

Inspection of Castle Hall Academy

Richard Thorpe Avenue, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 9PH

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

This is an ambitious, welcoming and inclusive school. Pupils are encouraged and supported by caring staff to be the best that they can be. Leaders have addressed the weaknesses of the predecessor school, and have ensured that this is now a school that is a source of pride for everyone in the wider community. There is now a high-quality curriculum in place that helps pupils to be well prepared for their next steps. Leaders' high aspirations for excellence are increasingly being realised as they continue to improve what pupils experience.

Pupils are happy and safe here. They are not worried about bullying as they know that staff will quickly address any concerns that they have. The great majority of pupils behave well. Many parents, staff and older pupils appreciate the many changes that leaders have brought about. They are rightly proud to be a part of the school community.

Pupils value the opportunities that they have to help others, such as being an anti-bullying ambassador. Older pupils are prefects, and have a range of responsibilities, such as supporting new Year 7 pupils in their transition to the school. A number of pupils and staff excitedly told inspectors about the improved catering on offer. Pupils on the school council are proud of their influence on the many food choices now available.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, including governors and trustees, have taken the right steps at the right time to address the weaknesses of the predecessor school. All aspects of this school have significantly improved. The great majority of pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum, with increasing access to a range of academic subjects. Staff share leaders' vision for absolute excellence. Staff value the support, training and guidance that they receive to help make this shared vision a reality. There is much to celebrate.

The great majority of pupils who attend this school benefit from the high-quality curriculum that is increasingly in place across all subjects. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that teachers are clear about what to teach and how to teach it. There are regular opportunities for pupils to revisit important learning. This includes morning 'mastery' sessions, which help pupils to remember important knowledge over time. Leaders know that there is work to do to refine the curriculum offer so that all pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from what is now in place.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and present new information clearly. Leaders and teachers use assessment information to identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Teachers help those pupils to catch up quickly. Teaching staff know which pupils struggle to remember what they are being taught. Leaders have ensured that teachers are provided with information about how to help pupils with

SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as others in their class. Leaders want to provide the absolute best for all pupils, including those with SEND. However, strategic leaders for areas such as behaviour, attendance and staff training do not work closely enough with SEND leaders to use their collective insight to best meet the needs of all pupils with SEND.

Leaders are passionate about building a culture of reading across the school. There are many, regular opportunities for pupils to read a range of different texts, both in dedicated reading sessions and in subject lessons. Pupils who need help with reading fluently receive additional support. This helps them to quickly learn to read with confidence.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attendance. Pupils behave well in class, and listen carefully to their teachers. In some classes, there is a real 'thirst' as pupils excitedly engage with new learning. There are well-established routines around school. Pupils enjoy talking with their friends at social times. A few pupils do not attend school well enough. They miss out on important learning and struggle to catch up. This impacts on the progress they make through the curriculum.

Leaders have strengthened the personal development curriculum. Many pupils can remember what they have been taught. They value their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. Leaders and staff work together to build pupils' aspirations, confidence and self-belief so that they are ready for their next steps as citizens of a multicultural, modern Britain. This is a tangible part of the school culture 'where hearts and minds connect'. Older pupils value the personalised careers advice that they receive and are looking forward to their ambitious next steps.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders know the importance of ensuring that staff and pupils learn important safeguarding messages relevant to the local community and beyond. Leaders regularly check that staff know and understand the safeguarding training messages that they have received. Staff know how to report any concerns that they may have over pupils' welfare. Leaders follow up on any concerns swiftly. They promptly make referrals to wider safeguarding partners to ensure that all pupils and their families receive the help and support that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Important safeguarding messages are woven through the PSHE curriculum and other subject curriculums. Pupils have assemblies and visits from external speakers to deepen their safeguarding knowledge.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not attend school well enough. They do not benefit from the strong curriculum offer that is now in place. They miss out on important learning, and this limits the progress that they make through the curriculum. Leaders should closely monitor the impact of strategies to improve attendance and take suitable action to ensure regular attendance for all pupils.
- On occasion, some leaders do not share their expertise and information as well as they could to best meet the needs of all pupils. For example, leaders with responsibility for behaviour and attendance do not work sufficiently closely with SEND leaders to consider how some pupils' needs could affect absence and behaviour. Senior leaders should enable pastoral and academic leaders to work together more effectively to better meet the needs of all pupils with SEND.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	146367
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10255582
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	738
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mike Reddy
Headteacher	Paul Brook
Website	https://www.castlehall.com/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the first inspection since the predecessor school, Castle Hall Academy, joined Impact Education Multi-Academy Trust in September 2018. When the predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- There have been significant changes to the senior leadership team since the school joined the trust. This includes a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. On joining the trust, an interim executive board was formed. This has since been replaced by the local governing body.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school currently holds the national 'Quality in Careers Standard'.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met with leaders for safeguarding, and behaviour and attendance. Other meetings were held with a range of staff, including subject leaders and pastoral staff. Inspectors spoke with teachers at the early stages of their teaching career.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, history and Spanish. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and visited some lessons. Inspectors heard pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. This included safeguarding records, data and analysis on behaviour and attendance, and wider policies. Inspectors carefully checked the systems in place to keep pupils safe.
- The views of parents were considered through the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey. The views of pupils were considered through responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, as well as through meetings held with pupils.
- The views of staff were considered through meetings held with staff and from the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Eleanor Belfield, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Joe Barton	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Ryder	Ofsted Inspector
Julian Appleyard	Ofsted Inspector

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