

Castle Rock High School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	120258
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313568
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Paula Heaney HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	483
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Knight
Headteacher	Rosemary Baker
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2004
School address	Meadow Lane Coalville LE67 4BR
Telephone number	01530 834368
Fax number	01530 830485

Age group	11-14
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Castle Rock serves an area with social and economic disadvantages and where overall educational attainment levels are low. A new purpose-built school building was opened in April 2006. The school population is predominantly (97.5%) White British. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is around the national average. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities form a higher proportion than the national average. There are a number of children in local authority (LA) care.

The school has a range of awards including the Basic Skills Mark, Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People, Artsmark, Excellence in Mentoring, Career Mark and Inclusion Quality Mark. The school works with a range of partner organisations centred around school development, including the provision of careers advisors and mentors for Year 9 students. An application for specialist status in sport with science, in a collaborative bid with two local schools, has been successful with effect from 1 September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Castle Rock High School is a good school with some outstanding features. Good leadership and management by the headteacher, the senior leadership team and other managers in the school have maintained students' good overall achievement. This is despite accommodation issues affecting the English and mathematics departments in particular, prior to the move into the new school building, and some staff changes. There have been significant improvements following the move, including the addition of extensive information and communication technology facilities.

A particular strength of the school is the way in which governors; leaders, managers and all staff in the school work closely together and are highly committed to equipping each student with the social and academic skills they need to achieve economic well-being. Teachers and managers know the students very well and track their progress and behaviour closely. Standards are broadly in line with national averages and students make good progress, given their starting points. The students' literacy skills are the weakest area on entry to the school and remain a barrier that holds back achievement, particularly for boys, in all subjects.

Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are lively events where students are active in their learning and enjoy their studies. Most teachers set a good pace and encourage all students, regardless of ability, to achieve their potential. Students' behaviour is satisfactory. They receive very high quality guidance and support on how to behave in school and with each other. Most respond positively and develop good social skills, but a few students have difficulty in conforming to the school's rules. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions is above average, and attendance is below average. The curriculum is good and already meets students' needs effectively in most respects. Students value highly the range of break-time and after-school activities available to them. The developments taking place such as those to make the curriculum more creative and even more effective in terms of consolidating students' literacy skills in all subject areas are not yet fully embedded.

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students are encouraged to eat healthily whilst in school, and they feel safe and enjoy attending. Bullying incidents are dealt with effectively. Students make a good, positive contribution to the community and they develop good work-related skills. The care, guidance and support students receive are outstanding. The school is highly effective in working with a wide range of agencies to ensure all students get the support they need to succeed. As a result, equality of opportunity is outstanding and students with particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities do as well as their peers. Most parents are positive about the school, although a very small minority are concerned about the behaviour of a few students.

The leadership team has ensured that all staff and governors share a clear and accurate vision of the school's strengths, as well as areas where it can improve. Senior leaders and the governors monitor effectively the actions taken to secure such improvements. This good quality self-evaluation, coupled with the improvements made so far, means that it is in a good position to raise standards further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve literacy skills for all students, but particularly boys, by ensuring that such skills are consolidated at every opportunity, and so raise achievement across the whole school.

- Improve attendance.
- Reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards students reach by the end of Year 9 are broadly average but do vary slightly from year to year. For example, results fell marginally in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science in 2007, and since 2004 the gap between the school's average points score for English and the national average has widened. In mathematics and science, standards rose in 2006 but fell slightly in 2007. The proportion of students reaching Level 5 and above in both English and mathematics was below the national average but broadly in line with the suitably challenging targets set by the school. In science, outcomes were broadly in line with the national average.

Students make good progress overall at the school, given their starting points. Recent strategies to improve achievement in English are beginning to have a positive impact across the curriculum. Girls make better progress than boys. Students who need extra support with their learning achieve well because of the very good support they receive. Progress seen in lessons was good. Most students achieve their targets, which are appropriately challenging and encourage students to achieve their potential. School data indicate that standards and achievement are likely to rise this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy school life and lessons. They form stable relationships with each other and with adults, and their social skills improve as they move up the school. Most students behave well but a minority have difficulty conforming to the school's rules. A policy of zero tolerance to behaviour the school regards as unacceptable means that the number of fixed-term exclusions is above average. By the time they reach Year 9, most are confident and mature young people, keen to make a contribution to the school and wider communities. Students have a good grasp of right and wrong and a strong sense of responsibility. This is evident in the care older students show for younger ones through the mediating system. The school council enables students to express their views within school and beyond. For example, their presentation to the local authority helped the school to obtain a substantial grant to set up its own radio station. Students work safely in lessons and treat the building with respect. They know the important features of eating healthily and most students make healthy choices at lunchtime. Attendance, though improving, is just below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and confident teaching styles. They establish good relationships within lessons and largely manage behaviour well. As a result, students are keen to learn and show good attitudes to their work. There are many examples of good teaching and some examples of outstanding practice within the school. In science for example, the Year 9 forensic module highlights the school's ability to plan and deliver exciting and stimulating lessons.

The large majority of lessons are good or better. Teachers prepare lesson plans which identify learner outcomes clearly to ensure students make good progress. These lessons provide pace and challenge, particularly for the more able students. Students say they enjoy the opportunity to work practically. In a small minority of lessons, pace is slow, activities do not meet the needs of all students and lesson plans provide insufficient detail. Good use is made of information learning technology (ILT) in some departments to deliver stimulating lessons and engage students in their work. In history, ILT is used effectively to present a variety of visual and written sources for students to explore, review and discuss. In English, ILT is used well to improve the pace and challenge of lessons.

Good examples of marking provide informative comments which identify how students can improve. Students are guided to assess work themselves with the use of specially designed materials in English and mathematics. This helps students identify what they need to do to achieve a higher level. A similar approach in science this year has led to higher levels of students' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and well planned. The school's involvement in a curricular project, together with the additional opportunities provided by the design of the new school building, has enabled more creativity within the curriculum. Timetabling in year groups has provided subject areas with opportunities to innovate and plan whole year group activities more effectively. These developments are relatively recent and are not yet fully embedded in all years. The personal development curriculum is particularly good as students are provided with opportunities to work with visiting professionals in areas such as health education. The good range of break-time and after-school activities are well supported. Students value and enjoy these activities highly. Strong partnerships have been established to support transition to the school and beyond. Year 9 students are provided with regular opportunities to visit further education colleges, sample vocational opportunities and familiarise themselves with upper school work prior to leaving Castle Rock. Such experiences prepare them well for the next stage in their lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school takes exceptionally good care of all its students, because it very firmly bases its support on the needs of individuals. All students are helped to settle in to Year 7 and there are very good links with the nearby upper school, so that the transitions through the phases of schooling are smooth. Frequent assessments enable teachers to see accurately and regularly how well students are doing and there are good structures to encourage students to do better still, or to help those who are underachieving. Students arrive in Year 7 with a wide range of needs and the school is very effective in diagnosing particular difficulties and responding with the best form of help. The school uses outside agencies very well to provide specialised support and a big strength is the way this large support network is managed so that all aspects of a student's needs are tackled very effectively. The recent appointment of two pastoral support managers is already having a positive effect on students' behaviour and decreasing the number of incidents that could lead to exclusion of a student. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and reviewed regularly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's good leadership has been a key factor in shaping the school so that it is focused effectively on developing students as individuals alongside raising aspirations and academic standards. Middle managers are closely involved in raising standards and are well supported by the senior leadership team. Staff, including those new to the school, feel well supported and morale is high. Leaders and managers at all levels are highly committed to ensuring that every student gets the very best chance of succeeding. Data are used effectively in analysing where the school is doing well and where further improvements need to be made. The school's systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress are detailed and used well to raise standards, but do not yet summarise their achievement against targets sufficiently precisely.

The procedures for checking the effectiveness of teaching and learning are rigorous but do not assess the quality of students' learning sufficiently well. The development plan is compiled through a whole-school approach and is focused sharply on raising performance across the school. The school recognises the importance of improving standards of literacy further for these students. Training is aligned to school aims effectively and is valued by both teaching and support staff. Resources are managed and deployed well. The school plans its staffing effectively and has minimised disruption to teaching during the move to new premises. Governance of the school is good and the governing body is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors provide good support to the headteacher and staff, and question closely the senior leadership team on progress. The school provides good value for money.

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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	3
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	3
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?	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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Students

Inspection of Castle Rock High School, Coalville, LE67 4BR

As you know, your school was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. First, I would like to thank you for your openness and cooperation during our visit. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. You demonstrated to us during our visit that you are mature and confident young people.

The inspection found that yours is a good school with some outstanding features. It is well led and managed. Results at the end of Year 9 are meeting standards achieved nationally. You are making good progress overall from your starting points.

Most lessons we saw were good or better. These were interesting and challenging, with a good range of activities which you clearly enjoyed. Your teachers and other school staff support you very well to get you to achieve to the best of your abilities. You particularly enjoy a variety of activities and learning that is fun, and the good range of break-time and after-school opportunities. Your behaviour is satisfactory and improving, but your attendance is below average and there are still too many exclusions.

We have asked your headteacher and other staff to help you improve your literacy skills, particularly those of boys, to help you to achieve your potential across all subjects, to improve attendance, and to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions caused by a few students who have difficulty conforming to the school rules. You can help by attending regularly and behaving well at all times.

We wish you well with your future studies.

Best wishes

Paula Heaney HM Inspector



13 June 2007

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