

Inspection of Castle Wood Special School

50 Deedmore Road, Coventry, West Midlands CV2 1FN

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well cared for and happy at Castle Wood Special School. All staff know pupils well. Pupils, parents and carers are made to feel welcome. Consequently, pupils settle quickly when they arrive at the school.

The curriculum sets out to support the broad and complex range of needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with multiple and complex learning needs work at the early stages of the curriculum. Staff focus on small steps of learning to support areas, such as physical development, shared attention and vocalisation. However, in other parts of the curriculum teachers are not clear about what to teach and when. This slows down learning, particularly for pupils who are ready and capable of moving on to more rigorous and demanding work. Consequently, the expectations for some pupils are not always high enough.

Pupils feel safe in school. They can name adults who will help them. Pupils learn about positive friendships. Any unkind behaviour is dealt with sensitively by staff. Pupils who may need additional support for their behaviour are well supported.

Pupils experience a range of broader opportunities, including visits to theatres and residential visits. This builds pupils' confidence and independence.

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

The curriculum offers a broad range of subject areas. In some parts of the curriculum, such as physical development, the precise knowledge and skills the school wants pupils to learn are clearly identified. Teachers know exactly what essential knowledge they should teach and in what order. Pupils build on their prior knowledge and skills in a logical way. As a result, in these parts of the curriculum, pupils achieve well across the school. However, in many other parts of the curriculum this is not the case. In subjects such as mathematics and science, for instance, the precise knowledge the school wants pupils to know is not clearly defined or ambitious enough. For some pupils, this limits their achievement.

Staff have a secure understanding of the barriers pupils may have to learning. These include sensory, behavioural and communication needs. The school engages well with external agencies, such as occupational therapists, to quickly put in place support for pupils. As a result, the complex range of needs of pupils are mostly well supported.

The school has ambitious plans to support pupils' communication needs. These include whole school approaches, such as signing, communication boards and symbols. In addition, staff establish suitable communication aids for individual pupils early on. However, these ambitions are not fully realised. The agreed strategies for supporting pupils' communication are not consistently implemented by all staff. This means, that some pupils are not able to always communicate their thoughts well enough throughout the day.

Pupils at the very early stages of reading are supported well by staff. They ensure that pupils learn the essential pre-reading skills, such as developing an awareness of sounds and print. Consequently, an increased number of pupils are ready to move on to the school's formal phonics programme. However, the teaching of phonics is variable between classrooms. As a result, for some pupils, this slows down their learning.

Children in the early years are well supported to start school. Staff work closely with parents and previous settings to understand their children's needs and motivations for learning. However, the curriculum is not planned and sequenced sufficiently well enough to prepare children for future learning as they move through the school. This means pupils are not always experiencing ambitious learning opportunities.

Pupils are mostly calm in class and around school. Staff use various supportive strategies to effectively help pupils when they become anxious. Consequently, pupils are happy to engage in lessons and learning activities.

The curriculum for personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils experience activities which go beyond the academic. For example, visitors to the school include artists and local political figures. Pupils visit and compare different types of parks. They know about difference and welcome visitors to their school. All this contributes to pupils' understanding of the world around them.

The school, including governors, does not always have an accurate view across school of what areas are working well and what areas are not. At times, they do not evaluate with precision the areas which need improvement. For example, the school does not have a strategic oversight of improving the attendance of pupils who do not attend school regularly enough. All this means the school's actions do not always lead to necessary improvements in different areas of their work quickly enough.

Most parents are positive about the school. They comment on how well staff know their children and how well they care for them.

Staff feel well supported. In particular, they feel their workload and well-being are well considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In parts of the curriculum, learning is not planned and sequenced sufficiently well enough to prepare pupils for future learning. The precise knowledge and skills the

school wants pupils to learn are not clearly defined in some subject areas. This means teachers are unclear about what to teach and when. This slows down learning, particularly for pupils who are ready and capable of moving on to more rigorous and demanding work. The school should ensure that the curriculum identifies precisely what knowledge and skills pupils should learn over time, so that all pupils can build on their knowledge accurately, successfully.

- The school has not ensured that staff consistently implement the agreed communication strategies in their classrooms. This means that some pupils are not able to consistently communicate their thoughts well enough throughout the day. The school should ensure the intended communication strategies are implemented consistently in all classrooms.
- The delivery of the phonics programme is inconsistent across school. This means that pupils experience variable approaches to the teaching of phonics in different classrooms. As a result, not all pupils build their phonic knowledge in a consistent way or as well as they are capable of doing. The school should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills to be able to deliver the phonics programme accurately and consistently.
- The school does not always have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses within its provision. This means their actions do not always lead to necessary improvements. The school should ensure precise and effective approaches accurately evaluate different areas of their work across school.

How can I feedback 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	135569
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10322819
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing bod
Chair of governing body	Margaret Chapman
Headteacher	Rebekah Hayes
Website	www.castlewood.coventry.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. These support a broad range of needs, including autism sensory condition, speech language and communication needs, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning disabilities. Pupils also have physical, medical and sensory needs.
- There were no nursery-age children on roll during the inspection.
- The school use one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

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

- ② 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.
- ② The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, chair of governors, an additional representative from the governing board, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with transport assistants, drivers and staff.
- ② The lead inspector spoke with a school improvement representative from the local authority.
- ② Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, communication and language, and mathematics and problem-solving. 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. The lead inspector also looked at additional subjects, including physical development and enquiry and investigation.
- ② The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- ② 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.
- ② Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- ② 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

Pete Hines OBE

Ofsted Inspector

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