

Castlebar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101966
Local Authority	Ealing
Inspection number	323557
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	104
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mary Delger
Headteacher	Mr Paul Adair
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hathaway Gardens Ealing London W13 0DH
Telephone number	020 8998 3135
Fax number	020 8810 7597

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Since the last inspection Castlebar School has been re-designated so it now caters for pupils aged 4-11 who have both moderate and severe learning difficulties. It continues to admit an increasing number of pupils with a greater complexity of need than in the past. A considerable proportion have autism and a smaller, but growing number have limited verbal communication and hearing/sensory impairment. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. They are from a range of ethnic backgrounds, with many being of Asian and African origin. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. The school has gained many accolades including the Healthy School and Sportsmark Awards. The school provides advice and support to local authority mainstream schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Castlebar School continues to be an outstanding school as it was at the last inspection. Under the very strong leadership of the headteacher, the provision has been adapted so that it is extremely effective in meeting the increased range and complexity of pupils' needs. Links with parents, outside agencies and other schools are excellent and play an important part in Castlebar's success. Parents are very happy because of the positive impact the school has had on their children's well-being, progress and independence. Comments such as, 'This school is the best thing that has happened in my child's life' are representative of their views.

At the core of the school's work is the promotion of pupils' personal development, and staff seize every opportunity to reinforce their high expectations. Consequently, pupils make tremendous progress in this area. They develop a very positive outlook and show a clear sense of purpose in all that they do. Due to constant encouragement by staff they develop high regard and respect for others and form good friendships. All work and play happily in a secure and harmonious environment. Pupils enjoy school and put a great deal of effort into trying to do things for themselves. As a result, their independence grows considerably and they develop high levels of confidence. All make marked improvements in developing self-discipline and, overall, pupils' behaviour is excellent. This success is a reflection of the positive and fully consistent approach of all staff towards behaviour management.

The professional development of staff is very successful and, as a result, teaching and learning are outstanding. As the needs of pupils have changed, the school has responded very positively by developing specialist resources and staff expertise. It has targeted these very well to pupils' individual requirements. A good example is the high quality of provision for pupils who have autism. Across the school, pupils' needs are assessed thoroughly leading to precisely planned lessons. Teachers' knowledge of pupils and their range of specialisms gives them the confidence to organise activities that are highly purposeful and at the same time great fun for pupils. As a result, pupils learn in extremely effective ways, concentrating, working hard and, often, contributing in a lively fashion. This leads to their outstanding achievement.

Added flexibility in the curriculum ensures that it fully meets pupils' needs by being tailored to their personal circumstances. A strong focus on learning the skills of communication, literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as life skills, forms the bedrock of the provision. An increased focus on therapeutic and sensory opportunities, and a more topic-based approach, ensure the curriculum fully meets pupils' changing needs. A wide range of professionals, for example psychologists and therapists, support the provision very well. They, together with school staff, help to ensure that pupils receive high-quality support and guidance so that they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Excellent self-evaluation underpins school improvement and is pursued with rigour, particularly by the senior team. Senior leaders set challenging targets for the school and staff. Leadership roles throughout the school have been broadened and strengthened since the previous inspection and, as a result, key developments have taken place. Good examples of these are the improved use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning and the way in which sensory learning now permeates the provision. The school is very clear about areas where further improvements might be achieved. It has rightly highlighted that not all staff are fully confident in using signing across a wide range of topics and work

already started in this area is paying dividends. This is helping the school in its aim of becoming a totally inclusive signing community where everyone is able to support the growing number of pupils joining the school who rely on signing. This exciting development is involving all Castlebar pupils, and also some from the nearby primary school, in learning to sign. The school's track record shows that it is extremely well placed to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children achieve extremely well in all six areas of learning. They get off to a flying start because of outstanding teaching. Staff provide excellent support and children's welfare is exemplary. As a result, children quickly develop daily routines, gain independence and achieve exceptionally well in the area of personal, social and emotional development. Staff match learning very well to the children's age, their interests and abilities, so that they are really motivated. In a session related to the topic of transport the children were totally engrossed and, because of this, showed very high levels of achievement, for example when counting toy vehicles. Assessment across the Early Years Foundation Stage is detailed and very effectively guides questioning by staff so that they extend children's understanding. Leadership is very effective and has ensured sustained improvement in the provision since the last inspection. Parents are involved as partners in their children's education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable all staff to be fully confident in using signing across a wide range of topics so that the school becomes a fully inclusive signing community.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils invariably reach or exceed their challenging targets. Although standards are well below those in mainstream schools this represents excellent achievement and progress, given pupils' very low starting points on entry. A number of pupils have experienced difficulty in their previous educational settings, but all who join Castlebar quickly show a determination to succeed. This is largely because of the clear targets they are set and the confidence they develop, based on a belief by staff that, 'Every pupil can succeed'. Pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, develop the key skills of language, communication and numeracy extremely well and they learn to apply these skills very effectively across all areas of learning. Pupils' skills in ICT are much improved since the last inspection and are now very good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has a strong commitment to ensuring 'every child matters' and all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils are happy to come to school, as seen in their smiling faces when they arrive and in the way they approach their lessons. They learn to explore their feelings and empathise with others in need of help very well, for example when younger ones gave support to older ones who are sad to be leaving the school. They show good understanding of the importance of reflection as seen during a whole-school assembly. Throughout the school, pupils take on responsibilities, such as being a school council member, very well and learn to work as members of a team. They respect the need to act safely, for example when pupils used knives to make a tropical fruit salad. They

make a very effective contribution to both the school and the wider community. All are very aware of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and are enthusiastic in the sporting activities such as football, basketball and outdoor education. This is recognised in the school achieving the Healthy School and Sportsmark Awards. Attendance is good. The overall figure is affected by a number of medical appointments but the school makes every effort to encourage pupils to attend. The excellent development of pupils' basic skills as well as their personal and social skills means that they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Staff have a wide range of expertise and they work tirelessly to ensure that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable. They treat pupils with respect and consideration and value their every effort. In turn, pupils concentrate very well and try hard to do their best. Teachers and support staff have excellent relationships with pupils and play a vital role in helping them develop the confidence they need to succeed. Careful assessment of pupils' progress is undertaken by all staff and this means that they are able to set finely tuned targets that very effectively guide pupils' learning. Staff make highly effective use of a range of strategies including sensory experiences, practical learning, and interactive technology to enhance pupils' understanding. Exceptionally high-quality lessons were seen in all age groups and, in these, the very high expectations that staff have of pupils, whatever their ability, was evident for all to see.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's curriculum is extremely effective. It is planned meticulously to take account of individual pupils' needs and it ensures that every opportunity is used to enhance pupils' personal development. Very good enrichment, including residential visits, work with visitors and a wide range of clubs, such as the walking and gardening clubs, give an added dimension. The school already makes good use of early years practice in the ways that it organises learning outdoors for the youngest pupils, as was seen when they pretended to be a bus driver taking passengers to the nearest bus stop. In its drive for continual improvement the school is extending this type of outdoor learning across all age groups.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care pupils receive is very high and pupils say 'that the teachers help us a lot'. There are thorough child protection procedures and safeguarding is robust. Staff make sure that all pupils, including any who arrive at different times, settle happily into school and feel confident about moving to the next stage of their education. It is noticeable how well staff listen to pupils and value their views. There is comprehensive tracking of each pupil's academic progress and this information is used very well to organise extra support for individuals as required, for example speech and language, occupational or music therapy. It is also used to advantage to set targets that the pupils are keen to reach. The school works extremely well with parents, for instance through the daily home-school diary system. As a result, parents and also a wide range of professionals give excellent support to pupils' development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership is outstanding. The headteacher leads by example and provides the vision and drive to ensure that, in line with the school's mission, 'all pupils reach their potential'. Along with the senior team, he gives a very clear sense of direction. Together, they set a climate of strong teamwork among all adults so that everyone makes an active contribution to school improvement. The excellent procedures to support the professional development of all staff make a significant contribution to sustaining pupils' excellent achievement. Governors provide very strong support to the school. They rigorously monitor the school's strengths and areas for development to ensure it provides excellent value for money. The school's very strong links with others, including some as far afield as St Lucia, help it to be highly effective in promoting and evaluating community cohesion, and valuing diversity at local, national and global levels. It is also very successful in raising the profile across a wider community of those who have learning difficulties, for example by pupils contributing to the Powerful Voices Conference.

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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?	1
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	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 learners' needs?	1
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

08 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castlebar School, London, W13 0DH

I would like to thank you for all the help you gave me when I came to visit your school. You go to an excellent school. I was very impressed with the way you learn to care for each other. I could see that you gain a lot of confidence and you learn to behave very well indeed. I was glad to hear that you enjoy school so much and that you make good friends. It is good to know that your teachers listen to you and help you.

Teachers plan exciting and interesting things for you to do, including the visits where you stay away from home and a wide range of clubs, such as the football, gardening and walking clubs. You clearly enjoy these. I saw that you try hard in your lessons and, because of the excellent teaching, you achieve extremely well.

The headteacher and senior teachers are very clear that they want to see the school improve even further. They have excellent ideas about how this might happen. I agree that it is important for all staff to be confident in using signing across a wide range of topics. I know that the school has already started work on this to make sure everyone is able to help those of you who use signing. I was glad to see that all of you are also working hard to learn signing so that you can help each other.

Yours faithfully

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector