

# Castle Newnham School

Polhill Avenue, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK41 9DT

## Inspection dates

25–26 September 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The federation principal, supported by senior leaders and governors, has successfully steered the school through a period of substantial change and growth.
- Staff, parents and pupils have confidence in the leadership of the school and feel valued and listened to.
- Leaders have created high expectations regarding behaviour. Pupils' behaviour and conduct in lessons and around the school are good.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for when they are in school. Parents share the view that the school is an environment in which their children can thrive.
- Leaders have carefully designed a curriculum that supports pupils' academic development well, and offers pupils access to a broad range of extra-curricular experiences.
- Pupils show tolerance and respect for each other's varying backgrounds and cultures. Pupils who arrive with little spoken English develop their language skills quickly because of effective support.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive support well-tailored to meet their needs, and make good progress from their varied starting points.
- Typically, teaching helps pupils to make good progress from their individual starting points across a range of subjects. However, some teachers do not always use assessments of pupils' progress to adapt tasks so that the needs of different groups of pupils are met consistently.
- Governors provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to ensure that school leaders provide a good standard of education for pupils. They have correctly identified their priorities for future development.
- Subject leaders fully support the vision and values of leaders and governors. Some are still developing the skills to ensure that their actions contribute effectively to achieving whole-school priorities.
- Past strategies to support disadvantaged pupils have not been evaluated effectively, and have not succeeded in boosting the progress of disadvantaged boys.
- Pupils, and their parents, are not always clear on how well they are achieving because the school is still developing a coherent assessment and reporting system for GCSE.
- Older pupils do not have enough opportunities to explore issues such as radicalisation, develop their awareness of these wider risks and so build resilience to them.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all leaders, including those new to leadership roles, evaluate the impact of their actions precisely to ensure that pupils' achievement, especially that of disadvantaged boys and those who need to catch up, is raised further
  - developing the skills of subject leaders in monitoring progress and leading improvements to secure consistently effective teaching across the school for all groups of pupils
  - ensuring that pupils, and their parents, understand how well they are progressing in their key stage 4 studies by developing a shared language of assessment that is clear to all.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that all teachers use assessments of pupils' progress to provide activities with appropriate levels of challenge and support well matched to all pupils' abilities.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - ensuring that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of issues such as radicalisation and so learn how to keep themselves safe.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The federation principal and the governing body have played a pivotal role in successfully guiding the school through its transition from a middle school to a secondary school. This transition will not be complete until 2020 when the first pupils will sit their GCSE exams.
- Senior leaders and teachers have already won the confidence and support of parents and pupils, with the overwhelming majority of Year 9 pupils choosing to stay at Castle Newnham for the next stage of their education.
- A key stage 4 curriculum was offered to pupils for the first time in September 2018. Over the past few years, the principal has deliberately recruited new leaders and teachers who have experience of key stage 4 teaching. This has boosted the level of expertise in secondary teaching at the school.
- Leaders have made good use of the support available from the local authority as Bedford moves from a three-phase to a two-phase education system. For example, local authority advisers have worked well with both the mathematics and English departments as they develop their key stage 4 curriculum. Teachers without previous experience of teaching GCSE have benefited from working with colleagues from local secondary schools. Some teachers have also been supported to train to teach in new subject areas.
- Leaders wisely chose to play to the strengths of their current staff when selecting which subject choices would be open to pupils in September 2018. This means that the breadth of subjects on offer is not as great as at some larger secondary schools. However, Year 10 pupils said that they were happy with the choice of subjects that were available. As the school continues to grow and new staff are recruited, firm plans are in place to increase the breadth of subjects on offer to pupils.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, especially for a small school. Year 10 pupils told inspectors how they were still recovering from their weekend expedition successfully undertaken as part of their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. Lunchtime and after-school clubs offer a variety of sports, such as dodgeball, girls' and boys' football and table tennis. Other clubs cater for the varied interests of the pupils and include drama, music and art.
- Teachers and middle leaders are clear about the whole-school priorities for improvement and the ways in which their actions contribute to achieving these. They are enthusiastic supporters of senior leaders' and governors' vision for the school. Staff feel valued and appreciate the actions senior leaders have taken to control workload and remove unnecessary tasks.
- The principal actively supports teachers to continuously improve their own pedagogy and practice. Some are involved in national and international projects aimed at deepening their understanding of effective teaching and learning. This research feeds into professional development for all teachers and provides clarity around the expectations in every classroom.
- Classroom practice is regularly monitored by senior leaders. Some responsibility for this

is being devolved to subject leaders as departments grow in size. Some subject leaders are not yet fully confident in this monitoring role. This results in some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the progress of some groups of pupils.

- The way that teachers in different subject areas give information to pupils about how well they are doing varies considerably, especially in key stage 4. This means that pupils are confused and do not always know how well they are achieving or which subjects they are most successful in. Comments from parents on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, also suggest that parents would like more information about how well their children are doing.
- Leaders have used the additional funding they receive to support particular groups of pupils with varied success. Extra support provided for those pupils who did not achieve the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 had varied impact last year. In mathematics, pupils made good progress, but improvements in reading and writing were minimal.
- Some disadvantaged pupils do receive the help and support that they need to overcome their individual barriers. However, leaders have not effectively measured the impact of different strategies over time and could not say which ones have worked and which have not. External support is now in place to ensure that, this year, the impact of support for disadvantaged pupils is effectively measured and evaluated.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body is experienced and effective and provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge to school leaders. Governors have a range of skills and expertise that help them to be effective in their roles. These include expertise in social care, data management and budgeting.
- The governing body is responsible for the all-through educational provision across the two sites that make up Castle Newnham School. Over the past few years, the governing body, together with the federation principal, has successfully overseen new building work, the expansion of the curriculum and the recruitment of new teachers as pupil numbers have grown.
- Governors have recently challenged leaders on how effectively target funds for disadvantaged pupils have been used. The lack of real impact on the progress of some disadvantaged pupils, and the poor evaluation of which strategies had worked best, led to the governors seeking external advice. This advice has ensured better planning of how leaders will use the extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils this year. The impact of the funds for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well monitored, with the special educational needs coordinator reporting regularly to the governing body.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the challenges still facing the school as it prepares for its first national examinations in 2020. The governors have a clear strategy and vision for the future development of the school that leaders and teachers share. They are aware that some strategies and systems are still being embedded and need regular and careful monitoring, and have set up systems to ensure that this happens.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors and leaders have successfully established a culture in which keeping children safe is a high priority. Staff, including non-teaching staff, are confident that they can recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and understand the need to follow school procedures and report concerns promptly.
- When teachers report a concern, safeguarding leaders act swiftly. When necessary, leaders refer concerns to outside agencies so that pupils and their families receive the help and support they need in a timely manner.
- Pupils learn how to stay safe online and how to manage social media responsibly. They are less confident talking about the risks to them through issues such as radicalisation. Pupils are clear that teachers do not tolerate bullying. They are confident that teachers deal with the few incidents that do occur effectively. This view is supported by all staff and the large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online surveys.
- Arrangements to carry out the checks required to ensure that all adults in the school are suitable to work with children and young people are thorough.
- Although staff receive regular safeguarding training, they have not always been provided with the latest statutory guidance.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers have high expectations regarding pupils' readiness to learn. This has resulted in almost all pupils having positive attitudes to learning. Relationships are respectful, and most pupils respond willingly to teachers' directions. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were positive about the teaching they receive and trust their teachers. The comments and responses from parents received through Parent View support this view.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and they use this knowledge to plan learning activities that build on what pupils already know. Pupils told inspectors that teachers frequently check that they have understood new learning through short quizzes and knowledge checks, often for homework. Pupils reported that they found it very useful when teachers gave them live feedback during lessons, which they could respond to right away and improve their work.
- Most teachers know their pupils and their individual needs well. They generally use this information to provide pupils with any additional help they need. This results in pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities making progress that is similar to that of other pupils who have similar starting points.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers ensure that they plan for different levels of challenge in their lessons. Examples of this were seen in Year 7 French where pupils of all abilities were confidently contributing answers because of carefully targeted questioning by the teacher. The teacher knew the pupils well enough to know when to support and encourage or when to ask a further question to increase the challenge. Similarly, in a Year 9 history lesson, questions directed at the most able pupils challenged these pupils to achieve higher standards in their learning.

- However, too often, pupils of different abilities are given the same tasks to complete. This means that some pupils find tasks too difficult and, without the right support, give up, leaving work incomplete. Others find them too easy and can waste time waiting for others to catch up before the teacher moves the lesson on. In both situations, pupils can become distracted and, occasionally, this leads to off-task behaviour and means that pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they feel well cared for in school. The well-being of pupils is a priority. For example, an assembly observed during the inspection raised awareness of the importance of having good mental health. Pupils were given some strategies to help maintain their own good mental health. The assembly also dispelled some of the myths around mental illness.
- Many parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire commented on the high level of care their children have received from their teachers. One typical comment of many praised the school for its 'incredibly supportive, inclusive ethos' and its 'nurturing environment'.
- Pupils are proud to be voted onto the school council and take pride in their achievements. They have raised money to improve their own social areas and also regularly raise money for charity.
- Pupils respect their environment and appreciate the facilities provided by the new school buildings. There is very little litter around the site. Pupils speak positively about their school, and the large majority take pride in their appearance.
- The school is a friendly, inclusive community. Pupils told inspectors that it is a place where it is all right to be different. Pupils respect the varied cultural backgrounds of their peers and celebrate the wide variety of home languages. During a tutor-time quiz on language, pupils were fascinated to learn how many languages some of their peers could speak.
- Incidents of racist, homophobic and derogatory language are rare. Pupils have a good understanding of why they need to understand and respect the beliefs and views of others.
- Pupils had a good understanding of the risks they face as young people in the modern world, especially those around the internet and social media. However, they were less confident in their understanding of issues such as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation and so less well equipped to protect themselves from these risks.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well around the school and at informal times, such as breaktimes and

lunchtimes. They socialise sensibly in mixed groups and work well with others when required to. The school is a calm, orderly and purposeful learning environment.

- Pupils' conduct in lessons is good. Pupils say that most teachers have high expectations of behaviour and that most pupils meet these expectations. As a result of this, there are few occasions when the behaviour of others disturbs their learning.
- Pupils want to do well and, overall, they have good relationships with their teachers. This means that, even when the tasks they are given do not fully challenge or interest them, they try their best not to become distracted and lose focus. On occasions though, this does result in some low-level disruption to learning.
- Pupils value their education and understand the importance of attending school regularly. Overall attendance continues to be broadly in line with the national average. Leaders have successfully supported individuals to improve their attendance so that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced, and is lower than that in most secondary schools nationally. To ensure that this positive trend continues, leaders have recently appointed an attendance officer to work with pupils and their families.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- As the school currently only has pupils in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, there is no external published information available on the progress that pupils make or on their standards of attainment.
- Pupils join the school having typically attained standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly in line with those expected for their age.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of learning found that most pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. This is because they routinely experience appropriate levels of challenge from teachers. However, when teachers do not provide the support that lower-ability pupils need or the extra challenge to stretch the most able, the progress that pupils make slows.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive effective support that enables most to make good progress from their individual starting points. Teaching assistants and teachers understand the needs of their pupils and adapt tasks effectively to ensure that they can participate fully in lessons. The behavioural, emotional and social progress that these pupils make is valued and evaluated particularly effectively.
- Some pupils arrive at the school speaking little or no English, often part way through the school year. They learn quickly because of effective targeted support. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well.
- Disadvantaged girls typically make good progress from their starting points. However, the progress made by disadvantaged boys lags behind that of the girls. Leaders have identified this, and there is an increased focus this year on monitoring and tracking the progress of this group. This means that the barriers preventing disadvantaged boys from making good progress can be identified quickly and appropriate support put in place to help them catch up with their peers. Leaders recognise that previous strategies to help this group have not been effective.
- Most pupils who entered the school with levels of numeracy below those expected for

their age in 2017 had caught up with other pupils in the school by the end of Year 7 because of the well-targeted support they received. However, they made more modest gains in their reading and writing. Support will continue for these pupils in Year 8.



## School details

Unique reference number	109661
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10078216

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 15
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	486
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Wood
Principal	Ruth Wilkes
Telephone number	01234 303403
Website	<a href="http://www.castlennwham.school">www.castlennwham.school</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@castlennwham.school">office@castlennwham.school</a>
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

## Information about this school

- Castle Newnham School was formed in January 2016, when Castle Lower School and Newnham Middle School federated to offer an all-through education to pupils from age four to 16 across two sites. Although the two schools still retain separate identities with the Department for Education, they share one governing body and one federation principal.
- The secondary school currently has pupils from Year 7 through to Year 10. The school has no published outcomes. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is just above the national average. Just over half of pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with other schools nationally.

- The school does not have any pupils who attend alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection only considered the secondary provision from Year 7 through to Year 10 at Castle Newnham School.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in every year group across a range of subjects. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with senior members of staff.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, looked at the work in their books and talked to different groups of pupils about their learning and school life.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the federation principal and other senior leaders, a representative from the local authority, subject leaders and teachers.
- Information about how well pupils are doing, how behaviour is monitored and how pupils are kept safe was closely scrutinised. School self-evaluation documents and improvement plans were discussed with senior leaders.
- The views of the 46 parents, 47 pupils and 56 members of staff who responded to the Ofsted online surveys were also considered.

## Inspection team

Lesley Daniel, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Loughran	Ofsted Inspector
John Craig	Ofsted Inspector

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