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. Students are empowered to take charge of their welfare, health and safety, and this aspect of the provision, along with safeguarding arrangements, is outstanding. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

## **Quality of education**

The good curriculum has significant strengths and serves the needs of all students well. It is broad and balanced. It provides personalised education based on a wide

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

range of initial assessments that identify the gaps which students have in their learning. Individual programmes of education are constructed around an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy because students join with low basic skills. Excellent provision for reading and writing enables students to make rapid progress in their literacy skills in a short time and to access the rest of the curriculum. Most of the subjects of the National Curriculum are gradually added to the timetable as students re-engage with education. Students develop good creative skills through art, design and technology, and the use of drama techniques such as role play and hot seating in some subjects. Although students who show an interest in playing an instrument are encouraged to do so in their leisure time, they are not taught formally to develop their musical skills. Students learn French and religious education (RE).

Since the last inspection, Key Stage 4 students have had access to a wider range of certification, including AQA unit awards, Entry Level qualifications, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network certificates and GCSEs, which prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) strongly contributes to students' outstanding personal development. It is underpinned by the therapeutic curriculum that focuses on all aspects of students' emotional, behavioural and social development and on preparing them to face the new challenges ahead once they leave the school. It is supplemented by a good life skills programme that develops students' ability to live independently. This is taught by the residential team.

The planning of the personalised curriculum is based on National Curriculum documentation and commercial schemes of work. Medium-term plans clearly indicate how students will progress in their learning. Individual educational plans support students who have a statement of special educational needs very effectively and students are involved in the setting of specific and measurable targets. The school liaises appropriately with external agencies to meet the needs of students closely. The curriculum is adequately resourced. Students have daily access to computers and use information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning tool. However, ICT is under-used to extend students' designing and creative skills. Students are helped to make informed choices about their future through a well-planned programme of careers education. There are good opportunities for work experience although the school recognises that these can be improved even more by providing a wider range of work and study options.

Teaching and assessment are good, underpinned by a programme of continuous professional development. Staff benefit from a wide pool of expertise from within the parent company in relation to subject specialism, moderation of teacher assessments and provision for students with special educational needs. The staff build excellent working relationships with students and establish clear expectations and routines in their classroom, giving students a stable framework within which they can settle promptly and focus on learning. Time is used wisely and flexibly, allowing teachers to stretch students without inhibiting their progress and students cover a copious amount of work. Effective use of resources supports students' learning and a variety of tasks sustains their attention and interest. Students are constantly encouraged by praise, constructive verbal feedback and sensitive use of humour. Teachers often

make links between subjects which help students to apply prior knowledge and make their learning more coherent. Teaching groups are very small and teachers and learning support assistants know students extremely well. They are skilful at playing the roles of knowledgeable peers. This method often leads to discussions that promote students' intellectual development well. It works particularly well when adults ask probing questions that prompt students to think more deeply about the topic. In some lessons, the teaching is outstanding when a consistently high level of challenge is sustained, resulting in students making outstanding progress in these lessons.

Assessment procedures, previously judged to be satisfactory, are now good. There are good systems for assessing students' learning continuously and tracking their progress rigorously against initial assessments and National Curriculum attainment targets. Sometimes, the information from assessments is used very effectively to pitch lessons at a level that enables students to make outstanding progress. In most lessons, this is achieved but not totally, resulting in students making good, rather than outstanding progress overall. This includes students who have a statement of special educational needs. Some students make outstanding progress, particularly in English.

Students are involved in the assessment of their learning through evaluations at the end of lessons and consistently constructive marking. Although teachers refer students to attainment targets, the latter are not used in a way that helps students to understand more deeply what precise steps they must take to progress at an even faster rate.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

While students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall, their cultural development is good. The staff create a warm and disciplined family atmosphere in which students feel secure and can flourish. Students respect and appreciate firm boundaries and they praise their teachers. Every student achievement is celebrated and students show very high levels of attendance, self-esteem and self-confidence, and pride in their achievements. Their success motivates them to have high aspirations for the future. Students' outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning reflect their excellent moral development. The daily institution of 'thought for the day' and the therapeutic curriculum enable students to reflect on moral issues and students demonstrate a keen sense of right and wrong, for example, during a discussion on domestic violence. Students learn to know themselves and their emotions extremely well through the therapeutic curriculum and PSHE. They talk confidently about the strategies that will help them to face new challenges when they move on to a mainstream school or a college. Students are reflective, considerate and well-mannered.

The very positive relationships which students form with staff and peers of diverse backgrounds are central to their social development. The staff consistently model kindness and courtesy and students feel free from harassment. Students contribute to school life by participating highly in class, respecting others and their learning

environment. They participate in school performances, for example by producing a nativity puppet show. They develop an awareness of public institutions through the citizenship programme and educational visits. They contribute to the wider community by raising funds for various charities and providing voluntary service to a national first aid charity.

Students' cultural and multicultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. It is not yet outstanding because students are not always given the chance to explore how to extend their artistic and designing skills through ICT and by planning their own music activities. Students explore world religions through RE and visits to places of worship. They develop cultural awareness through art, visits to museums and theatres, and by participating in multicultural evenings and attending concerts and various clubs.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The outstanding provision for students' welfare, health and safety is underpinned by seamless team work between the education and care staff teams resulting in exceptionally good pastoral care. Commitment to extensive training supports staff and students extremely well. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. All the required checks are carried out on adults working at the school. All staff are trained in child protection to appropriate standards and at appropriate intervals. All the essential policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks, promoting good behaviour and combating bullying are up to date and implemented consistently. Students develop an excellent understanding of bullying through a wide range of activities including producing a play on this subject, and instances of bullying are very rare. Students have full confidence in the staff's ability to keep them safe and feel comfortable to approach them with any concern. Students are strongly motivated to behave very well and to learn by the reward system and the celebration of their achievements. The use of physical restraint is very rare. High staffing ratios ensure that supervision is vigilant throughout the school. Students are helped to keep safe and adopt healthy lifestyles extremely well through training in first aid, food hygiene and fire safety, through PSHE and regular opportunities to exercise vigorously. Gardening, cooking and the provision of nutritious meals encourage them to adopt healthy eating habits.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The proprietors ensure that robust recruitment procedures are implemented to ascertain the suitability of all adults working at the school to work with young people. All the required checks are recorded in a single central register following a good practice model.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises provide a homely atmosphere that supports the caring ethos of the school well and enables effective and safe learning. They are maintained and decorated well and the classrooms are enlivened by displays of students' work. The

school makes effective use of the outdoor area for horticulture and of local facilities for swimming and sports.

### **Provision of information**

Parents, carers and placing authorities receive information that is clear, accurate and up-to-date, as required. Placing authorities who expressed their views say they are totally satisfied with the school's work and outcomes for students.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints procedures meet requirements.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

### **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Widen the curriculum to support students' cultural development even better, for example by exploring how students can extend their artistic and designing skills through ICT and by planning regular music activities.
- Provide a wider range of work and study opportunities.
- Help students to make outstanding progress by refining the use of attainment targets to:
  - plan tasks that provide a consistently high level of challenge
  - involve students more deeply in the assessment of their learning.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
<b>Date school opened</b>	2005
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–17 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Annual fees</b>	£188,567.00
<b>Address of school</b>	Castlecare, Squires Hill, Kettering, NN14 6BQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01536 711111
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:rburrows@castlehomes.co.uk">rburrows@castlehomes.co.uk</a>
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marion Paige
<b>Proprietor</b>	Castlecare Group

**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.**

30 November 2012

Dear Students



### **Inspection of Castle Lodge School**

I would like to thank you for making me welcome when I visited your school recently. I was delighted to see how happy you are at school, how eager you are to learn and how self-confident you are. You told me that you are immensely grateful to your 'brilliant' teachers and for the one-to-one provision that enables you fill the gaps in your education. Those of you who are due to move on to a mainstream school soon say that they feel very well prepared to do so.

This inspection found that your school provides you with a good quality of education and meets all government requirements. You learn a wide range of subjects and you enjoy a good number of educational visits. The teaching is good, enabling you to make good progress. In some cases, you make outstanding progress, for example in English. The residential and school staff work very well together to help you to make outstanding progress in your personal development. You respect boundaries and your behaviour is outstanding. You say that you feel very safe and indeed the staff look after you extremely well.

I have made some recommendations to make your school even better. I have asked the school to plan regular music activities for you and to use ICT to extend your artistic and designing skills. I have also asked the school to provide you with even better opportunities for study and work experience. Finally, I have asked teachers to use attainment targets even better than they do currently to help you make outstanding progress.

You can play your part in helping the school improve still further by keeping up the best standards of behaviour and excellent attendance, and by working as hard as I saw during the inspection.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michèle Messaoudi  
Lead inspector