

Castle Hill High School

The Fairway, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 5DS

Inspection dates

17–18 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, with the support of other leaders and governors, has inspired and motivated his staff to manage a tremendously successful move to a new location and premises. There have been changes in leadership, staffing, pupil intake as well as the development of a new sixth form during the past three years. These achievements are exceptional.
- Staff morale is very high because there has been an excellent shared vision and strategic direction of travel to which they all subscribe.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been consistently good or better to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress from their starting points on entry to the school. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve GCSE grades in subjects including English and mathematics. All leavers at the end of Year 11 move successfully to further education, employment and training.
- The sixth form is outstanding due to strong direction and leadership. Learners develop work-based independence and learning skills to achieve further qualifications. They, too, move successfully to their next steps.
- Pupils' attitudes and engagement in lessons are outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their behaviour in and around school is exemplary. Pupils with more complex needs make outstanding progress in their social and personal skills due to excellent support from the school's inclusion team and from staff working in the specialist classroom called 'The Hub'.
- Leaders ensure that they systematically monitor the quality of teaching and support across the school. There are strong and effective systems in place to check pupils' progress because of the high-quality teaching and support that they receive.
- Governors have an agreed process for making sure that they are up to date with leaders' work through a programme of focused visits. Governors are knowledgeable and play an outstanding role in ensuring that leaders are held to account.
- Leaders and governors recognise that further refinements of the curriculum are necessary to ensure that pupils with more complex needs benefit fully from the school and sixth-form provisions.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further respond to the changing needs of the school community by ensuring that:
 - the curriculum provision for pupils with complex needs, both in the main school and in the sixth form, is further refined so that pupils always make the best possible progress in their learning
 - all staff are informed about the complex needs of some pupils through access to current research and training opportunities
 - leaders share their best practice in meeting the complex needs of pupils with other local schools.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership team, has inspired the school community to share and follow his strategic vision. As a result, this is an outstanding school.
- There is a wonderful ethos enhanced by a clear 'can do' culture of learning. Staff and pupils are overwhelmingly positive in their views about the school. Staff ensure that pupils follow the agreed code of conduct so that behaviour in and around school is exemplary. Staff in 'The Hub', one of the school's classes which provides specialist support for pupils who have autism, and the school's inclusion team ensure that pupils who have complex needs receive close support and mentoring so that they make strong progress in their behaviour, personal and social skills.
- School development planning is precise and strategic. Leaders focus upon clear success measures to check upon progress and future actions. This agreed system ensures rapid improvements, for example in the way that teachers consistently use information about pupils' abilities and needs to inform their planning and subsequent tracking of pupils' progress.
- Senior and other leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment extremely well to inform staff training needs, support programmes and appraisal objectives. Teaching, learning and support are consistently good and often better.
- Specialist staff at the school who are trained in meeting the needs of pupils who have autism have a strong impact in developing the skills of other staff. Leaders recognise that they can build successfully on this approach to ensure that they continue to create the best possible provision for pupils who have more complex needs who are now entering the school and the sixth form.
- Other leaders, including the special education needs coordinators, ensure that there are robust procedures in place to enable pupils to transfer smoothly from their primary schools into Year 7. Once in the school, similar procedures ensure pupils' smooth transition from class to class as well as into the sixth form.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. Subjects such as physical education, science, computing, art and design technology are taught by specialist teachers. After-school clubs provide further enrichment, for example through modern foreign languages such as Japanese and Spanish. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is available for older pupils up to silver level. Vocational learning, such as catering, hair and beauty and construction, is a strong feature of the school's work from Year 9 through to the sixth form. Leaders and governors recognise, however, that further refinements of the curriculum are necessary to ensure that pupils who have more-complex needs benefit fully from the school and sixth-form provisions.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, including the British values of tolerance, respect, democracy and the rule of law, is an outstanding aspect of the school's work. For example, lessons observed indicated that staff were keen to promote respect and tolerance between pupils through peer support and collaborative working.

- Partnership working with parents is outstanding. Parents spoken to appreciate the approachability of the headteacher and the staff. A parents' committee meets monthly at the school. Leaders do all they can to chase up the very small minority of parental concerns that rarely arise.
- Partnership working with other secondary high schools through a local teaching school alliance demonstrates that the school is valued locally, for example when hosting trainee teachers from local colleges. Links with the local authority sensory support team ensure that deaf pupils receive high-quality support and that staff benefit from training and support.
- The school's policies and practices for promoting equal opportunities are outstanding because staff plan so effectively for pupils' needs across subjects and contexts. In this way, realistic and challenging targets are set in accordance with pupils' abilities and interests. There is a broad range of 'learning pathways' for pupils to follow so that they are fully engaged in learning and aspiring to do their best at all times.
- The school is increasingly catering for pupils with more complex needs. Consequently, leaders recognise that they need to afford staff more opportunities to deepen their understanding of how best to meet these pupils' complex needs. They also recognise that they have a wealth of experience and best practice to share with other local schools.

Governance of the school

- Governance is outstanding. The chair of governors meets routinely with the headteacher to discuss aspects of school improvement. In line with the governing body's agreed procedures, other governors are tasked to focus on subjects or aspects, such as safeguarding, for which there is a named governor. In this way, governors can provide verbal feedback at the full governing body meetings.
- Governors are well informed about the work of the school, especially about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They hold leaders to account through robust appraisal objectives and procedures. All staff have objectives that link directly to agreed school improvement actions.
- Pupil premium funding is exceptionally well used. Governors know that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, those who are looked after by the local authority and those who are the least able, make similar progress from their starting points to their peers. Year 7 catch-up funding is used to good effect in supporting the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have made measured improvements in these areas due to additional staffing, lunchtime clubs and library resources. Governors ensure that funding set aside to benefit pupils who have levels of special educational need and/or disability is used to good effect.
- Governors attend training days set aside for their own development. They have opportunities to update their knowledge, skills and understanding in agreed areas relating to the school's work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust. Staff and governors receive training, for example, on 'Prevent', so that staff can recognise and respond to signs of radicalisation or extremist behaviour. Staff spoken to can explain procedures that operate when a concern about child protection is raised.
- Risk assessments are robust, for example when planning trips out of school. Pastoral staff maintain regular checks on absence and monitor the attendance and behaviour of pupils and learners who attend regular work placements.
- Arrangements for securing the premises are very strong, including for the admission of visitors and advising them of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Senior and other leaders have ensured that all teachers adhere to the agreed school policy regarding teaching, learning and assessment. Staff, including skilled teaching assistants, make highly effective use of pupils' learning, social, personal and behavioural assessment information to inform lesson planning, individual and small-group support plans. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.
- Staff teams work exceptionally well to create welcoming, nurturing classrooms. Pupils settle to learning with enthusiasm. They make great progress in terms of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example when working with each other on joint projects. Classroom displays demonstrate how staff value pupils' efforts in their work.
- The high quality of interaction between staff and pupils with complex needs leads to very positive outcomes in a range of subjects across different key stages. For example, on a personal, social and health education level, pupils in Year 9 responded with great maturity when setting the ground rules about appropriate language during a sex education lesson.
- Teachers deploy teaching assistants, sixth-form mentors and other resources with skill and sensitivity to ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to access lessons. The use of signing for deaf pupils ensures that appropriate levels of challenge for each pupil are put in place.
- Teachers encourage pupils to explore their own ideas through trial and error, such as when working on Venn diagrams in Year 8. Pupils become more self-confident and learn more deeply as a result.
- Teachers use skilled questioning techniques to test pupils' understanding of vocabulary, linked to pupils' ability levels. As a result, pupils think more deeply about what they want to write.
- In other subjects, for example art, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to be creative so that they can explore their feelings; pupils painted self-portraits after studying examples from Picasso's work. In physical education lessons, older pupils are encouraged to think about how they use their skills, such as in the context of a netball game, so that they can develop better as part of a team.
- Teachers actively promote pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills across different subjects, for example in design technology, science and computing. Teachers

regularly refer to individual assessment profiles so that work is pitched appropriately for each pupil.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes and engagement in lesson are exemplary because of high-quality teaching and support.
- Pupils are treated with great respect by staff in all contexts. Pupils spoken to say that this is 'an amazing school' because they feel both supported and challenged in their learning and behaviour. They appreciate that staff recognise and reward their efforts but will remind them about what is or is not acceptable if they step out of line.
- Pupils spoken to say that they feel safe and that any bullying incidents are quickly dealt with by caring, supportive and vigilant staff.
- Pupils say that they know how to keep safe on the internet. Parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire survey were overwhelmingly happy about the safety and welfare of the pupils. Such comments as 'We love the school and everyone who works there!' typify parents' appreciation.
- The school's support for pupils' physical and emotional well-being is outstanding. Parents spoken to during the inspection commented on the approachability of the headteacher and staff. Leaders state that, on the rare occasions where parents are unhappy over an issue, they will follow up concerns until they are resolved.
- The ability of many pupils to develop confidence in travelling independently to and from school is notable. School staff provide strong support to pupils and their families for this to happen.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct in and around school is outstanding. They understand the rules and consistently follow staff instructions. For example, pupils do not use mobile phones during the school day.
- The school's policy on behaviour is translated effectively by staff into day-to-day practices. For example, the agreed rewards and sanctions system has led to an increase in pupil rewards and a decrease in reported incidents.
- There has been a slight increase, however, in reported behaviour incidents more recently in Year 7. As a result, leaders have increased the levels of specialist teaching and support through 'The Hub' to manage the needs of a growing number of pupils with additional complex needs now being referred to the school.
- Overall, attendance levels are better than other special schools nationally. Pastoral leaders ensure that pupils with persistent absence make improvements through targeted support plans.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- All groups of pupils make good or better progress from their starting points. On average, leavers achieve 12 externally accredited qualifications by the end of Year 11. These include a mix of GCSEs, entry-level and functional skills and vocational qualifications. Some pupils achieve a Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award. This is an outstanding achievement.
- Pupils who have more complex needs, including those on the autistic spectrum or with medical or sensory needs, make similar steps of progress in external accreditation as their peers. They also meet their targets in personal, social, behavioural, speech, language and communication. As a result, they develop the self-confidence and skills to make a successful transition to work placements, college and the wider community.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able and least able disadvantaged, make good or better progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and computing in key stage 4. The most able attain up to grade B in GCSE English, and grade C in mathematics, science and art and design. Some gain GCSEs in both English and mathematics as well as in science and art and design.
- In key stage 3, leaders' use of the pupil premium funding has ensured that disadvantaged pupils make the same progress as their peers and, in some cases, better, for example in Year 8 science. This picture is evident across each of the key stages. The small group of pupils who are looked after by the local authority make better progress from their starting points than their peers in school.
- Subject teachers maintain equally comprehensive records of pupils' starting points, their targets and the progress that they make across the curriculum. Inspectors found that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are also promoted well. Pupils increasingly use these skills to access lessons with greater independence and self-confidence, for example when researching holiday destinations on the internet and recording their findings. Pupils develop their skills in physical education lessons when thinking strategically as part of a team.
- Reading is a strength of the school's work. Pupils whom inspectors heard reading demonstrate strong reading habits. The library is at the heart of the school's community. It is organised so that pupils are motivated to earn reward points as well as to develop their skills of word recognition and comprehension. Pupils spoken to said that they enjoyed reading with their teachers or teaching assistants. Staff make detailed notes when hearing pupils read so as to inform future learning. Consequently, pupils make good or better progress in their reading skills, including comprehension.
- Reading, writing and mathematical skills are promoted well across different subjects. Within key stage 4, for example, and within the vocational department, pupils demonstrate that they can read for information, follow instructions and use a range of mathematical calculations appropriately.
- Due to the wide-ranging and diverse needs of pupils at the school, and because some of these groups are relatively small, it is not possible to make accurate comparisons with levels of progress made by pupils nationally.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Strong leadership and direction from the head of sixth form has led, in a short time, to outstanding provision and outcomes for learners. The sixth form has retained all its learners.
- Staff take full account of learners' needs and aspirations so that the learning pathways followed are accurately matched. Leaders continue to develop the sixth-form provision to ensure that learners arriving with more complex needs always reap the same benefits as their peers.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and enriching. There are plenty of opportunities for learners to explore their interests and ambitions, both within school or when attending off-site work placements.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together to ensure that learners of differing ability make good or better progress in lessons. Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding.
- Learners are encouraged to use and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in literacy and numeracy. They develop independent learning and research skills, for example when writing job applications or when planning a budget.
- Learners engage extremely well during construction lessons. They follow health and safety requirements when handling tools and equipment.
- Teachers in the vocational department plan exceptionally well to meet individual learners' needs. Staff continually foster learners' independence and self-reliance so that they become ready for transition to the world of work, for example when the school's café is run by learners for the local community.
- Careers advice, support and guidance is of a high quality. All leavers at the end of Year 13 move on successfully to further education, employment or training.
- The conduct of learners is exemplary in and out of lessons. Learners have a positive impact when they mentor younger pupils to develop good learning habits or in their reading. Learners are safe in the sixth form.
- Learners demonstrate strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They show a great understanding of the British values of tolerance, respect, democracy and the rule of law – for example, when speaking about Brexit and the general election.

School details

Unique reference number	106172
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10022787

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bevon Blackwood
Headteacher	Mr John Law
Telephone number	0161 285 3925
Website	www.castlehill.stockport.sch.uk
Email address	admin@castlehill.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school relocated to its current site in September 2014. There have been numerous staff changes, including to the senior leadership team, but there is now stability. There is now a sixth form that caters for 24 learners in total.
- There is a hearing impairment unit on site that is overseen by the local authority. The school benefits from this provision.
- The school is part of the Altius Teaching School Alliance group.

- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school provides mostly for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, many of whom have complex social, emotional and mental health needs, autistic spectrum disorders or speech, language and communication needs. A small number have more-severe learning difficulties, hearing impairments or physical disabilities.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is just above the national average.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a cross-section of classes in the school and in the sixth form.
- Inspectors met informally and formally with small and larger groups of pupils in the school and in the sixth form.
- An inspector visited a learner based at an off-site work placement.
- An inspector met with 13 parents, one of whom was a parent governor.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and spoke to them about their progress.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a member of the local authority school improvement team.
- Inspectors considered responses from Parent View (the online site for parents to record their views about the school), the online staff survey and pupil survey.
- A range of documents was considered, including the school's self-review document, the school improvement plan, a range of school policies, documents relating to teaching, learning and assessment, appraisal and performance management documentation, governors' reports and recent external reports about the school. Information about pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance were looked at, as well the work in pupils' books.

Inspection team

Jon Ashley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Clare McGarey	Ofsted Inspector

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