

Inspection of Castle Mead Academy

Richard III Road, Leicester LE3 5QT

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Thomas Hague. This school is part of The Mead Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sarah Ridley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Glover.

What is it like to attend this school?

Castle Mead Academy is an exceptional school. There is a 'can-do' culture where staff ensure that pupils take a full and active part in school life. Pupils proudly attend this aspirational and visionary school. Pupils follow the 'Castle Credo' of be kind, work hard and build your character.

Pupils excel at Castle Mead due to the school's extremely high expectations of them. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. There is a consistently calm learning environment at this school. Pupils highly value that the environment enables their learning. The school does not tolerate bullying and discriminatory language. On the rare occasion that there is a bullying incident, the school takes effective action. Consequently, pupils feel happy and safe here.

Opportunities to develop pupils' talents and interests go beyond what is expected and are wide ranging through the 'enrichment electives' for all pupils. Many pupils benefit from music and rowing scholarships. Disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), speak highly of these opportunities.

A comment typical of many parents and carers was: 'This is a fantastic school where the scholars are supported to achieve excellence for all.'

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

The school's curriculum is meticulously planned, carefully sequenced and successfully implemented. It is ambitious and challenging. The school has a relentless focus for all pupils to achieve the very best outcomes they can. The English Baccalaureate forms the backbone of the curriculum, and the uptake of languages is high.

Teachers are experts in the subjects that they teach. They present new content clearly. Staff help pupils to build links between different pieces of knowledge. This helps pupils know and remember more. The school swiftly identifies pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. They achieve exceptionally well because staff know their individual needs and apply appropriate strategies to support them effectively. Staff help pupils to become independent and resilient learners. As a result, all pupils have the confidence to attempt work that significantly challenges them.

Teachers are highly skilled at measuring pupils' successes. They routinely check what pupils know before moving on with new work. Teachers use assessment well to inform future learning and address any gaps in knowledge that pupils have.

Reading is a priority in this school. Pupils at the early stages of learning to read receive carefully targeted support, which helps them to catch up quickly. They develop confidence and fluency. Pupils read widely and often.

The school has extremely high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils consistently meet these high standards. Pupils' conduct creates a positive environment in lessons, resulting in no lost learning time.

The school has a sharp focus on raising attendance rates. Staff work tenaciously with families to develop pupils' positive habits of regular attendance.

The school enriches pupils' personal development through a carefully considered curriculum and range of planned activities. Pupils have many opportunities to develop resilience and self-confidence. All pupils learn to recite key poems from the 'Castle Canon', as they move through the school. Pupils do this with pride. Year 7, for example, recited 'Invictus' and explored resilience. 'Castle Character Time' provides exceptional opportunities to nurture all pupils' talents and interests. This includes, for example, learning to speak Mandarin, debating skills, international film studies and the photography society. The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum enables pupils to discuss topical issues. Pupils learn how to look after their mental and physical health.

The school has a robust and highly effective careers programme. The school ensures that there is impartial advice available for pupils in all year groups. Year 10 pupils benefit from well-planned work experience.

Trustees ensure that there is challenge and accountability at all levels of management. Governors know the school exceptionally well. The vision and values are a constant that drives the work that they do. Teachers' professional development is rigorously supported to sustain their deep subject knowledge and refine their pedagogical approaches. The well-being of staff is a priority. Workload is routinely considered and managed effectively. The school is involved in and committed to supporting other trust schools and the wider education community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	147068
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10298528
Type of school	secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,224
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Glover
Principal	Thomas Hague
Website	https://www.castle-tmet.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is part of The Mead Educational Trust.
- The school opened in 2019.
- The school uses seven unregistered alternative providers and one registered alternative provider.
- 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 apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English; mathematics; science; history; and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To further look at the curriculum, inspectors met with leaders about the curriculums in music and physical education (PE).
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance and documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour. Inspectors also reviewed the documents available on the school website.
- Inspectors met with pupils to gather their views about the school and looked at the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors observed informal times, including arrival at school, break and lunchtime.
- The lead inspector met with trustees, and governors on the academy council.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free text comments, and the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Karen Hayes	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Wood	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Sheppard	Ofsted Inspector
Julie McBrearty	Ofsted Inspector

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