

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 July 2019

Mr Steve Perren
Principal
Castle Hill: A Specialist College for Communication and Interaction
Newsome Road South
Newsome
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD4 6JL

Dear Mr Perren

Short inspection of Castle Hill: A Specialist College for Communication and Interaction

Following my visit to the school on 2 July 2019 with Fiona Dixon, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in December 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the governors have ensured that leadership has remained very strong and that the school continues to have high expectations for pupils' achievements.

Since the previous inspection, Castle Hill has become part of the Interaction and Communication Academy Trust. Your staff also play a role in supporting colleagues in other schools as the lead teaching school of the Pennine Teaching School Alliance and gives them opportunities to share good practice and to develop their own skills.

Your school is a calm and respectful place that caters successfully for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and complex physical and medical needs. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have a love of learning. The dedicated staff team have worked highly successfully to ensure that pupils continue to benefit from an excellent quality of education, which is constantly evolving to meet their individual needs.

The governing body provides clear strategic leadership and offers support and challenge to you and your staff. Governors are experienced, knowledgeable and frequent visitors to the school. They share your ambition for your pupils. You ensure that leaders and staff have access to effective ongoing training so that

they are highly skilled. Consequently, teachers and support staff are dedicated to individual pupils' well-being and work very well together to enable pupils to thrive.

Pupils are clear about what is expected of them and behave extremely well. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils benefit from a wide range of interesting curricular opportunities that help them to learn about the world around them, such as collaborative work with pupils from other schools and cooking for older people.

Specialist resources, such as the hydrotherapy pool, communication tools and sensory areas, in addition to a well-thought-out school environment, allow pupils to develop skills through a wide variety of activities.

Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. Typical comments include: 'Castle Hill School is second to none. Their care and attention to my child's needs is exemplary' and 'The staff are highly skilled in meeting my child's needs and they track their progress with great precision and insight.'

There is a strong culture of reflection and honest self-evaluation throughout the school. Leaders and teachers actively research ideas in order to make improvements, such as the use of sensory cues to motivate pupils and to enable them to anticipate in activities.

You are an ambitious team and are keen for the school to develop further. For example, you have undertaken a wide-ranging development of the curriculum and assessment process. This ensures that learning is even more sharply linked to pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans and prepares pupils particularly well for the transition to their next stage of life.

Teaching is of a consistently high standard. You monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching thoroughly. Collegiate working ensures that there are well thought out and consistent approaches utilised throughout the school, which enables all activities to be learning opportunities. Members of support staff know pupils well and provide skilful support that helps pupils to succeed.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that there is an extremely strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Records are comprehensive and of high quality. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They carry out all checks to make sure that adults working at school are suitable. Staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training. Their knowledge of individual pupils enables them to be particularly vigilant to any changes in the appearance or behaviour of pupils who are particularly vulnerable. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety. Leaders work very effectively with different agencies to ensure that pupils are kept as safe as possible. Parents say that their children are safe and well looked after.

Pupils' physical health and emotional well-being are core aspects of the school's

ethos. Pupils feel respected and are actively involved in the life of the school, for example, through the UNICEF Respecting Rights Award.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, I shared four key lines of enquiry with you and these formed the basis of the inspection. The first of these focused on how the school has maintained strong progress for all pupils. You and your staff have developed the curriculum with pupils' EHC plans in mind, which enables all pupils to demonstrate progress and apply their learning in a range of contexts. Planning and assessment, which is personalised, sets high expectations. The extensive development of assessment, along with widespread moderation, ensure that the recording of pupils' progress is accurate and evidenced creatively. Members of staff employ a range of effective communication strategies so that learning can be monitored successfully. Any dips in progress are quickly identified and addressed appropriately.
- The next line of enquiry focused on pupils' behaviour and attendance. The school has thorough processes for helping pupils to learn about themselves and how to manage their own behaviour. You and other leaders ensure that staff are highly trained and understand pupils extremely well. There is a strong ethos of respect for everyone and relationships between staff and pupils are a key strength of the school. This means that members of staff actively respond to pupils as individuals and can provide appropriate support to reduce anxieties. The development of routines, which include multi-sensory cues, plays an important part in the development of pupils' ability to self-regulate their behaviour. There is a warm and caring welcome for all pupils, which helps them to enjoy their learning.
- Leaders closely monitor attendance and provide a great deal of support for parents. However, there is still more that could be done to support those pupils who miss school regularly due to medical needs or hospital stays during their absence.
- The third line of enquiry looked at what leaders have done to maintain the high quality of provision to meet the needs of pupils. You and your staff have worked tirelessly to develop the curriculum which is bespoke to the needs of individual pupils and enables every pupil to have personalised learning experiences. The curriculum thoughtfully embeds spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities for all pupils. In addition, there is a wide range of community activities to ensure equality for all and a wealth of experiences for pupils to learn from. For example, pupils frequently have opportunities to work with pupils from other local schools and older pupils gain valuable work experience.
- Together with governors, you monitor and evaluate the provision regularly and actively encourage teachers to develop new strategies to develop the work of the school further. For example, you assess pupils' responses to music and sounds in order to prepare them better for changes in activities. Staff are highly skilled in meeting the needs of pupils and understand them extremely well. This means that they respond expertly to pupil reactions and make the most of all learning opportunities. Support staff are fully involved in knowing the next steps for individual pupils. You are still ambitious to develop the curriculum further by

widening the work-related opportunities for post-16 pupils and further developing relationships and sex education to ensure that it matches pupils' needs more fully.

- My final line of enquiry was to check if safeguarding is still effective. The school has developed a safeguarding team with one of the designated safeguarding leads always being on site. The team meet weekly to reflect and to ensure that monitoring is robust and well recorded. The school works closely with external agencies and goes beyond expectations to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff and governors are well trained in issues linked to safeguarding. The curriculum addresses appropriate issues for pupils to learn about keeping safe. Health and well-being are key aspects of school life which all pupils learn about. Staff communicate with parents extremely well and offer an extensive range of support including training sessions, pamper sessions and informative newsletters.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop work related opportunities and relationships and sex education to more carefully match pupils' needs
- they fully support pupils who miss a significant number of days from school due to medical needs with learning while away from school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Rowland
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and other leaders. An inspector met with six members of the local governing body and with a representative from the Interaction and Communication Academy Trust. We met formally with a group of pupils and spoke with pupils in lessons and at social times. We also met with middle leaders. Leaders accompanied us on visits to classrooms, where they observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects. They looked at pupils' work across the school.

We examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. We scrutinised a range of policies and leaders' school improvement plan and self-evaluation. Inspectors checked the school's website. Inspectors considered the responses of 21 parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, along with free-text

comments. We took account of the 49 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.