

Castle Hill High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106172
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309045
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael McDowell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bevon Blackwood
Headteacher	Mr John Law
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2005
School address	Lapwing Lane Brinnington Stockport Cheshire SK5 8LF
Telephone number	0161 4946439
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Castle Hill High School provides education for pupils who have statements of special educational need because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most have moderate learning difficulties. Significant minorities have either autistic spectrum disorders or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils are predominantly White and British. There are many more boys than girls. A small minority of pupils is looked after by the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. Parents are happy that it helps their children to become sociable, confident and successful learners. Pupils agree. They believe that the staff are on their side and always ready to help them.

Because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities the standards of pupils entering the school are well below those expected for their age. However, whatever their learning difficulty or disability, both boys and girls respond quickly to effective teaching and make good progress. By the end of Year 11 they have made significant strides in subjects across the curriculum. They do well in nationally accredited courses including English and mathematics. While pupils' performance in mathematics and English is good, their performance in science is better.

Teaching and learning is good. Teachers know their pupils well and they set challenging work for them. They give the support that pupils need in order to overcome their difficulties and achieve well. The curriculum is outstanding. It meets external requirements and individual needs. Exceptionally strong provision is made to enhance pupils' confidence and well-being. Arrangements for those who require an alternative curriculum are excellent.

Personal development is good. Pupils have good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Many now eat healthily and take part in physical activities. Pupils act safely in classrooms and around the school. Behaviour is good. Pupils know that occasional incidents of bullying will be dealt with and they have no fear about coming to school. Attendance is satisfactory and most enjoy their education. Everything possible is done to encourage the few poor attenders to come to school. Pupils are happy to help others. Members of the school council understand their responsibilities. They are sure that their suggestions are taken into account by the school.

Pupils are given outstanding care, support and guidance. Staff make the welfare and safety of pupils their first priority. Arrangements for child protection are strong and kept under regular review. The school supports vulnerable pupils and their families exceptionally well. It works very effectively with other agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from the education it provides. Excellent support for pupils in Years 10 and 11 enables them to move confidently to further training or employment.

Leadership and management are good. Improvement since the last inspection is good and the school is well placed to continue to improve. The headteacher, the leadership team and the governors share a common ambition to improve the school further. They are strongly committed to inclusion and equality of opportunity. Parents have confidence in the school and most feel that they are partners in their children's education. The school is broadly accurate in its evaluation of its performance. However, while pupils' progress is continually monitored, the leadership is aware that data gathered on performance and personal development is not yet analysed in sufficient depth to provide some of the information needed to plan improvement. Governance is good and governors hold the school to account. Arrangements for safeguarding children meet current Government requirements. The school uses resources effectively and efficiently. It gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics to match the higher level that they attain in science.

- Analyse data about pupils' progress more rigorously so that the leadership is better informed about pupils' performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their individual starting points, pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. By the end of Year 9, in response to good teaching and an excellent curriculum, teachers' assessment and pupils' attainment in national tests show pupils to have made good progress, many exceeding the levels predicted for them. The school's analysis shows no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls or between other identifiable groups. At the end of Year 11 all pupils achieve accreditation in English and mathematics according to their ability at either entry level or GCSE. Almost all complete further externally accredited courses in a range of subjects. Pupils do well in GCSE and entry level courses in art, and in design and technology. Achievement in science is very good with small numbers of pupils achieving levels comparable to national standards in GCSE. Performance in science sets a standard not yet matched in English and mathematics. Those for whom an alternative curriculum is best focus on work-related learning. Pupils make good progress in their vocational placements at college and with work-related learning providers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are considerate. Their good behaviour and positive attitude to learning helps all to benefit from lessons. They empathise with others less fortunate than themselves and they are generous in supporting national and local good causes. Pupils show respect for the school environment. Through the very active 'eco committee' they recycle waste efficiently. Overall, pupils make a good contribution to both the school community and to the broader community beyond it. Pupils are very well informed about healthy lifestyles. An increasing number now choose the healthy option from the school dinner menu. They also take advantage of the opportunities for sport and active leisure pursuits that the school provides. When asked, pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. However, attendance is satisfactory overall rather than good because a small number of pupils are persistent non-attenders or poor attenders. The school and education welfare officer take the steps available to them to deal with this. Pupils say that their lessons are challenging and interesting. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups at the school. However, pupils have a good awareness of the multicultural nature of society and are taught to be positive about the richness of diversity. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have made very good use of the vocational courses arranged for them. As a result they are very well prepared for life after school and their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good progress made by pupils across the age range shows that teaching and learning is good. Teachers carefully assess their pupils. Their capabilities and previous learning are known and taken into account when lessons are planned and work is set. Because of this pupils have confidence in their teachers. They know that they will be given sufficient guidance to cope with the challenging work that they are offered. Teachers always make clear what pupils should

accomplish in each lesson. Teaching assistants play an important part in ensuring the pupils understand their tasks. In dialogue with teachers and teaching assistants pupils are made aware of what they have achieved and what they must do to improve further. Behaviour is well managed and pupils work consistently and well. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and the courses that they teach. They keep their classrooms bright and pleasant to learn with relevant displays that celebrate pupils' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements and is carefully tailored to the individual needs of pupils. There is very good provision to develop literacy and numeracy. Provision for art, design and technology, science, and personal, social, health and citizenship education is excellent. The curriculum is substantially enriched by a broad range of opportunities for learning outside the classroom and beyond the school day. The range of courses and learning experiences for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is exceptional. These pupils are given excellent support to enhance their personal development, health and well-being. They are encouraged to take advantage of an extensive range of work experiences, pre-vocational courses and work-related learning that prepares them very well for life after school. Very strong alternative curriculum arrangements are made for those who need to pursue their learning beyond the confines of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff are very strongly committed to the welfare of pupils. Thorough assessment is made of the risks to pupils that might arise from planned activities both in and out of school. All adults in the school are fully aware of what they must do to ensure the safety and well-being of those who attend it. The school makes strenuous efforts to promote attendance, address unauthorised absence and reduce the number of exclusions. The number of exclusions has been reduced because of well thought out arrangements to provide an alternative to excluding pupils when, as rarely happens, their behaviour oversteps the mark. Pupils' individual learning needs are known well by staff who ensure the right support at the right time to enable them to achieve well. Work with other agencies, including health and social services, to provide support for vulnerable pupils and for families in crisis, is exceptionally good. The guidance for pupils who are moving on from school to college or employment is excellent. Young people continue to be supported after they have left school and this helps them to succeed in the vocational courses or work that they have chosen.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a very clear sense of direction and high expectations for the school's future development. The recent restructuring of responsibilities has strengthened the school's focus on teaching and learning. Staff development is valued. It has effectively improved the quality of subject and pastoral leadership with a positive impact on teaching and pupils' welfare. All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the school. Good use is made of the views of parents and pupils, for example in structuring the new homework programme.

The headteacher has an overall view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school improvement plan very clearly identifies key areas for development. Equal opportunities are promoted strongly to ensure the well-being of all pupils including the most vulnerable. The school monitors and evaluates most aspects of its work systematically. However, the data gathered on pupil progress and behaviour is not analysed to the fullest extent. As a result, the leadership does not have a complete picture of pupils' personal development and academic growth. Managers are aware of the need to tackle this so as to improve the capacity of the school to raise standards.

Governors are strong 'critical friends'. They set a strategic direction which focuses on pupil achievement and well-being. The school is forward looking and makes effective arrangements to finance its future plans. It has, for example, accumulated funds to improve its resources in support of its bid for specialist school status.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the welcome you gave to us when Mrs Clare and I visited your school. You were very polite and helpful and made us feel at home.

Those of you who spoke to us, especially members of the school council and the eco committee, told us a great deal about the things you like about Castle Hill High and the part you have played in helping to improve it. You said that you thought that you were taught well and that the work you are given is neither too hard nor too easy. You said that you always receive help when you need it. You know a lot about healthy lifestyles and some of you really enjoy sport. None of you were afraid to come to school. You said there was some name-calling but you knew just what to do to avoid it. You were also sure that the staff would deal quickly with any incidents. You were rightly proud of your eco work and of the role played by the school council in helping to make the school even better. Some of you said the school was 'perfect'.

Here is what Mrs. Clare and I found out about your school. You are given many interesting and enjoyable things to do and you work hard and make good progress in your lessons. You do well in English and mathematics but better in science. You are well taught and the staff help you to learn. You are polite, confident, boys and girls. You know how to stay healthy. Your teachers and all staff try their best to always keep you safe. Your school is led and managed well.

In order to make your school even better I have asked the headteacher and staff to do the following.

- Help you to achieve as well in English and mathematics as you do in science.
- Look more carefully at the record that is kept of your progress so that you can be helped to achieve more.

Thank you once again for your help. Mrs Clare and I wish you the best of luck in the future.