

Inspection of Castlewood School

Lanchester Way, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, West Midlands B36 9LF

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Trevor Scott. This school is part of Manor Hall Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Richard Redgate, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Alexander.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have mixed views of what it is like to attend Castlewood School. Many pupils feel their needs are well supported by the school. However, some pupils say that they are not always well understood.

The school provides pupils with experiences to help them prepare for future employment and education. Pupils value this very much. Pupils are aspirational about the next stages of their lives. They enjoy visiting colleges with their teachers. Staff ensure that pupils are given opportunities to develop their interests. For example, some pupils enjoy learning how to fix cars.

Behaviours in classroom are calm most of the time. Relationships between pupils and adults are mostly positive and friendly. Pupils respond well to the rewards systems in place. However, the way some pupils speak and treat each other is not always respectful. Strategies for managing behaviours are not consistent across school. This means some pupils' negative behaviours can escalate quickly.

The school has high expectations for what pupils can achieve academically. Leaders have implemented a curriculum to reflect their aspirations for all pupils. However, the curriculum does not build in a logical order from primary to secondary. This means that pupils learn in a disjointed way.

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

The school has designed a curriculum with clear end points in most subjects that mostly meet the ambition of the national curriculum. The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to work towards qualifications. However, in some subjects, knowledge does not build over time in a logical way. This slows pupils' progress in these subjects.

Reading is not consistently prioritised across school. The school has in place a system for teaching pupils how to read in the lower year groups. As part of this approach, younger pupils have regular reading opportunities with an adult. These pupils read books that, in most cases, match their stage of learning. Pupils join the school at different stages of their education. Some of the older pupils who join require support to become fluent readers. The school does not support older pupils at the early stages of reading well enough. This means these older pupils are not catching up quickly enough.

The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The main areas of need include social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The needs of pupils with SEND are regularly reviewed, with clear strategies in place. However, the school does not always accurately understand and support the needs of some pupils. This means some pupils are not making as much progress as they could.

Some pupils show demonstrable improvement in their behaviour over time. They are well supported, with clear strategies in place for managing their behaviour. However, this is not consistent across the school for all pupils. When pupils are beginning to display unwanted behaviours, the way this is managed is not consistent. For example, some pupils use inappropriate language casually and often when interacting with each other. Staff do not consistently challenge this. This lack of consistency means that behaviours can escalate quickly. Many pupils comment on how often this occurs.

The school has an appropriately planned offer in place for careers, information, education, advice and guidance. Pupils mostly know what opportunities are available for future careers and education opportunities. This is a positive aspect of the school.

The school has effective strategies to improve pupil attendance. Leaders have clear, effective systems in place and work closely with families. However, this sharp focus is not consistently reflected in other areas of the school. Systems for checking and reviewing the impact of other areas of the school's work are not robust enough. This means that the school does not always have an accurate view of what is working well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, but minor improvements are required.

The school does not implement behaviour strategies consistently well enough. The behaviours of some pupils are not managed effectively. At times, behaviours can escalate quickly. The school will then use physical intervention to keep pupils safe from harm. However, the school does not systematically review and evaluate these incidents to identify whole-school patterns that may exist. This means that the school does not always have an accurate understanding of when physical intervention is used and how this may impact on pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have a sharp enough focus on checking, analysing and evaluating the impact of its work, including when physical intervention is used. This means that it does not always have an accurate view on what is working well and what areas need reviewing. The school should ensure that actions and systems are thoroughly reviewed so that it has an accurate view of the impact of its work.
- Some older pupils who are at the early stages of reading are not well supported to become fluent readers. This means gaps in their reading persist, and they are

not catching up quickly enough. The school should ensure that appropriate provision for early reading is in place for older pupils.

- The school does not always consistently understand and support some pupils' specific SEMH needs. This slows their learning. The school should ensure that systems to accurately identify pupils' SEMH needs are consistent and robust and that strategies to support pupils are implemented and regularly reviewed.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141171
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10290613
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Alexander
Headteacher	Trevor Scott
Website	http://castlewoodschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	7 July 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Castlewood School is part of the Manor Hall Academy Trust.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. These are for SEMH needs and for ASD.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeship.
- During the inspection, there were no pupils currently attending early years.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, two representatives from the trust, governors, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also spoke to leaders from the alternative provision. They talked informally with parents, carers, transport escorts, drivers, staff and pupils to gather general information about school life.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority via telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, computing and personal development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with areas of learning leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at additional areas of learning.
- Inspectors looked at individual pupils' EHC plans and checked these against the school's provision.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, formally and informally, about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Safeguarding documents were reviewed, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children. The inspectors examined how staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively across the school. They also considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses received during the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school policies, curriculum documents and SEND records.

Inspection team

Anna Vrahimi, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Howes

His Majesty's Inspector

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