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Mrs Christine Fraser
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fraser

Short inspection of Castle Business and Enterprise College

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018 with Russell Hinton, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be outstanding in July 2013. A monitoring inspection of the school was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in October 2014 because the Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour and attendance at the school.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders put their pupils at the heart of everything they do. You have taken effective action to continue to develop and improve the education on offer at Castle.

You have a dedicated staff team whose members have worked together to build on the outstanding practice seen at the previous inspection. The school has grown in numbers from the last inspection so that there are now 140 pupils on roll. The range of pupils' special educational needs has also changed over time. Despite these changes, you and your staff have maintained high expectations and aspirations for all your pupils. Your school evaluation is very accurate and identifies the school's strengths and needs. You and other leaders understand clearly the aspects of the school's work that need to be focused on in future.

Leadership at all levels of the school is strong. Staff value the training and opportunities that they are given. Teaching is outstanding because teachers plan carefully to meet the individual needs of pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to move learning on in lessons. They use resources and challenging activities to provide interest and appropriate challenge for pupils. This teaching enables pupils to make rapid progress in a range of subjects.

Leaders have effectively addressed the area for development identified at the previous inspection. You have increased the space in school to extend the accommodation for your post-16 students. You have also effectively developed the courses and opportunities available to these students to produce a more cohesive 16 to 19 offer for them. Classrooms and external areas are very well organised and provide bright and purposeful environments for learning. Teachers use a variety of interesting resources and activities to promote effective learning. This ensures that all students leave school with a range of accredited qualifications and well prepared for their next stage of education.

There were two priorities for further improvement identified in the monitoring inspection. You have responded well to the priority related to behaviour by putting in place a range of effective measures to help staff support the small number of pupils with the most challenging behaviours. This includes quality de-escalation training which has had clear benefits in helping staff reduce the number of behaviour incidents each term. There are far fewer occasions on which staff have had to physically restrain pupils in the last year. The number of exclusions has fallen considerably, so that there have been none in school since the spring term of 2017. School staff have been inventive in introducing strategies which challenge pupils and parents around attendance. These have included a range of incentive schemes and this work has helped to ensure that more pupils are at school more of the time, and to raise the school's overall attendance rate. However, there remain too many pupils who miss more than 10% of their schooling. Further attention needs to be given to ways of encouraging these pupils to be in school more regularly.

Pupils thrive in the environment you have created. They say they enjoy lessons and are listened to. They are polite and show respect for each other both in lessons and at less structured times such as breaktimes or after-school clubs. They enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils enjoy their lessons and actively engage in the activities taking place. They are positive about school and the support they receive from the adults working with them. They describe their school as 'brilliant'.

Parents are very supportive of the school. The majority of parents who completed questionnaires and those who spoke to inspectors at the start of the day were highly positive about the school. A typical quote was: 'I really can't fault the school one little bit; in my eyes they are outstanding in all that they do.'

Governance is strong. Governors are committed to ensuring that the school continues to provide an outstanding education for the pupils. They offer appropriate support and challenge to leaders. They know what the school does well and are realistic about the challenges ahead. They play a full part in moving the school forward.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a very strong safeguarding culture at Castle. You make sure that protecting pupils and keeping them safe is a key priority for everyone, in recognition of the additional needs and vulnerabilities of your pupils. You and the leadership team have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils' medical needs are well supported and checks on medication are in place. There are appropriate procedures to ensure that staff register all concerns. Senior leaders follow these up immediately. There are clear protocols for dealing with absences and those missing from school. When there have been safeguarding incidents, school leaders have followed the school's own and the local authority's procedures to the letter. Your protection and welfare officers are extremely diligent and tenacious in following up concerns and making sure that pupils and their families receive the support they need. Records of individual cases are detailed and thorough.

Safeguarding training is regularly provided for all staff, who know what to do and whom to contact when they have any concerns. Staff throughout the school teach pupils about the potential risks and dangers they might face. As a result, you keep pupils safe in school, and when online or on school visits. Pupils said they feel safe and well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils achieve very well at Castle. Teachers know the pupils and what they are capable of. They use this understanding to plan tasks and activities that are well matched to what pupils need to learn to achieve their next steps of progress. They put interventions in place to support pupils who are in danger of falling behind. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to help pupils to develop and extend their skills.
- Teachers provide effective support for pupils to help them develop their communication and language skills. You have rightly recognised that this is an increased need for the pupils coming into school and have put a range of support measures in place, including employing a speech and language therapist. Pupils are taught to use signs and symbols as aids to communication. This increases their opportunities to take part in learning in the classroom.
- The school is a vibrant learning environment. Whether in classes, at breaktimes or in the clubs you hold before and after school, pupils always looked happy and to be enjoying themselves. You make sure that pupils follow a broad, balanced curriculum which prepares them well for life in modern Britain and is adjusted to meet the needs and interests of the pupils. In key stage 4, pupils follow a range of accredited courses, in both academic and vocational subjects, which meet their needs, potential and aspirations.
- Post-16 students are proud of their school. They appreciate the courses they follow and how these are helping to prepare them for the next stage of their education, training or the world of work. They have opportunities to try a number

of different activities, including practical work-based learning. They receive appropriate guidance on possible future careers. Students spoke about the steps they had taken to improve their grades and about how their college courses linked to their dreams and aspirations.

- Additional funding is used well in school. Sports funding has been used to extend the range of activities that younger pupils can take part in, including table tennis. Catch-up funding has been used effectively to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of Year 7 pupils. Pupil premium money has helped to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to the other pupils in school. You have evaluated the impact of the previous year's spending and used this to inform the allocation of this year's grants.
- You and your staff have responded well to the challenge of assessing the progress of pupils whose attainment does not match the national expectations for their age. You have developed your own assessment criteria and measures of progress. Staff use this to monitor the progress of pupils in English, mathematics and science. You recognise that this system needs further work and development to enable you to track pupils' progress across the curriculum even more accurately from their starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop and refine the system for recording and tracking pupils' progress across the curriculum
- they pursue vigorously all avenues to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Roalfe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

To explore the main areas of enquiry for this inspection, inspectors: met with you, senior leaders, the school staff, the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority and spoke to an external adviser for the school; met with parents at the beginning of the school day to discuss their children's welfare and progress; spoke with pupils and met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and school experiences; met with staff formally and informally

to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection; scrutinised a range of documents including work in pupils' books, teachers' planning files, curriculum folders, the single central record, safeguarding documents, behaviour, physical intervention and attendance and exclusion records and the school's system for measuring pupils' progress; visited lessons in key stage 2, key stage 3, key stage 4 and post-16, some with senior leaders; visited the zone where pupils go when they need time to calm down; considered the views of the five parents who contacted Ofsted through the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 23 responses from the online staff questionnaire. There were no responses from pupils to the online pupil questionnaire.