

Castle Manor Academy

Eastern Avenue, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 9JE

Inspection dates

16–17 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have a clear and ambitious vision that is shared by everyone within the school. They lead the school energetically and with a strong moral purpose.
- Leaders know the school well. They address weaknesses effectively. Consequently, since the previous inspection teaching, achievement, behaviour and attendance have improved.
- Senior leaders provide strong direction and support for staff. This ensures that middle leaders and teaching staff understand their roles in bringing about further school improvement.
- Teachers' accurate assessment enables them to monitor pupils' progress and plan appropriate next steps in their learning.
- Published outcomes show that the achievement of most pupils has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is good. The school is a calm and orderly environment.
- Parents overwhelmingly support the school and acknowledge the improvements since the previous inspection.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. As a result, pupils are happy and engage successfully in their learning. Sound careers advice means that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it is well planned. As a result, pupils follow a broad range of subjects that meets their interests and needs well.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses. They provide strong support; however, their challenge is not routinely sharp enough.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding increasingly well. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils, although improving in key stage 3, is still below that of other pupils nationally at key stage 4.
- Most teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' prior learning and understanding. However, questioning that challenges pupils to think more deeply about their learning is variable.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and the positive relationships they have with pupils to encourage pupil participation in all aspects of the lessons. However, some pupils are not confident enough to embrace these opportunities to support their progress.
- Overall attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is in line with the national average. The attendance of some disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is still a concern.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - governors routinely challenge leaders' actions and hold them to account stringently
 - the pupil premium funding builds upon recent improvements so that the positive outcomes of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 3 continue into key stage 4.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers develop their questioning skills so that they routinely challenge pupils to think more deeply about their learning
 - teachers enable pupils to become confident and self-assured learners so that they embrace the learning opportunities in all lessons and achieve well.
- Improve attendance across the school by reducing the absence of pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have a clear vision for the school. The school's values, known as the PROUD values and 'the Castle Manor way', permeate the school and are fully embraced by staff. These values are lived out through simple but strong processes and procedures. They are consistently applied and embed the high expectations across the school. For example, middle leaders acknowledge that this approach has contributed to the significant improvement in pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This is because there are clear systems in place for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders know which areas need attention and appropriate actions are taken to improve these.
- The relationship between senior and middle leaders is strong. Middle leaders, including those recently appointed, receive focused training and support from senior colleagues. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective within the school and have a growing influence on improvement. They appreciate the positive structures within the school that support their work, and the clarity of expectations for teaching, learning and behaviour.
- Responses to Ofsted's online staff survey indicate that staff feel extremely proud to work at the school. They enjoy their work and feel supported. They appreciate leaders' clear guidance and the school's positive culture that encourages their involvement in school improvement. Staff overwhelmingly state that the school is well led and managed.
- Leaders review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it is well planned. Consequently, pupils follow a broad range of subjects that meet their needs and interests. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Staff develop and coordinate a range of outside learning activities for pupils. These include regular extra-curricular activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh award, horticulture, animal care and bush craft. The school has gained the Eco Schools Green Flag award.
- Leaders ensure that the funding for pupils with SEND is spent effectively. Staff support these pupils well. Pupils' needs are identified quickly and the right interventions are put in place, including, where appropriate, individual support. These are monitored carefully to ensure that they are effective. Regular communication with parents is embedded in the school's practice.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, state that their children are safe and well supported. The overwhelming majority would recommend the school to others. One parent, who spoke for many, stated: 'The school leaders are passionate about the success of the school and more importantly their pupils.'
- The Unity Schools Partnership Trust provides effective support to leaders and staff. For example, subject leaders appreciate the collaborative work with colleagues from other schools within the trust. This has improved the moderation processes at key stage 4

and improved the accuracy and security of the grade predictions for Year 11 pupils.

- Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is used effectively. The majority of pupils who access the additional funding for Year 7 catch-up have improved their progress in reading. Additional support is provided for the small number of pupils who are not making appropriate progress.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding increasingly well to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders identify the barriers that hinder improvement for disadvantaged pupils and have put appropriate strategies in place. Research projects have helped to develop a more individualised approach to support their needs. Current pupils at key stage 3 in particular benefit from this support and most pupils make good or better progress. However, at key stage 4 the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains below that of other pupils nationally.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well and have an accurate assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. This is helped by the detailed reports they receive from school leaders and the trust. Governors' own purposeful visits to the school also contribute to this.
- Governors regularly check the school's arrangements for safeguarding.
- Governors are aware of the importance of improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This is supported by the trust which recently carried out a review of how effectively the pupil premium funding is spent. This focus is having a positive impact on the improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils presently attending the school.
- Governors are becoming more confident in challenging school leaders and holding them to account. However, minutes of meetings show that governors are not routinely asking probing questions and following up leaders' actions to ensure that improvements take place.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders regularly check the single central record, a document that records details of all adults that work in the school. It is well maintained and fully up to date. The school is committed to safer recruitment. Leaders ensure that child protection and safeguarding training for staff is up to date and in line with statutory requirements.
- The school site is secure. The school entrances are locked at the start of the school day and CCTV is used around the site.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through tutor time, computing lessons and assemblies. Pupils say that they feel safe and parents strongly support this view.
- The trust supports the work of the school in keeping pupils safe by carrying out regular reviews of policies and practice. Leaders ensure that any required actions are quickly put in place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations regarding how pupils conduct themselves in lessons. Consequently, pupils are punctual and attend lessons well equipped to participate. Little time in lessons is wasted.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to sequence tasks that help pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers actively promote literacy, for example by reinforcing pupils' understanding of different texts and encouraging the use of subject-specific vocabulary.
- Teachers plan engaging tasks that provide appropriate challenge for pupils. Most lessons are well planned with a clear structure. Pupils are attentive and quickly engage in learning activities, enabling time to be used productively. When engaged in paired or small group activities, pupils work together harmoniously and stay on task.
- Leaders have focused on improving the quality and quantity of homework set. Teachers regularly provide homework across the curriculum. Pupils acknowledge that these tasks are meaningful. The views expressed by parents through Parent View also support this.
- Established routines are evident when pupils participate in practical activities which help them to work independently. In a dance lesson, an inspector observed a pupil leading the warm-up activity with the rest of the class respectfully following her guidance and direction. Pupils were fully engaged in the activities.
- Pupils' books show that teachers provide written feedback in line with the school's chosen policy. During lessons, teachers take opportunities to give instant feedback orally. Pupils say that they find this approach helpful.
- Leaders reviewed their assessment approaches after the previous inspection and staff have received training on how to use testing more productively. Assessment is regular across the school and uses a variety of approaches. As a result, teachers' predictions and the grades pupils achieve are more aligned, particularly at key stage 4.
- Leaders regularly provide parents with accurate information regarding their child's progress and attitudes to learning. A mobile phone app quickly informs parents if their child is not meeting the school's expectations about how they approach their learning. Most parents who responded to Parent View stated that they receive valuable information from the school regarding their child's progress. Attendance at parents' consultations is high.
- Teachers' skilful questioning encourages most pupils to contribute and progress in lessons. Teachers often check pupils' prior learning through a starter activity. For example, the 'Do Now' activities used in English reinforce previous learning effectively. During lessons, teachers regularly check that pupils are understanding their learning. However, teachers' questioning that challenges pupils to think more deeply about their learning is not consistently in place throughout the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. One parent on Parent View, commenting for many, stated: 'I certainly feel that the children are supported academically and pastorally. They are listened to and valued.'
- Leaders provide an increasing range of opportunities for pupils to grow spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Engaging trips are arranged including the Year 7 camping trip, which is attended by most of the year group. Nearly all the disadvantaged pupils in Year 7 visited the theatre to watch 'Matilda'.
- Pupils told inspectors that they trust staff to deal with bullying and any other problems they might have. Leaders provide additional support for pupils who are struggling, including the well-being room where pupils can access support. This is appreciated by pupils.
- Diversity and equality are promoted well. Pupils are confident that it is 'OK to be different' and fully support leaders and staff in creating the school culture where respect for everyone is the norm.
- Pupils with SEND told inspectors that they were well supported by teachers in the classroom and the special education needs coordinator. A daily check-in for vulnerable pupils ensures that any issues are picked up and dealt with quickly. Pupils are clear on how they can access support from within the school.
- Leaders have strong relationships with the alternative providers that a small number of pupils use. Regular communications and thorough procedures ensure that safeguarding is secure, and attendance and progress are monitored. The pupils who attend alternative provision are well cared for.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, experience a positive start to the day by attending the school's breakfast club, which encourages pupils to engage in a physical activity and have breakfast before school starts. An inspector witnessed pupils enjoying this club.
- Positive relationships between teachers and pupils in almost all lessons supports teaching and learning across the school. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and adhere to the 'Proud in 10' expectations that the school has for pupils to develop these attitudes. Teachers encourage pupils to participate in lessons, although some pupils lack the self-confidence to maximise the learning opportunities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The recent review of the school's behaviour strategies with clear expectations for pupils has been fully embraced and implemented by staff. This has successfully improved behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Leaders ensure that parents are informed promptly when their child's behaviour falls below the school's expectations. Pupils see this as a significant contributing factor to the improvement in behaviour across the school.
- Leaders' and staff's expectations that pupils will 'work hard, be kind and be proud' is permeating the school and is visible in terms of the behaviour of pupils. Inspectors

found, without exception, that pupils are extremely polite and courteous.

- Pupils enter and leave school in a very orderly manner and behaviour around the school is exemplary. Pupils move around the school calmly and arrive at lessons promptly, fully equipped to participate in the learning activities.
- Pupils wear the school uniform with pride.
- In lessons, pupils are attentive, and most are willing to participate. They work effectively in pairs and small groups. Very little time is wasted because of low-level behaviour issues and, when a rare incident of poor behaviour occurs, it is well managed by teachers who are consistent in the application of the school's behaviour policy.
- A large majority of pupils and parents are confident that the school will deal effectively with any bullying incidents. The school's records show that bullying incidents are infrequent and are declining.
- Leaders work hard to promote good attendance using a variety of strategies. The work of the attendance officers has contributed to an improvement in attendance since the previous inspection, bringing it in line with the national average. The number of current pupils who are regularly absent is below the national average. However, leaders recognise that improving attendance remains a priority for pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND.
- Historically, the rate of permanent exclusions has been in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection the published outcomes for Year 11 pupils across a broad range of subjects have improved significantly. The 2017 and 2018 progress scores for the school were better than the county and the national average. Outcomes in mathematics, in particular, have been a strength in the school.
- Pupils in key stage 4 are being well prepared for public examinations. Support sessions are available after school and are well attended. The school's information indicates that attainment for Year 11 pupils is improving.
- The school is using a range of strategies to improve reading for its key stage 3 pupils. In year 8, the significant improvement made by disadvantaged pupils has closed the reading-age gap with other pupils within the year group.
- The majority of pupils who access the additional funding for Year 7 catch-up have improved their progress in reading. Additional support is provided for the small number of pupils who are not making appropriate progress.
- Pupils with SEND receive appropriate support and consequently make good progress from their various starting points. Staff are well trained and supported to meet pupils' needs.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training. Leaders provide a comprehensive careers advice programme for Year 7 to Year 11. The programme ensures that pupils have access to independent careers advice and

guidance. Some disadvantaged pupils have benefited from work experience, for example a visit to Cambridge Research Park, and vulnerable pupils are also supported by the Suffolk Youth Support service.

- The published outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have fluctuated since the previous inspection and remain below those of other pupils nationally. For a variety of reasons, a very small number of disadvantaged pupils did not complete all their examinations, and this impacted on the progress score for the disadvantaged pupil cohort in 2018.
- Individualised support is improving the progress of current disadvantaged pupils. Leaders use nationally validated tests to monitor this. These show that a large majority of disadvantaged pupils are making good or better progress in Years 8 and 9 in English and mathematics and in Year 9 for English. However, the strong progress of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 3 is not yet in place at key stage 4.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138162 |
| Local authority | Suffolk |
| Inspection number | 10088676 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 611 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Michael Parish |
| Headteacher | Vanessa Whitcombe |
| Telephone number | 01440 705 501 |
| Website | www.castlemanor.org.uk |
| Email address | info@castlemanor.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 26-27 January 2017 |

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school joined the multi-academy trust now called the Unity Schools Partnership Trust in December 2016. The Trust delegates three roles to the governing body: ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction, holding the headteacher to account and overseeing the financial performance of the school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average.
- The headteacher was appointed to her post in April 2016.
- The school uses The Albany (Bury St Edmunds), Olive Academy (Stowmarket) and Hampden House (Sudbury) for alternative provision for a small number of its pupils.
- Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects, including some jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met six groups of pupils and also talked informally with others during the school day.
- Discussions were held with staff including senior and middle leaders and newly and recently qualified staff.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive officer of the Unity Schools Partnership Trust and representatives of the local governing body.
- Telephone conversations were held with all alternative providers attended by a small number of Castle Manor pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 140 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire and the 46 free-text responses. Additionally, inspectors considered the 34 responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey and the 13 responses to Ofsted’s online pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including policies, the minutes of governors’ meetings, the school’s self-evaluation document, the school’s improvement plan, the single central record, information regarding the school’s performance and attendance and behaviour data.
- Inspectors spent time observing lunchtime and breaktime, and pupils arriving at and leaving the school at end of the school day.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| David Hutton, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Gerard Batty | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sue Smith | Ofsted Inspector |
| Kathryn Herlock | 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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