

Inspection of an outstanding school: Castle Hill High School

The Fairway, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 5DS

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

Outcome

Castle Hill High School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Castle Hill High School is a vibrant and exciting place to learn. Throughout the day, staff greet pupils with kind words and a smile. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, thrive in the calm and harmonious atmosphere that exists at the school. They benefit significantly from the caring relationships that they enjoy with staff who know the pupils so well.

Leaders have the highest aspirations for pupils' achievement. Pupils flourish as soon as they join the school. This is because of the extensive transition programme that leaders have put in place. Pupils and students, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils take pride in living up to the high expectations that leaders have of their behaviour. Staff take the time to develop a deep understanding of each pupil's feelings and anxieties. As a result, they provide pupils with intelligent and sensitive support that helps them to manage their emotions.

Bullying is rare and leaders deal effectively with any cases that may occur. Pupils feel safe.

At the heart of leaders' aspirations is the desire to ensure that all pupils are extremely well prepared for adulthood. The extensive programme of activities and experiences that leaders have designed helps pupils to develop the self-belief that they need to become confident, resilient and independent young people. This is evident in pupils' conduct throughout the school.

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

Leaders have established an inclusive and ambitious curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects at key stage 3 that prepare them superbly for the demands of key stage 4. Pupils, including those taught in the provision for autism and students in the sixth form, are exceptionally well prepared for each stage of their education.

Leaders ensure that teachers receive extensive training about the specific needs of the pupils that they teach. They draw extensively on the information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Teachers are experts at using this information to design activities that help pupils to build their knowledge and skills incrementally over time. As a result, the work that pupils produce is of consistently high quality.

Teachers have a highly detailed understanding of the subject curriculums that leaders have designed. They make regular and precise checks on what pupils know and remember. They support pupils effectively to address any gaps or misconceptions that they may have.

Leaders consider the development of pupils' reading, language and communication skills to be of the highest priority. They have a detailed knowledge of pupils' reading and communication needs. Pupils at the very early stages of learning to communicate benefit from the highly nuanced and focused support that they receive. This includes the use of sign language, visual aids and modern technology. As a result, pupils learn how to articulate their thoughts and feelings to their peers and to staff.

Pupils at the early stages of learning to read receive the support that they need to develop their phonic knowledge. They read books that are well matched to the sounds that they learn. This helps them to quickly become confident and fluent readers. Pupils relish the opportunities that they have to improve their reading, such as when visiting the school library and reading to the school therapy dog.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. Their learning is rarely interrupted. Teachers routinely check how pupils feel when they arrive at lessons. They are adept at helping pupils to manage their emotions so that they are ready to learn. Consequently, pupils develop confidence in their own abilities and they show a high level of motivation and positivity towards their learning.

Leaders ensure that all pupils have access to a rich and wide set of experiences that make an impressive contribution to their personal development. Pupils relish the opportunities that they have to develop their talents and interests. They know how to look after their physical and mental health. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships, including sexual health. Pupils demonstrate a high degree of respect for the differences that exist between people.

Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers education. Leaders take great care to ensure that pupils in Year 11 and in the sixth form enjoy successful work experience placements. Pupils have high aspirations for their futures and they are exceptionally well supported into further education, apprenticeships or employment with training.

The knowledgeable and experienced governing body is highly effective at holding school leaders to account for the quality of education at the school. Together, they share an ambitious vision for the school's future. Staff value the support that they receive from leaders for their workload and well-being. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture at the school. They ensure that staff receive the training that they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff are alert to the signs that pupils may be worried or concerned. This includes for those pupils who are not able to communicate easily.

Leaders respond quickly to any concerns that they have about pupils. They work with an extensive range of other agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the timely support that they need.

Pupils learn about how to stay safe online and in the community.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding May 2017.

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	106172
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10240586
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	323
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bevon Blackwood
Headteacher	Anna Hudson
Website	www.castlehill.stockport.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up post in September 2022.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school provides for pupils with a broad range of SEND, including complex needs. These include autism, moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health needs, and speech, language and communication needs. Some pupils have severe learning difficulties, hearing and visual impairments or physical disabilities.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision for any pupils.

Information about this inspection

- 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.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading and communication, mathematics and food technology. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair of governors. He also met with the local authority lead for SEND and the local authority school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, the curriculum, assessment, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils. They checked a sample of leaders' safeguarding records and reviewed the recruitment checks made on staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life and their views on behaviour and bullying. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ahmed Marikar

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023