

Castle Manor Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124788
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315060
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Jennifer Brown HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	13–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	543
6th form	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Pearson
Headteacher	Ms Madeleine Vigar
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Eastern Avenue Haverhill Suffolk CB9 9JE
Telephone number	01440705501
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Age group	13-19
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Castle Manor School is a 13 to 19 Business and Enterprise college of smaller than average size. It obtained specialist status in 2005. A large majority of the students are White British and the proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average. Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average with few attaining higher levels. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average and the proportion with statements of special educational need is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Castle Manor Business and Enterprise College is a good school, which has made rapid and significant improvements in many areas since the last inspection. The curriculum, developed thoughtfully and effectively to meet the wide range of needs of students who attend the school, is outstanding. Partnership arrangements with other providers add to the breadth of choices which, for a small school, is exemplary. Students value the range of options on offer. They appreciate that they can opt for courses with learning approaches that engage and motivate them and feel this has increased their enjoyment of school. Consequently, attendance is greatly improved and now is similar to the national average.

The school's specialist status has had a beneficial effect on the learning experiences of students, through increasing the breadth of the curriculum and the constructive links developed with business and industry. These are having a positive effect on students' personal and social well-being, which are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As a result, behaviour is also good and is a tribute to both the students and the hard work undertaken by the staff through their consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy.

A positive outcome of the changes to the curriculum and in attendance and behaviour is the rapid improvement in some standards and achievement by the age of 16. The majority of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well in relation to their lower than average starting points. The percentage of students obtaining five A* to C grades has greatly increased and appropriate systems and structures are in place to sustain this improvement. However, achievement in mathematics is falling.

Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well structured and teachers enjoy very good relationships with their students. The level of challenge in most lessons is usually appropriately matched to students' needs, but lesson plans do not all identify how teaching will meet the needs of students of differing abilities. Weaker teaching is not sustaining the pace of learning and the level of challenge throughout the lesson. The quality of marking is variable and, whilst some is good, it does not always give clear advice about what students can do to improve and make good progress, particularly in science.

The headteacher and senior managers give a very clear direction and strong focus on improving standards attained by students at the school. Monitoring and evaluation of student achievement are core aspects of the school's self-evaluation processes. Realistic targets for improvement are set, but middle managers are not consistently using robust information to monitor progress towards their achievement. The school has made good and, in some cases, outstanding improvements since the last inspection. It knows itself well and has a strong capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is much smaller than average and this poses significant challenges in providing a suitable range of courses to meet the needs of students. Links with the neighbouring secondary school are broadening the range of subjects offered post-16 and improving recruitment to the sixth form. Students can study a good range of GCE, vocational and other courses. This meets the needs of students with a wide range of abilities. Standards are below average, but have been improving year on year. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Students make satisfactory progress and like the fact that they get highly individual support in small classes. As in the

main school, there are variations in the quality of assessment and feedback provided by teachers to students about their progress. The newly appointed coordinator has identified shortcomings in the consistency and rigor of academic advice and support and is putting in place systems to address this issue. A number of senior staff share the leadership responsibilities and there is a joint arrangement that oversees course development at both sites. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and progress in mathematics.
- Ensure all middle managers have a consistent approach to monitoring student progress and raising standards.
- Ensure all teachers maximise learning throughout the lesson and provide high quality feedback when marking.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' achievement is good in relation to their lower than average starting points. The percentage of students attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE improved significantly in 2007 and is close to the national average. The proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, also improved and although it was very low in 2007 there are good indications that this improvement will accelerate in 2008. Standards in many of the specialist subject areas are below the demanding targets the school sets itself. The rate at which students are gaining relevant knowledge, skills and understanding is variable. It is best in single science, history, home economics and music where standards are above average. However, standards in mathematics, business studies, French, drama and geography are very low.

Students' progress between the ages of 14 and 16 improved considerably in 2007 and the majority of students are making good progress. The 2007 year group contained a high proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who also achieved well. Information provided by the school indicates standards at age 14 are below average and students make satisfactory progress. While there has been some improvement in standards at Key Stage 3 in 2007, for example in English, the rate of improvement has not kept pace with that nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Following considerable efforts by the school, attendance is improving and is now in line with national averages. Where lessons are challenging and interesting, students enjoy their learning and behaviour is very good. Students know what makes a good lesson and are able to work independently. They take responsibility for their own progress through the target setting process and maintain a personal portfolio to record their achievements and successes.

Students are confident and caring in their relationships with their teachers and with one another. Clear procedures result in them having a good understanding of social and moral behaviour. Incidents of bullying are very low and dealt with robustly so that students feel safe. Assemblies

and 'thought for the day' provide good opportunities for spiritual reflection. Students appreciate the opportunities for cultural development provided through invited guest speakers and educational visits. Participation in after-school sports activities helps them adopt healthy lifestyles.

Students contribute well to the school and wider community through a wide range of activities including fund-raising and performances. Older students support the progress of younger and more vulnerable students through their involvement in mentoring activities and by being sports leaders. Students feel that they are treated with respect and as adults, and they respond positively to this. The school council is closely involved in key decisions that affect students, such as the introduction of the school uniform. Consequently, students wear their uniform with pride and their appearance is very smart. The school's specialist status is enabling students to develop skills useful to their future lives, although some still have relatively low levels of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality of lessons has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge. The majority of lessons are well planned and organised with clear lesson routines understood and adhered to by students. In many lessons, the range of methods and resources matches student needs and abilities. This sustains the learning effectively over the hundred minute lessons so that students behave very well and respond positively to the tasks set. The teaching challenges them to think; regular questioning checks their understanding and ensures very effective use is made of the time. In some lessons, tasks are too long and the pace of learning suffers as a result.

Homework is not regularly set and sometimes provides insufficient challenge. The quality of marking and assessment is variable. It is particularly good in English and humanities where teachers give clear advice about how students can improve their work, but is less consistent in science. An increasing number of teachers use self-assessment and peer assessment. There are good examples across a number of subjects where students have regular opportunities to judge the progress they have made and to reflect on the quality of their work, which helps them understand how to improve. Students in the sixth form for example were quick to mention the quality of feedback they receive from their English teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum provision, in the context of a small school, is outstanding. Developments over the last two years have resulted in a wide range of options being available to Year 10 and 11 students. These include the Young Apprentice scheme, fast track GCSE entry for more able students and pathways for low achieving or disaffected students. The schools' specialist Business and Enterprise status is securing an increasing range of opportunities for students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world of work. All students now study a course with a vocational element. In Year 9, a full range of subjects meet national expectations and provides

the opportunity for students to study a second modern language. Students like the range of choices on offer. In the sixth form, improvements to the range of courses have led to increased recruitment from Year 11. A good range of visits enhances the curriculum and after-school clubs and sports activities further extend opportunities for students to learn and achieve beyond the school day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures for child protection, including risk assessments, are extensive and robust. Staff have worked hard and effectively to improve behaviour and attendance so that students have greater opportunities to learn.

Students receive clear and helpful career advice and have good opportunities to develop vocational skills and to experience work-related learning. Pastoral care is outstanding. Well-qualified and committed staff work tirelessly to ensure the best possible life chances for students, particularly for the vulnerable or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are effective and sensitive links with external agencies, such as the police and medical services, so that students can receive the best possible pastoral care. The advice and guidance centre is a strength of the school and students rightly speak highly of it. Academic guidance and monitoring systems to support students in reaching challenging targets are still developing. Students have medium term targets and in the best lessons teachers exemplify what students need to do to progress and achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher and the senior team provide a very clear direction and an outstanding sense of purpose, which has resulted in significant improvements since the last inspection. New appointments at both senior and middle management level have strengthened the school's capacity to improve, which is good. Innovative changes to the curriculum, together with improved student behaviour, have resulted in significant increases in student achievement at age 16. Self-evaluation, supported by a thorough analysis of examination performance, is good and leads to very clear planning for future development. Realistic targets for improvement are set, but middle managers are not consistently using robust information to monitor progress towards their achievement. Curriculum leaders are held accountable for their own subjects and, together with senior leaders, monitor and evaluate teaching and learning accurately. The college maintains a strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils, but has not yet ensured all learners are consistently achieving as well as they can across all subject areas. Governance is good and governors provide strong support and challenge for the college. The management of resources is effective and 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	16-19
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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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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	3
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	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	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

8 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Castle Manor Business and Enterprise College, Haverhill, CB9 9JE

Thank you very much for making us so welcome and the way in which you shared your views with us, both in formal and informal meetings and within lessons. You told us how much the school has improved in recent years. You appreciate the wide range of courses and options you can choose from both in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. You wear the uniform you helped to choose with pride and we were very impressed by your smart appearance. You attend a good school and we are certain that the headteacher and all the staff will continue to work hard to ensure it continues getting better. The school has many strengths and we were particularly impressed by:

- the way in which the school is led by the headteacher and senior staff;
- the improvement in the number of students getting five A* to C grades in 2007;
- the improvements in the standard of your behaviour and attendance;
- the arrangements the school has with the local college and other schools in Haverhill which ensure you have very good opportunities to progress in your academic and personal development;
- the quality of care and support you receive when you experience difficulties.

To make your school even better we have recommended that:

- the standards you achieve in mathematics by the time you are 16 improve;
- teachers plan their lessons to make the best use of the one hundred minutes of time and when they mark your work they all make it clear to you what you have to do to improve;
- curriculum coordinators consistently use information to make sure you are making the progress you should.

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Brown HMI

Lead inspector