

Inspection of Castle Academy

Station Road, Conisbrough, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN12 3DB

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

The principal of this school is Claire Blagden. This school is part of Astrea 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, Rowena Hackwood, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ben Brown.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at Castle Academy have established influential values. These include scholarship, aspiration and empathy. Staff consistently display these values through their interactions with pupils. This inspires pupils to do the same. They take pride in their learning and treat those around them with the utmost respect. Leaders have shaped a highly inclusive school culture. Pupils feel valued and are proud to be part of their school community. The school is a very happy place to learn.

The school has established an ambitious curriculum for pupils to study. From Reception to Year 6, pupils master the skills that they need to become independent learners. This motivates pupils to be resilient when learning something new or mastering a new skill. Leaders bring the curriculum to life for pupils through the many opportunities that are offered. Pupils join in regular activities to learn outdoors. Some play in the Samba band and others take part in author visits. Pupils build their confidence by taking on many leadership roles within the school. These roles are a golden thread that inspire pupils to make a significant contribution to their school community. They work alongside leaders to help make their school the best it can be.

Adults help pupils to manage their own feelings and behaviour well. Pupils understand what adults expect of their behaviour and rise to these expectations. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. The school is helping pupils and families to understand the importance of attendance. Pupils' attendance is improving.

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

Leaders have established an ambitious curriculum that starts in early years. Children immerse themselves in colour mixing and printing. They investigate the textures that they create with magnifying glasses. They compare these textures to the objects around them. Children find this learning enthralling. Children in early years develop impressive knowledge.

Across the school, the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn has been identified. In history, pupils learn about concepts such as cause and effect. Pupils use this knowledge to explain the impact of the industrial revolution on migration. In geography, pupils participate in 'we are Conisbrough' in order to learn about their local area. Pupils use this local knowledge to make comparisons with other geographical regions. Sometimes, the way new knowledge is shared with pupils does not help them to make connections to the things that they already know. Pupils have some gaps in the important knowledge that they need.

The school has made reading a priority. All staff have the training that they need to help pupils to become confident readers. The way that adults in early years support children with their language and talk is exemplary. Children become confident talkers. This helps them to learn phonics and master new sounds quickly. Children in

early years flourish with this expectational support. Across school, adults share carefully chosen stories that inspire pupils to read. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the way their teachers bring these stories to life. The school ensures that pupils who fall behind have the support that they need to be able to catch up. This is helping them to become fluent readers.

Staff give children in early years many opportunities to develop their mathematical skills. Children confidently use positional language in their play and learn to make different amounts. Children in early years become very confident mathematicians. Across the school, pupils have lots of opportunities to rehearse and revisit learning. This is helping them to remember more of their learning and to become fluent mathematicians.

The support that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive is exemplary. If pupils have different starting points, the school makes sure that they learn a curriculum that is just right for them. This is helping pupils to develop their confidence and communication skills. Leaders place no limits on what pupils can do and achieve.

Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development is exceptional. Pupils develop a mature understanding of protected characteristics. Pupils talk about diversity with considerable sensitivity. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to consider their futures. Across key stage 2, pupils learn about different career pathways. They are inspired by visitors that talk about their own professions. Leaders deliberately plan many opportunities for pupils to explore their talents and interests. Some participate in the school choir, while others learn British Sign Language and participate in sports events. Pupils know that their voice matters to the adults in school. They are proud of the improvements that they have helped to make. For example, pupils have introduced music to dance to during breaktimes. These opportunities inform the deep sense of pride that pupils have about their school.

Those responsible for governance are knowledgeable about the school. They check that leaders are taking the right actions in the best interests of all pupils. The workload and well-being of all staff are a priority. The school makes sure that staff have the time that they need to undertake their responsibilities effectively. Staff are proud to work in this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the way that new knowledge is shared with pupils does not help them to make connections to the things that they already know. Pupils have some

gaps in the important knowledge that they need. The school should build on the strong practice that exists in the school so that pupils are able to connect new learning more securely to the things that they already know.

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 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	144483
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10323092
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ben Brown
Principal	Claire Blagden
Website	www.astreacastle.org
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club provision for pupils in the school.

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. 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 senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the local governing committee, including the chair of the local committee and the chair of the trust. The lead inspector also held a meeting with the CEO of the trust.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, 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 listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- 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.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of other documentation, including the minutes of governors' meetings and leaders' evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils to gather their views on school life.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors took account of the views of parents from the Ofsted Parent View survey, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including free-text comments. Inspectors also met with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors met formally with staff to gather their views.

Inspection team

Jen Sloan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Helen Stout

Ofsted Inspector

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