

# Castledon School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115461
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311941
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Smith

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Nan Ashkettle
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Carole Clift
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Bromfords Drive Wickford Essex SS12 0PW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 761252
<b>Fax number</b>	01268 571861

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<b>Age group</b>	4–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Castledon School provides for pupils who have statements of special educational need for a range of difficulties. These include moderate learning difficulties, global developmental delay, speech and language difficulties, emotional and social communication difficulties and pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Pupils come from a diverse and mainly White British background and on entry they are working well below the national expected levels. There are four times as many boys as girls. Currently, five pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school is one of five local authority Community Learning in Partnership (CLIP) schools in Essex. The school has recently achieved the Healthy School award. There are currently no pupils in the Foundation Stage.

## 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 where leadership and management have a clear vision for improving provision and pupil achievement. The headteacher offers motivating support to all staff and is very well supported by a highly competent and well-organised deputy. The senior leadership team (SLT) have clear roles and responsibilities and, together with a dedicated staff and well-informed governors, continue to improve the provision and learning opportunities for all pupils. A parent, reflecting the views of many wrote, 'The change that has taken place since our son started at school has been tremendous and is due to the fantastic care and support of staff'. The school has well established and very effective partnerships with external support agencies, schools, colleges and the community, ensuring pupils' personal needs and well-being are well met. Monitoring and self-evaluation enable the school to have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and how to achieve success.

Due to the complexity of pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities, their standards are generally very low. Given their starting points and the nature of these difficulties, the achievement and progress of the great majority of pupils is good. Some pupils achieve GCSE standards in line with their mainstream peers, for example in art. Parents confirm that their children's confidence and social development is a direct result of the support they receive and of the success they achieve in lessons. Pupils are encouraged to work independently, make choices and to work towards their individual challenging targets, which most successfully achieve. Pupils' personal development is good because of their positive attitudes to learning, their excellent relationships, good care, support and guidance and the good teaching they receive for their individual needs. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, recorded and analysed to ensure they receive the right level of challenge to make continued progress. The SLT is aware of the quality of learning and teaching through regular monitoring and effective support is given to individual teachers to improve practice further. The very best practice could be shared more effectively across the school, particularly in the areas of assessment, planning and the management of pupils' behaviour.

The relevant curriculum effectively supports pupils' personal development and interesting activities motivate pupils to do their best. Visits into the community, work in other schools and colleges and visiting specialists effectively support pupils' learning. The curriculum is constantly being developed to ensure it meets the ever-changing and complex needs of the pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as is their contribution to the community. Pupils show empathy and support for each other and their behaviour is generally good. A very small number of parents reported their concerns regarding the few instances of poor pupil behaviour and the school's management of its consequences. Such behaviour was not found by inspectors to impair the learning and achievement of others and school procedures for dealing with incidents of misbehaviour are appropriate. However, procedures are not sufficiently transparent and communication with parents is insufficiently clear. The great majority of parents are fully supportive of the school. One wrote, 'Since coming to Castledon from mainstream school, my son has made amazing progress and continues to do well. He is now very happy and we have a different child.'

The school has made good progress since the last inspection through relevant development planning and subsequent action. Governors are well informed and are appropriately involved in monitoring, self-evaluation and in the strategic management of the school. Leadership and

management are clearly improving the quality of provision, which is enabling pupils to achieve and make continued good progress. The capacity to improve further is good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that the very best practice in teaching and learning is effectively shared across the school.
- Ensure the training for all staff improves the management of pupil behaviour and is consistently followed through on all occasions.
- Improve communication between the school and home to ensure parents are clear about school policies and practices.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' progress and achievement are good in relation to their starting points and challenging individual targets. Achievements in literacy, communication, numeracy and in personal, social and health education (PSHE) are particularly good as are some elements of information and communication technology (ICT). This is due to the school's focus and support on these areas. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Most parents are very happy with the progress their children make both personally and academically. One parent said, 'My daughter has made excellent progress since she has been taught at this school.' The high expectations, excellent relationships and relevant curriculum enable almost all pupils, including those with more complex needs, to gain one or more qualification or award by the time they leave school. Some pupils are able to take GCSE subjects, such as drama and art, at local mainstream schools. The tracking of pupils' progress is developing well and data is analysed and used to identify any underachievement, make changes and inform subsequent planning.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are excellent. Pupils' self-esteem is raised by their achievements and parents say how much their children enjoy their learning and comment on the positive atmosphere in the school. Pupils clearly enjoy lessons and most pupils are well motivated and behave well. The few pupils who find concentration more difficult are managed well by the effective teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs). A small number of parents and pupils say that during less structured occasions, such as lunch and break times, some pupils' misbehaviour can affect others and cause some anxiety. The outcomes and consequences of such occasions have not always been transparent, although school procedures are well documented and pupil expectations are clear. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils are encouraged and rewarded for improved attendance. Pupils of all ages carry out enthusiastically any responsibility they are given, for example being a school's council representative. Pupils demonstrate feeling and support for each other and gain a good sense of community while learning how to keep themselves healthy and safe. In a science lesson, pupils acted very maturely and safely when burning paper in an experiment to learn about the irreversibility of a chemical reaction. Pupils' views are sought and the school acts on their requests. For example, changes have been made to school menus in response to pupils' comments. Older pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education, for example by taking part in community and work experience placements. They make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural

education and benefit from the curriculum and support from adults in everyday interactions. Pupils develop useful skills that contribute well to their future economic well-being, for example by taking part in mini-enterprise activities and fund raising events.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy their learning because activities are generally interesting and pupils are keen to do well. The very positive learning environment is a result of the excellent relationships between staff and pupils where pupils gain confidence and are able to do their best. Teaching and learning are good overall and the excellent adult teamwork ensures pupils make good progress. The effective support for pupils' individual needs promotes improved communication and independence. All staff are committed to improving their skills and practice, and welcome the opportunities for support and professional development. The very best practice could be shared more effectively across the school. Some teachers are better than others at using pupil information and progress data in their planning and in managing the behaviour of different groups of pupils. LSAs make a significant contribution to encouraging pupils' confidence and supporting their progress and achievement. Resources, including ICT, are effectively used to support learning and pupils' effort. Achievement is celebrated at every opportunity.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and pertinent to the needs of all pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis on communication and life skills and carefully planned pupil groups ensure that learning activities are well matched to individual needs. Relevant topics, such as re-cycling and running a school cafe, provide a motivating context for the development and reinforcement of important skills. The curriculum gives appropriate emphasis to the importance of keeping healthy and undertaking exercise. The life skills programme runs across the whole school and includes planned trips into the community. For example, younger pupils learn to cross roads and visit shops. Older pupils take part in the selling of produce and crafts made at school and learn to use public transport independently. Out of school activities make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Partnerships with mainstream schools offer valuable opportunities for many pupils to study GCSE subjects such as art and drama. Pupils work towards accredited qualifications and vocational awards and most pupils achieve the Trident Gold Award having undertaken community and work experience placements. Enterprise projects provide practical opportunities for pupils to learn and use skills that will help their understanding of the world of work.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. School procedures ensure pupils can learn and develop their academic, personal and social skills in a safe and secure environment. Pupils are encouraged to make choices and acquire the skills of independence. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are clear, effective and understood by all staff. Appropriate staff training takes place and the school is aware of the need to ensure there is consistent follow-through and approaches by all staff, particularly in the management of pupils' behaviour. Pupils receive good individual guidance and their personal targets are suitably challenging. Procedures for

monitoring and assessment ensure pupils are on track to make good progress in both their personal and academic development. Very effective partnerships with external support agencies ensure that the specific needs of pupils are well met. There is a positive partnership with most parents, but the school is aware of the need to improve its communication with parents and carers to ensure that school procedures and developments are clear to all.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has worked hard at creating a positive and dedicated team of professionals that shares the responsibilities of promoting the best learning opportunities for all pupils. The senior leadership team has clear roles and responsibilities, shares the drive for school improvement and ensures the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The impact of everyone's work is clearly reflected in the good care, support and personal development of pupils and their good academic progress. A very effective employee induction and support programme gives confidence to staff. Regular monitoring ensures there is a clear awareness of where there is the best practice, although it is not yet sufficiently shared across the school. Training and professional development opportunities are central to school improvement and are eagerly taken up by staff.

The school works very effectively with external agencies and consequently, the appropriate support is co-ordinated to meet pupils' specific needs. The school gives valuable 'outreach' support to mainstream staff and pupils. Outreach procedures are very well led and managed and greatly appreciated by schools. Governors are clearly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through their active involvement and visits to the school.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### 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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castledon School, Wickford, Essex, SS12 0PW

Thank you for welcoming us into your school; we really enjoyed our time with you. A special thank you to the school council who told us all about the school, their favourite things and what they would improve. We noticed that you really enjoy coming to school and meeting your friends and we agree with you and your parents that your school is good. You make good progress in your lessons and you learn important skills that will benefit you when you leave school. The school knows what it has to do to make things even better for you and you can help by 'good listening' in lessons and always behaving the best that you can. You know your personal targets and what you need to do to make continued good progress.

We particularly liked the fact that:

- all adults work well as a team to ensure you are well looked after;
- you learn to do things for yourself and you are friendly and polite;
- you really enjoy your lessons and work hard;
- you enjoy attending mainstream schools and work experience placements;
- you get involved with lots of different activities in and outside of school;
- the school works very well with other people so you get the support you need;
- all the staff are working hard to help you make even better progress.

There are a few things the teachers know they can do better:

- they can ensure that the very best teaching practice in lessons is shared amongst all staff;
- they can ensure that all staff effectively manage your behaviour and make it clear how you can improve;
- they can improve the communication between the school and your home to ensure that your parents or carers are clear about what goes on in school.

We wish you every future success.

Yours faithfully

Mike Smith

Lead inspector