

Castle Hall Academy Trust

Richard Thorpe Avenue, Crowlees Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 9PH

Inspection dates

16–17 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Senior and middle leaders have focused too much on attainment levels and have failed to make sure that pupils make good progress.
- Senior leaders have an inaccurate view of how well the school is doing. Improvement plans are not targeted well enough at tackling those areas that need to improve rapidly.
- Governors are not meeting their statutory duties. Important policies are out of date and in need of urgent review. Governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the significant weaknesses in the school, especially in relation to pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough and over time teaching is inadequate. Teachers do not consistently tackle poor behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Attendance levels are not high enough and there are occasions when pupils do not report instances of bullying.
- Child protection records are not clear enough in how they record events that have happened or the impact actions have been having on improving pupils' lives.
- Careers information, advice and guidance for younger pupils are ineffective. Pupils are not clear on the possible options and pathways that are available to them.

The school has the following strengths

- The number of pupils who secure a grade C or above at GCSE level across a core of five academic subjects is well above the national average.
- Some teaching over time is more effective in helping pupils achieve well, particularly in mathematics and in some modern foreign languages.
- Some pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons and behave well when moving around the school.
- Pupils benefit from 'alternative curriculum days'. They are developing their understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of 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?

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so pupils make good progress by:
 - making sure that leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching give greater weight to the progress all groups of pupils are making in relation to their starting points
 - ensuring that self-evaluation is accurate and informs whole-school and departmental improvement plans
 - improving the quality of performance management targets so that they sharply focus on improving pupils' progress
 - making sure that middle leaders effectively check and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and hold teachers accountable for the progress pupils are making
 - improving the curriculum for pupils attending the learning support unit and making sure that those who attend off-site provision are following suitable accredited pathways
 - ensuring that the curriculum equips all pupils for life in modern Britain
 - ensuring that governors fulfil their statutory duties, making sure that all school policies are reviewed, amended and ratified in a timely manner and these are reflected on the school website
 - making sure that governors and external support provide greater levels of challenge and scrutiny on the impact leaders and managers are having in rapidly tackling weaknesses.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - making sure that all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can do
 - ensuring that teachers make best use of pupil assessment information to deliver teaching over time that is sufficiently engaging and challenging, especially for the most able pupils
 - checking that teachers consistently tackle pupils' weaknesses in literacy
 - ensuring that pupils understand clearly how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve, in line with the school's marking and assessment policy

- making sure that successful strategies to improve teaching are more effectively shared and adopted to improve teaching.
- Improve the behaviour and attendance of pupils by:
 - making sure that all teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour both in and out of lessons
 - carefully analysing why different groups of pupils are not attending the school regularly and devising suitable strategies to improve their attendance levels
 - devising further ways to give pupils the confidence to report all instances of bullying so that these can be successfully addressed
 - ensuring adequate staff supervision at lunchtimes to make sure that all pupils use exits and entrances appropriately.
- Improve the quality of child protection records by:
 - making sure that there are clear timelines for when actions have to be taken
 - ensuring that greater attention is paid to checking that actions taken by the school and other professionals and agencies are having the desired impact.
- Improve the quality of careers information, advice and guidance so that younger pupils are better informed and more confident about the choices available to them at key stage 4.

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 the 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

Inadequate

- Leaders and managers lack the capacity to improve the school. Since the previous inspection, pupils have made inadequate progress in a number of key subjects, including English and science. Leaders have an over-generous view of how good teaching is and are not paying enough attention to improving pupils' progress.
- The leadership of teaching is inadequate. Leaders are often at a loss to explain why pupils' progress is so poor when their own checks on teaching are so positive. Leaders' checks on learning are not insightful or incisive enough and do not drill down into the reasons why pupils are not making good progress.
- Issues identified by leaders over a year ago have not been successfully tackled, including the need to improve pupils' spelling and provide useful feedback to pupils on their work. Leaders have not done enough to improve pupils' literacy skills.
- The school's self-evaluation is inaccurate, despite leaders saying that they know improvements are needed. School improvement plans do not identify some of the key weaknesses that need to be tackled. Performance management is ineffective. Targets set for leaders and teachers are often imprecise and unclear, especially in relation to improving pupils' progress. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to judge whether teachers have met the targets set. Various professional development activities, including challenge for the most able, sharing effective practice across the school and training in observing teaching, have not had enough of an impact on improving the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils continue to make inadequate progress.
- Middle leaders are not effective in checking and improving the quality of teaching in their departments; hence their self-evaluations and plans for improvement are inaccurate and unconvincing. Middle leaders are not clear enough in spotting what the key priorities are and what actions they need to take to improve pupils' progress. Along with senior leaders, middle leaders fail to consider carefully whether different groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making fast enough progress.
- The curriculum is ineffective in helping all pupils achieve their best. Pupils who have behavioural issues attending the learning support unit (LSU) do not receive the support they should. Too often, the quality, quantity and frequency of work set by their class teachers are poor and in some cases non-existent, despite several requests from LSU support staff. A small number of pupils who attend off-site provision are not following suitable pathways that will lead to accredited qualifications. This unsuitable curriculum, coupled with poor-quality teaching, mean that pupils in the LSU and those attending off-site provision are not receiving an acceptable standard of education.

- 'Alternative curriculum days' provide pupils with helpful opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Pupils have benefited from learning about the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse and ways to keep safe when online. Pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through a variety of trips and fund-raising opportunities, including for BBC Children in Need and the Student Council Bake Sale. Pupils also have some understanding of different faiths and religions.
- External support provided by other local schools has had minimal impact in a number of curriculum areas including science, history and geography. Local authority support is weak and ineffective. Local authority officers are too accepting of what leaders tell them. Local authority officers make few independent checks to see whether school leaders' actions are having the desired impact. Reports written by local authority officers do not clearly convey the significant weaknesses that exist in the school. School leaders and local authority officers have tried to paint the best possible picture of the school by masking weak assessment information. This proves of little help to leaders, governors or pupils.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is ineffective. Governors do not have a clear picture of how well pupils are progressing. Consequently, their view of how well leaders and managers are doing is inaccurate. Governors agree that they would benefit from additional support and training to help them better understand assessment information and so be able to challenge leaders more effectively.
- Governors pose a range of questions during their meetings, but rarely do they get to the heart of the matter regarding how well pupils are doing. It is unclear what agreed actions are to be taken following these meetings or how the impact of leaders' actions will be measured.
- Governors are not involved enough in challenging and questioning leaders about self-evaluation. They are too accepting that they and school leaders are doing well.
- Governors are aware of how additional funding is spent. However, governors are not clear whether this large amount of money is having a positive impact. Governors have not been dogged or determined enough in checking whether actions are helping disadvantaged pupils to make faster progress. Governors are unclear which strategies have had most impact on pupils' progress. As a result, pupils who are supported by the pupil premium make the same inadequate progress as their peers.
- Governors do not meet all of their statutory duties. They were unaware that important policies related to attendance, safeguarding and child protection are out of date and some policies have not been reviewed for several years.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, despite out-of-date policies. There are effective processes in place to check that individuals are safe to work with pupils. Staff have valued the training they have received in helping to spot and report potential safeguarding issues.

- Staff have found training on radicalisation and extremism useful. This training has been used to good effect in referring concerns of potential extremism to the appropriate authorities. Effective systems are also in place to report children who are missing from education. Registrations quickly identify pupils who are absent and phone calls home are made to check where pupils are.
- Newly and recently qualified teachers have been effectively inducted into the school's safeguarding arrangements. This group of teachers, along with other staff, understand their safeguarding responsibilities and the key messages in the latest guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2016).
- However, child protection files are not as helpful as they could be in detailing how support is being used to help these vulnerable pupils. This makes it difficult to judge the impact that leaders, other professionals and agencies are having. Site supervision at lunchtimes is not as good as it is during breaktimes and this means that a few pupils use exit points inappropriately.
- It is strongly recommended that, before appointing newly qualified teachers, the leaders and managers of the school consult Her Majesty's Inspector, who will monitor the progress of the school following this inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching over time is inadequate. Few pupils make the progress they should. Teachers' expectations vary across the school and within departments. Work over time shows that some teachers too often accept low standards. Teachers do not consistently tackle pupils over poorly presented work that lacks care, effort or pride.
- Teachers have access to a wealth of information on pupils but rarely use it well to set challenging work. Teachers do not challenge the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, to think more deeply and carefully about what they are learning. In some classrooms, low expectations coupled with low levels of challenge prevent the most able from achieving the highest grades. Pupils commented to inspectors on several occasions that much depends on the teacher they have as to whether learning will be effective, challenging or interesting.
- Teachers do not check carefully enough how well pupils are doing in lessons. Too often, the most able pupils coast through undemanding work. At other times, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, copy down work that they do not understand. This contributes to poor pupil understanding and progress over time.
- Too often, teachers do not successfully tackle weaknesses in pupils' literacy. Pupils repeatedly make spelling errors and teachers fail to tackle these successfully. The use of spelling logs and school-wide approaches to feedback remain inconsistent despite senior leaders identifying the need to improve these areas over a year ago.
- In some departments, including modern foreign languages, some teachers are able to use questioning more effectively to probe pupils' understanding. In these classrooms, teachers' questioning is well targeted to check that individual pupils have fully understood what is being taught.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. The curriculum provides pupils with some understanding of life in modern Britain, but it is not good enough. Some older pupils, for example, do not have a good enough understanding of what democracy is or the importance of voting.
- For some pupils, form time is a missed opportunity to instil good learning habits. In some classrooms, form time allows teachers to encourage pupils to practise reading or complete their homework. In other classrooms, teachers leave pupils to their own devices and this leads to pupils achieving very little.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are better for pupils leaving key stage 4 than for those in key stage 3. Younger pupils do not receive effective enough careers information, advice and guidance when considering their key stage 4 option choices. Pupils told inspectors that they had little helpful information to make informed option choices based on their career ambitions. Despite this, the overwhelming majority of older pupils pursue suitable education, employment or training pathways once they have left the school.
- Pupils are kept safe because there are adults whom they can talk to if they have concerns. Supervision at breaktimes helps pupils feel that they are being cared for. Bullying, usually name-calling, does occur but staff tackle it, including homophobic and racist bullying, well. Outside school, some pupils use social media inappropriately and this leads to arguments when they are in school. Such issues are dealt with by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because low-level disruption in some lessons hinders pupils' learning. The number of low-level incidents reported is falling but there is still a way to go before behaviour is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are sometimes 'hit and miss'. At times pupils are silly, misbehave and are disrespectful to their teachers. Pupils say that this can get in the way of learning in some classrooms. At other times, pupils show good levels of concentration, listen carefully to what the teacher is saying and show pride in their work. Pupils comment that in these classrooms, they can get on with their learning.
- Pupils are inquisitive and often welcoming to visitors to the school. They are often confident and keen to share their views about the school. Pupils usually walk sensibly around the school site and behave respectfully to each other. However, at times, some pupils can be too rowdy and dawdle on their way to lessons. Some teachers do not shy away from tackling this behaviour, while other teachers are less effective in getting pupils to their lessons quickly.

- Attendance rates have fallen and are not high enough, even when taking into account those pupils who are absent due to religious holidays. There are signs this term that leaders have started to improve overall attendance levels, but it is too early to say whether this will be sustained. Persistent absence rates have risen. Leaders and managers do not do enough to analyse absence rates by different groups of pupils to identify any themes or emerging issues that they can quickly tackle. Exclusion rates remain low.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils of Pakistani heritage, have failed to make the progress they should be making. This is because of poor teaching over time, leaders and managers not paying enough attention to the progress that different groups of pupils should be making, and inconsistent teachers' expectations.
- The school's own assessment information shows that significant weaknesses still exist in a number of subjects, including English, science, geography and history. The current progress information coupled with inspection evidence show that boys, the most able, including those that are disadvantaged, and middle-ability pupils are not making fast enough progress.
- The progress that pupils are making in key stage 3 is inadequate. Few pupils are achieving as well as they could be. Despite leaders and managers producing large amounts of assessment information each term, this is making little difference to improving the rates of progress pupils are making.
- Leaders are not making the best use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils' progress lags way behind that of other pupils when compared against a range of national attainment and progress measures. There are currently few convincing signs that these differences are diminishing quickly enough.
- Leaders are making better use of Year 7 catch-up funding. Younger pupils are improving their reading scores and this is helping them access more of the key stage 3 curriculum. Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is being used more effectively to help this group of pupils in their examination preparation.
- As with other pupils, the most able pupils underachieve across a wide range of subjects. Despite headline attainment measures comparing favourably with, and sometimes being well above, national averages, too few of the most able pupils attain the highest grades in a range of subjects, including English, science, history and geography.
- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remains significantly below that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Current assessment information, coupled with inspection evidence, show that leaders are not successfully improving the progress of this group of pupils fast enough.

- Pupils attending alternative provision are usually following suitable courses. However, there are occasions when this is not the case and some vulnerable pupils are leaving the school with few qualifications.

School details

Unique reference number	137399
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10021974

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	869
Appropriate authority	The academy trust
Chair	Chris Sutcliffe
Principal	Andy Pugh
Telephone number	01924 520500
Website	www.castlehall.com
Email address	office@castlehall.com
Date of previous inspection	24–25 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about policies related to child protection, e-safety, sex and relationships education and health and safety.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about child protection.
- The school is slightly smaller than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average.

- The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, with the majority of pupils being of Pakistani heritage.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A small number of pupils attend education and/or training at places away from the school. The providers are Brian Jackson College, Nexus Multi-Academy Trust, Ethos College and Ponderosa Rural Therapeutic Centre.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including observations of teaching and conducting learning walks. Some were undertaken with senior leaders.
- Inspectors carefully scrutinised pupils' work over time in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, modern foreign languages and design technology.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, including the principal, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors met with a group of teachers, including newly and recently qualified teachers. They also met with four governors and a local authority officer.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during formal interviews, during lessons and informally.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation related to the school's work, gaining the school's view of its performance and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, pupils' behaviour over time and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors analysed school parental surveys, as there were no responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire).
- The school works in partnership with a number of local schools.
- An inspector also visited one alternative provider.

Inspection team

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Elizabeth Cresswell	Ofsted Inspector
Judith Gooding	Ofsted Inspector
David Pridding	Ofsted Inspector
Sai Patel	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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