

Inspection of an outstanding school: Castlebar School

Hathaway Gardens, Ealing, London W13 0DH

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and kept safe at Castlebar School. Pupils flourish here because relationships are highly positive. Consistent routines, a calm atmosphere and familiar adults provide stability, enabling pupils to access learning and school life with ease. As a result, behaviour is strong in lessons and around the site.

The development of pupils' communication and socialisation is prioritised. Specialist training, knowledge and support underpin the curriculum, meaning pupils typically achieve well from their different starting points. However, in some subjects, for pupils who are ready to access the national curriculum, learning is not as well designed.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences that enrich the curriculum and prepare them well for their future education and life outside of school. For example, all classes use the on-site swimming pool, reducing any fear of water that might exist and providing a valuable life skill. Many pupils told the inspectors that swimming was one of their favourite activities.

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

There is strong support for pupils' behaviour and development of their social skills. Leaders work closely with specialists, including speech and language and occupational therapists, to secure advice and guidance. This information, as well as targets from education, health and care (EHC) plans, inform pupils' individualised programmes and integrated therapies. Information is clearly communicated with staff. Bespoke behaviour plans equip staff to manage any dysregulation. Some pupils need support to refocus but settle quickly because staff use agreed strategies consistently. Increasing pupils' independence is prioritised. For example, pupils manage their learning through selecting carefully chosen activities from their own trays. As a result, pupils are very well supported to access the planned curriculum in an environment that is calm and conducive to learning. Attendance

is monitored rigorously. Any patterns are identified, and families supported to ensure that their children attend school each day.

There is a strong commitment to the development of communication, speech and understanding. Through the carefully considered therapeutic offer, well-targeted strategies and support programmes enable pupils to communicate, for example through signing or using an electronic device. For pupils who are ready, different approaches are taken to the teaching of reading. These include phonics and recognising whole words. However, pupils do not consistently read books that are matched closely to the sounds they know. This, along with some staff not having had recent phonics training, limits the fluency with which pupils learn to read.

For pupils following a pre-key stage curriculum, learning is broken down into the small steps they need to practise and secure. Assessment is used carefully to check that pupils understand and can demonstrate their learning before moving on. For example, children in the Reception class learn to count through engagement with stories and songs. Similarly, in science, older pupils learn about magnetism through exploring and sorting materials as magnetic or non-magnetic. As a result, these pupils are typically well supported to make progress through the pre-key stage curriculum from their starting points.

A number of pupils are ready to access the early stages of the national curriculum. However, learning in some subjects is less well designed. This is because the knowledge pupils need to secure and the order in which it should be taught has not been as well considered as it has been in other subjects. As a result, teachers do not routinely focus on the important aspects of these subjects and assessment is not used as effectively to check what pupils have learned. This limits some pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Pupils' wider personal development is very well considered. Pupils are supported to begin to experience things that will prepare them for their future lives, such as learning to cook. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education is carefully designed. Pupils are well supported to understand important ideas, including the importance of healthy and safe relationships, including more complex issues about consent and puberty.

Staff are proud to be part of the Castlebar community. They are overwhelmingly positive about the support they receive to develop professionally and to manage their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the knowledge pupils moving beyond the pre-key stage curriculum are expected to learn has not been clearly identified or sequenced. This means important concepts are not consistently reinforced. As a result, this limits the depth of knowledge some pupils secure in these subjects. The school should ensure that the curriculum in each subject is well designed by identifying and sequencing the important ideas pupils need to learn and remember.
- The approach to phonics is not fully effective. Some staff have not received recent training and pupils do not consistently practise reading with books that are well matched to the sounds they know. This limits the accuracy and fluency with which some pupils read. The school must ensure that up-to-date phonics training is provided, and that the books used to practise reading are precisely matched to the sounds pupils know.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 2014.

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	101966
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	10289827
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mary Delger
Headteacher	Paul Adair
Website	www.castlebar.ealing.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for primary age pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Some pupils access a pre-key stage curriculum. Others access the early stages of the national curriculum.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and members of staff. They also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language (including early reading), mathematics, understanding of the world (including science), and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders,

discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.

- The inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement.
- The views of pupils, parents, carers and staff were gathered through discussions and their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Samantha Ingram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Canning

Ofsted Inspector

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