

Castle Academy

Station Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN12 3DB

Inspection dates

4–5 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders are not acting quickly enough to halt the underachievement of pupils in key stage 2.
- The headteacher has spent insufficient time ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- Leaders are not making the necessary checks to ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust.
- Leaders do not use the information they collect to help them plan what they need to do to improve. The areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have not been addressed.
- Governors do not have the appropriate information with which to hold leaders fully accountable.
- Leaders and governors rely too heavily on external consultants’ views of the school. They do not check the accuracy of the reports they receive.
- Leaders have not done enough to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, resulting in too much variability.
- From their starting points, pupils do not make as much progress as they should, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who are most able.
- When work in lessons is too hard or too easy, some pupils get distracted and do not behave as well as they can.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, who have class teacher roles, have the appropriate skills to model best practice for other teachers.
- Pupils are happy, they enjoy coming to school and feel safe.
- Attendance figures are higher than the national average.
- Staff have positive relationships with parents.
- Outcomes for children at the end of the early years are above the national average.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that monitoring of the school's work leads to accurate self-evaluation
 - producing a development plan that is clearly linked to improving rates of progress for all groups of pupils
 - ensuring that the proposed impact of actions is measurable and checked regularly
 - increasing the rigour of the management of staff performance so school improvement is promoted more effectively
 - ensuring effective support for disadvantaged pupils so they all make good progress
 - developing the curriculum so it better prepares pupils for life in modern Britain
 - making sure that information presented to governors and on the school's website is accurate
 - urgently introducing checks and procedures to ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are maintained in line with current guidance
 - acting quickly to identify and halt any underachievement recognised in particular classes.

- Improve the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 1 and 2 so that it is consistently good or better in order to improve progress for all pupils, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that lessons progress at a lively pace
 - making sure that teachers consistently challenge the most able pupils so that they make at least good progress
 - improving the work of teaching assistants to ensure good outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs or disability
 - engaging pupils in their learning so that they are interested and show positive attitudes to learning
 - developing links with other schools so that teachers can learn from colleagues and improve their own practice.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Senior leaders do not have an accurate understanding of how the school is performing compared to other schools nationally. They have an overly positive view of the school's strengths and do not use the information available to them to identify and plan for rapid improvement.
- There is over-reliance on the use of external consultants to identify strengths and weaknesses. This has allowed the headteacher to absolve responsibility for some aspects of his work.
- Self-evaluation is flimsy and glosses over the key areas of underperformance. Inaccurate information is presented to governors without being checked or challenged. This gives governors an overly generous picture of the school's overall effectiveness.
- The school's plans to improve are ineffective. They neither identify key issues nor include measures of success. The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have not been addressed and are not identified on the current strategic plan.
- Approaches to assessment are changed too frequently, making it difficult for leaders to establish continuity in measures of pupils' current progress. Leaders have collected a vast amount of information on pupils' progress but subsequent analysis is weak.
- Leaders have recognised they have become increasingly isolated as a stand-alone academy and have sought support from a multi-academy trust. This has taken too long and leaders have focused their time and energy on resolving this issue rather than on the progress of pupils within the school. Recent staffing turbulence, although now resolved, has had a negative impact on outcomes and progress.
- Some of the information provided on the school's website is not accurate and gives an overly positive picture of how the school is performing.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have been too slow to identify and act on the lack of progress being made by pupils. Leaders made sure that government floor standards were reached last year, reflecting an improvement in attainment, but progress remained weak. Since September 2015, with more stable staffing, current pupils' progress has begun to improve.
- The curriculum lacks breadth and balance and needs further development to ensure that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Performance management arrangements, including for the headteacher, lack rigour.
- The impact of pupil premium funding for pupils who are disadvantaged varies across the school. Tracking is in place but the impact of different interventions is not being closely monitored.
- Sport premium funding is used well and pupils enjoy physical activities. There is a range of after-school activities on offer run by specialist sports coaches.
- Inspectors recommend that newly qualified teachers are not appointed.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Over the last 18 months, governors have focused their energies on choosing and joining an appropriate academy trust. The process has been lengthy and time-consuming, and has taken them away from their core purpose. Governors are not checking the accuracy of the school's work. They do not fully understand the external analysis of pupils' results and therefore did not know that pupils were underachieving. Minutes from a recent governing body meeting show that governors sometimes ask pertinent questions but are accepting of general answers. They are not robust enough in their questioning.
 - Long agendas at meetings, focusing on finance and legal duties, are not helping governors to focus on key issues. The reports provided to them by the headteacher are not always accurate, focus mainly on positive areas and do not give a full picture or any detailed analysis. As a result, governors have an overly positive view of where the school is.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. However, at the start of the inspection there were a number of administrative errors in the single central record. Inspection evidence confirms the necessary information was held by the school. Leaders, including governors, are not checking that systems are up-to-date with current guidance and do not have procedures in place to help them do so.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because they have not been consistently good enough over time to ensure that pupils progress quickly enough.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are slowing down rates of progress in some classes. This is because teachers are not focusing on the needs of all pupils in their class and the most able pupils are often left to work independently. Teaching assistants' low expectations hamper the progress of the least able pupils they teach in small groups.
- The pace of lessons varies; some pupils spend too long waiting for others to finish, while in other classes the pace is so fast that pupils are moved on before they understand what to do. Sometimes pupils lose interest and their concentration wanders where the pace is too slow.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and therefore do not challenge the most able pupils. For example, limited vocabulary used in worksheets does not challenge the most able to grapple with harder words.
- Increased focus on the teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation is having a positive impact on the quality of written work seen in books. This is reflected in the much-improved spelling, punctuation and grammar in the current Year 6. However, sometimes teachers do not check that spelling is accurate and pupils repeat the same mistakes too frequently.
- Marking and feedback are inconsistent across the school. Some teachers provide detailed next steps for pupils, in line with the school's policy, so that they know how to improve their work. There is strong practice in some classes, but in others it is not as well developed. Where it is strongest, pupils are making better progress.
- Where teaching is strongest, assessment of what pupils already know is used effectively. In a Year 6 revision session, the teacher really focused on ensuring that pupils could differentiate between the different types of questions being asked in the key stage 2 tests. She engaged all pupils through skilfully targeted questions aimed at providing strong models and successfully picked up any pupil misconceptions.
- Pupils enjoy reading and show positive attitudes to books. There is an appropriate match of books to most able pupils but for some lower- and middle-ability pupils the match is not always accurate. This is further backed up by observations in a comprehension lesson where the most able pupils were given work that challenged their thinking and they worked together to answer the questions. However, middle-ability pupils were not as confident and spent too much time waiting for the teacher to come to them, so learning was not as evident.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Work to help pupils understand about other cultures and religions is not developed well enough. This is not helping them to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Attitudes to learning are not always positive. Pupils appear bored in many lessons and switch off because they lose interest and concentration.
- The school provides language support for pupils who are new to the country, and this is helping them to learn English quickly. However, they sometimes lack guidance and support during breaks and lunchtimes, which is not helping them to develop friendships.
- Pupils say they feel safe and know that they can talk to teachers if there is anything that is concerning them. Most parents agree, and say that their children are happy.
- The breakfast club is well attended and provides pupils with a healthy start to the day. Pupils enjoy socialising with their friends before school starts and others use the opportunity to read books and chat.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils are often not fully engaged in their learning and their focus and concentration is lost. Sometimes pupils are too reliant on an adult, needing to have their

work checked before they move on, or waiting for others. This slows down rates of progress.

- When very challenging behaviour occurs, staff deal with it well, removing the class to safety so that they can continue with their learning.
- General behaviour around the school is of a high standard. Pupils are polite and friendly, they show respect for each other. In the playground, pupils play games together without adult intervention, taking turns and sharing. Pupils line up sensibly and move around the school safely.
- Attendance is above the national average. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent is higher than the national figure, but case studies demonstrate that work with particular families has had a positive impact on their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils across the school are too variable because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. The patchiness of progress for specific year groups means that teachers are playing catch-up in some classes.
- Not enough pupils are making the progress expected of them from their starting points, and because of the variability of teaching, too many are not reaching the levels of which they are capable. Too much focus has been on securing the minimum standard. As a result, progress for the most able pupils is not improving quickly enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making expected progress by the end of key stage 2, but no disadvantaged pupils made more than expected progress in reading and writing in 2015. This is because the focus has been on reaching the minimum expected standards, and not on accelerating progress for the most able disadvantaged pupils. Current information about progress shows a similar picture.
- In the early years, there has been year-on-year improvement in the proportion of children who reach and exceed national expectations at the end of the year.
- Attainment in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) has generally been above the national average. However, in 2015 there was a sharp decline. Leaders know why this happened and are tracking attainment in phonics more closely. Pupils entering Year 3 without reaching the Year 1 expected standard in phonics are still struggling to read.
- Pupils leave key stage 1 with skills that are broadly in line for their age. However, from their starting points, this does not represent good progress.
- Work in books suggests some improvements are now apparent in mathematics and writing. There is more evidence of progress over time and leaders are monitoring this more closely. However, there are not enough opportunities for the most able pupils to apply their skills and knowledge more deeply. Progress for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is also too variable.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Early years provision requires improvement because leaders are not checking that information on entry to the Reception class is being accurately assessed. Therefore leaders do not know if the progress information is accurate.
- Regular observations give brief overviews of what the children are learning. Sometimes the identified next steps do not give clear indications of what children need to do to move forward in their learning.
- Constructive and supportive partnerships with parents ensure that they are involved in their children's learning. Parents are encouraged to send in their own observations of what their children are learning at home and this information is used to create a picture of the whole child. The early years leader visits local settings to support transition.
- The early years teacher has high expectations of what she wants children to achieve. For example, children practised counting to 50 and then counting in tens. Most children succeeded because the lesson was fun, engaging and lively. In another session children independently worked out doubles by themselves and knew how to use equipment to help them. Progress in mathematics is particularly strong.
- The new early years provision provides a well organised learning environment for both learning inside and outside. Children show high levels of engagement when they choose activities for themselves, and when teachers direct their activities, children can talk about their learning.

- Children are highly motivated to learn because the activities are purposeful, well planned and matched to where they are in their learning. Planning takes into account young children's interests and learning is linked to real-life experiences.
- Positive relationships between adults and children ensure that children feel safe and well supported in their learning. Children's independence is encouraged by the range of activities on offer.
- Children leave early years well prepared for key stage 1.

School details

Unique reference number	138703
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10012021

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Hoyland
Headteacher	Simon Martin
Telephone number	01709 513010
Website	www.castleacademy.org
Email address	admin@castleacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	1–2 April 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium (additional funding for those eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is just below the national average.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who need support for their special educational needs or disability is around the national average.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which are the minimum expected standards for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Plans are now in place for the school to join the Reach4 Academy Trust, as a partner, from June 2016.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupils' progress on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class at least once. Three lessons were visited jointly with the headteacher. A range of books were scrutinised along with assessment information, and inspectors heard a range of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders, two groups of pupils, two governors, including the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of Reach4 Academy Trust.
- Inspectors took account of 31 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey), eight responses to the pupil questionnaire and 15 online staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school strategic plan, self-evaluation, in-house assessment information, nationally available information and other documentation made available by the school.

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