

Castles Education

12 Acland Street, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 2LG

Inspection date

7 November 2023

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- At the standard inspection, leaders had not thought carefully enough about the curriculum. The curriculum offer was not ambitious enough for all pupils. Pupils were too limited in the range of subjects they could study. They did not always follow programmes that offered suitable accreditations and qualifications.
- Many subject curriculums were poorly organised. The school was just starting to identify exactly what pupils needed to learn and when.
- Support for pupils who were at an early stage of learning to read lacked coherence. Not enough staff knew how to teach phonics effectively. Approaches used to improve these pupils' reading accuracy and fluency varied. Pupils' reading books were not always matched closely to the letters and sounds they knew.
- These weaknesses in the curriculum meant that pupils did not have the opportunity to learn and make progress. They were not prepared well enough for their next steps.
- Since the previous inspection, no coherently structured curriculum has been successfully developed and embedded. Subject curriculums have not been thought through. Many subject curriculums have not been developed to enable pupils to build their learning over time. Some of the school's subjects have not been taught in recent months. There is a lack of ambition and coherence in the foundation and vocational subject curriculums.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the breadth and ambition of the school's curriculum. In the last few weeks, they have determined a vision for the school's curriculum in terms of its breadth and scope. Leaders recognise that the curriculum is not sufficiently ambitious in many subjects. Subject curriculums are not coherently planned to enable pupils to build their learning over time. The school is in the very early stages of developing a coherent curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils and sets appropriately demanding expectations.
- Leaders have developed coherent subject curriculum overviews in English, mathematics and science. The school is beginning to identify the key knowledge and skills that they want older pupils to learn in these subjects. This is not in place for younger pupils.

Leaders are beginning to consider the learning they want pupils to gain in other subjects.

- There has been little improvement in the provision for pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. This weakness has not been addressed since the previous inspection. These pupils are not taught the knowledge and skills they need to become fluent in reading. The barrier of not being fluent readers continues to restrict these pupils' access to the rest of the school's curriculum.
- These continued curriculum weaknesses mean that pupils have not had opportunities to learn well and make appropriate progress. Leaders recognise that there is significant work to be undertaken to improve the quality of the curriculum so that pupils can learn more and remember more over time and be better prepared for their next steps.
- These previously unmet requirements of the independent school standards (the standards) remain unmet.

Paragraphs 2(2)(e) to 2(2)(e)(iii)

- At the standard inspection, inspectors found that careers guidance was poor. This led to pupils not being prepared well enough for their next steps.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the school's provision for careers advice and guidance. Older pupils have weekly careers lessons and work to complete a qualification in employability. Younger pupils learn about the employment market and local job opportunities.
- The school has engaged an external careers adviser to support key stage 4 pupils initially. As support for these older pupils meets need, leaders plan for this support to be provided to younger pupils.
- These requirements are now met.

Paragraphs 2A(1) to 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d)

- At the standard inspection, inspectors found that the curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and the programme for personal development did not promote pupils' knowledge of relationships and sex education (RSE).
- Leaders are now developing a bespoke relationships education programme for younger pupils that takes into account their maturity and their gaps in previous learning. Older pupils have the opportunity to learn about different types of relationships, including healthy and unhealthy relationships. The school's RSE curriculum reflects statutory requirements.
- These requirements are now met.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c) to 3(g)

- At the standard inspection, teachers did not always consider information about each pupil's additional needs when planning and delivering the curriculum. Teaching methods were sometimes poorly chosen. Teaching resources were sometimes inappropriate and contained inaccuracies. Teachers did not check pupils' knowledge closely enough. Pupils could not recall what they had learned in any detail.
- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has not improved. In recent weeks, leaders have started to set high expectations for teachers. Leaders are providing staff

with training and coaching to improve the quality of teaching. This is in its very early stages of development. Many staff welcome this support.

- These previously unmet requirements remain unmet.
- The school continues to not meet all of the previously unmet requirements of the standards in this part.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraphs 5, 5(b), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(v)(vii)

- At the standard inspection, the PSHE curriculum and the programme for personal development did not promote pupils' wider development well enough. Pupils' awareness of different cultures and faiths was limited. They could not explain important British values such as democracy and individual liberty.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced a PSHE curriculum that all pupils learn. The planned curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn and understand different aspects of fundamental British values. This includes learning about and respecting democracy and English laws. Pupils also have opportunities to learn about and respect different religions and cultures.
- The school now meets all the previously unmet requirements of the standard in this part.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The proprietor ensures that the school's safeguarding arrangements are secure. Leaders have maintained a strong culture of safeguarding.
- Safer recruitment practices are in place. All pre-employment checks are undertaken before adults start working with pupils. These checks are recorded on the single central record.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website. It reflects the latest statutory guidance.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff know and understand their responsibilities well. They know and understand pupils' backgrounds and contexts well.
- Leaders take appropriate steps when there are concerns about pupils' welfare. They work with external professionals when needed.
- The requirements of these standards continue to be met.

Paragraphs 3(h), 9, 9(b)

- At the standard inspection, pupils were sometimes reluctant to engage with learning. Staff did not always follow agreed routines when pupils were disruptive. They sometimes struggled to help pupils regulate their behaviour. These inconsistencies in approach prevented these pupils, and their peers, from learning. The school's behaviour policy was not implemented effectively.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that the revised behaviour policy is more consistently implemented. Expectations of pupils' behaviour have been raised. Leaders have supported staff with training to manage pupils' behaviour better. Many

pupils learn to manage their feelings and behaviour better during their time at school. Pupils' behaviour is beginning to improve. There has been a reduction in suspensions and the use of physical interventions.

Paragraph 11

- At the standard inspection, leaders were not aware of some minor health and safety issues that inspectors identified. The systems to ensure that these issues did not become a concern again were not yet secure.
- Leaders now undertake appropriate regular health and safety checks of the premises. Identified concerns are quickly resolved. Leaders ensure that the health and safety policy is implemented effectively.

Paragraphs 16 to 16(b)

- At the standard inspection, leaders' assessment of risk lacked the necessary precision. This made it challenging for staff to interpret risk assessments. The risk assessment policy provided insufficient guidance.
- Since the previous inspection, the school's risk assessment policy has been revised. It now provides guidance on how to identify, measure and mitigate against potential risk. Staff have had training in this policy and in how to implement mitigations to reduce identified risks.
- Risk assessments reflect appropriate identification of control measures to manage risks. The school's risk assessment policy is implemented effectively.
- The school now meets all the previously unmet standards in this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- At the standard inspection, the inspectors noted that the proprietor was aware that there was a lot to do to rectify unmet standards. However, the proprietor had not ensured that the school met all the standards. The proprietor had not actively promoted the well-being of pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has appointed a new headteacher. There has been significant change in the leadership of the school. The leadership structure has been reviewed and new appointees are yet to take up their posts. The capacity of leadership is much improved.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school. In recent weeks, they have been decisive and have acted swiftly to begin to address systemic weaknesses in the provision.
- The proprietor has not ensured that all of the previously unmet standards are consistently met. Previously unmet standards related to quality of education remain unmet. The proprietor has not actively promoted pupils' education until very recently.
- The school continues to not meet all the previously unmet requirements of the standards in this part.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	147170
DfE registration number	925/6018
Inspection number	10306265

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Castles Special Projects Limited
Chair	John Marsden
Headteacher	Andy Fyfe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£170 to £200 per day
Telephone number	01427 253117
Website	www.castleseducation.co.uk
Email address	info@castleseducation.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	21 to 23 March 2023

Information about this school

- Castles Education, formerly known as Castle Futures, is registered to provide education for up to 110 pupils aged seven to 16 years. There are currently 94 pupils on roll.
- The school is located at 12 Acland Street, Gainsborough, DN21 2LG. This is not the school's registered address, which is Sports Pavillion, Ravendale Drive, Lincoln, LN2 2JN.
- The school offers specialist provision for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils on the school roll are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place from 21 to 23 March 2023 and

the school received an overall judgement of inadequate.

- The school uses the services of two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The headteacher took up the substantive post three weeks ago. There have been other changes to the senior leadership team since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- Following the most recent standard inspection in March 2023 at which the school was judged to not comply with the standards, the Department for Education (DfE) required the school to prepare an action plan.
- Ofsted evaluated the action plan on 19 July 2023. The DfE rejected the plan on 31 July 2023.
- The inspection was carried out without notice.
- The inspectors met with the proprietor, the headteacher and other leaders.
- Inspectors visited lessons. They spoke with groups of pupils and staff.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's website and a range of documents. They considered a wide range of documents related to the school's curriculum. Inspectors reviewed the school's behaviour, health and safety and risk assessment policies and related information.
- The inspection also considered the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central record of pre-employment checks and whether the school's safeguarding policy is available to parents and carers. These requirements of the standards are met.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Hollingsworth

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively;
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-

- 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(a) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with primary education at the school is provided with relationships education,
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2), and
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools.
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures; and

- 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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