

Castleford High School Technology and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108273
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	324738
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr W Clift MBE JP
Headteacher	Mr R Vaughan
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
School address	Ferrybridge Road Castleford West Yorkshire WF10 4JQ
Telephone number	01977 605060
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Castleford High School Technology and Sports College is a larger than average community comprehensive school. Most of its students come from the immediate area. They are largely White British and a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school has a unit for students with hearing impairment. The school achieved technology college status in 1996 and also sports college status in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Castleford High School is outstandingly effective. It has mounted a sustained campaign of improvement since the last inspection. Given the clarity of its aims, its ambitions for excellence and a proven record in managing change, it has an outstanding capacity to improve further. The school is led and managed exceptionally well. Governors provide experience and the clear capacity to give support and challenge. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has developed highly effective cooperation between managers at all levels of the school. This ensures that the unremitting focus stays on improving students' attainment and personal development. The school runs smoothly, and both the management of resources and value for money achieved are excellent.

Students enter the school with below average prior attainment and they make good progress. They leave with an above average proportion gaining five or more higher GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. Standards are above average on the whole, though attainment in English in Year 11 dipped to slightly below average in 2008, and boys attain less well than girls throughout the school as they do nationally. The vast majority of students leave for further study or employment, having developed as well-rounded individuals who are confident, considerate and sociable. Their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding. They respond eagerly to the many opportunities the school provides for them to participate in a wide range of activities. They are clear about how to live healthily and stay safe, and the school's excellent provision for sports gives them wide opportunities to keep fit. Taken together, these achievements prepare them very well for further study and to be able to secure their future economic well-being. The school provides outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for which students are appreciative. Staff are highly effective in managing lessons and in stimulating students to think for themselves. This is well supported by the school's impressively broad and balanced curriculum, and the significant work staff have done to develop teaching methods which the students find engaging. Most of the teaching is good and a significant proportion is outstanding, though a few lessons do not fully reflect the high quality of teaching expected by the school. Pupils enjoy their schooling a great deal, a fact reflected in their high attendance, and rightly feel that they are being prepared well for the future. Parents reflect this view and are highly satisfied with the school. Governors and senior leaders are determined to serve the changing needs of the local community; they aim to enable students to attain highly so that they can compete, where appropriate, for high quality jobs in the area and beyond.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by improving GCSE results in English, and improving the overall attainment of boys throughout the school.
- Bring all teaching up to the level of the best by ensuring a fully consistent application of the school's teaching and learning policy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are generally above average. Students enter Year 7 with standards below those expected for their age. Attainment improves during the first three years and standards in English, mathematics and science are above the national figures by the end

of Year 9. Girls reach higher standards than boys. The challenging targets set by the school, and its highly effective monitoring and support systems, ensure that students continue to make this good progress during Years 10 and 11. In 2007 and 2008, the proportion of students achieving five or more higher GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, at the end of Year 11 was above average. Results in English declined to just below average in 2008, while those in mathematics improved. School data show that students currently in Years 10 and 11 are on target to improve on last year's results. The school's specialist subjects perform well and students reach standards that are well above those reached nationally. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those based in the hearing-impaired unit, make progress on a par with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Attendance is well above average and students arrive punctually to school and to lessons. They say they enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. They particularly enjoy the challenge given to them in many lessons and the wealth of extra-curricular activities. Students eat healthily and understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. This is reflected in high levels of participation in team games, with a great deal of success locally and nationally. Students know how to keep safe in and around school. They make a strong contribution to school life through the school council and, for example, they make collections for various charities and are presently working out ways to reduce the local litter problem and to regenerate Saville Park. Initiatives such as 'Enterprise' for Year 11 and the '4x4 Schools Technology Challenge' prepare students well for the future world of work. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Behaviour is of a high standard both in lessons and around the school. Students stated that bullying is rare and that the few minor incidents which crop up are dealt with quickly and successfully by staff, whom they see as 'effective problem solvers'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with outstanding features. Excellent practice has been developed in the school's specialist subjects and also in the innovative work carried out by staff throughout the school in the 'Teaching and Learning Group'. New methods are shared throughout the school and they have improved the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, not all teachers have responded fully to improving practice. Teachers demonstrate very secure subject knowledge and the vast majority of lessons progress at a lively pace, engaging the interest of students and promoting good and sometimes outstanding learning. A broad range of teaching and learning activities and the excellent use of resources contribute to the good progress made by students. Lesson plans are clear and concise and tasks are tailored to meet the needs of individuals, encouraging all students to reach their full potential. Teachers use excellent questioning techniques which probe students' understanding and extend their thinking. Students are provided with many opportunities to think for themselves and to become independent learners. They readily share ideas through class discussion, peer mentoring and self-assessment. The quality of assessment is excellent and constructive comments encourage further improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum meets the needs, interests and aspirations of all students exceptionally well. The emphasis is firmly on success for all. The impact of the technology and sport specialisms is keenly felt throughout the school in supporting and leading new and innovative practices. There is a strong emphasis in all subjects on key skills for future success in the workplace, including decision making, problem solving and effective teamwork. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are developed well across the curriculum. Successful learning techniques involving students in practical work motivate and engage them. Central to these experiences is the application of information and communication technology in developing valuable communication and research skills. By the age of 14, students have an excellent choice of GCSE, vocational and work-related courses. A comprehensive programme of citizenship and personal, social and health education makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development. Students value and enjoy the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities offered, including sporting, technological, musical and theatrical activities. These enrich their everyday learning experiences. Transition arrangements for vulnerable Year 7 students provide them with a very safe and supportive environment so that they are able to access the curriculum with confidence. Full participation in work experience contributes well to students' preparation to enter the next stage of their education or working life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

In this highly inclusive school, care, guidance and support are outstanding. They help students to achieve well and leave school confident and responsible young people. The school has been very successful in improving attendance including among those who have in the past been persistently absent. For some it has been necessary to involve external agencies and take firm measures to ensure attendance but the vast majority of students attend because they appreciate and enjoy school. Permanent exclusions are rare but in two year groups fixed-term exclusions have increased recently as the school has worked to ensure that all students behave well both in class and around the school. The staff are acutely aware of the different groups in the school, their progress is closely monitored and provision is adjusted to best meet the needs of individual students and particular groups. The provision for students with hearing impairment is exemplary and they achieve well. The support staff in the hearing impaired unit, and those for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make a very valuable contribution to students' progress. The care and support for the more vulnerable students is highly effective and appreciated by them. There is a very strong focus on the more able students and those with talents for sport or the performing arts: the school's data show that they are on track to achieve very well. As a result of the student tracking and target-setting systems, students know how well they are doing in subjects and are well aware of their targets. Teachers use this data well to plan lessons that meet the needs of the different groups within their classes. The arrangements for the transfer of students from the primary schools are excellent. The information, advice and guidance that students receive throughout the school is of high quality and most students are very well prepared for when they leave school. Most move on to education, training or employment. The school is working well with the local authority and post-16 providers to reduce even further the number of students who are not in education, training or employment at the age of 16. Adults work effectively to ensure the safety of students

when in school, off site and when they are leaving school at the end of the day. Safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding throughout the school. This lies at the heart of the school's significant improvement since the last inspection and its outstanding capacity for further improvement. With the strong support of the committed and experienced governing body, the headteacher has gone to some lengths to build high performing senior and middle leadership teams. They have worked strenuously with the staff of the school to develop and realise a shared vision for improvement. A high level of consensus has been reached on aims and how effectively the school is meeting its targets for improvement. This is well grounded in rigorous and accurate self-evaluation which takes place routinely at all levels of management. It pays due regard to the opinions of parents which are canvassed in detail, and to the academic performance and personal development of the students. Planning for improvement, and for day-to-day running, is first-rate and involves staff at all levels in the school. The school continues to identify areas which are to be developed to raise standards and improve provision. The evaluation of staff through the performance management system is highly effective. It has their strong support, not least because it leads to the identification of improvement needs and the provision of training and development activities to meet these needs. Staff morale is very high and there is a palpable sense of pride in working within such an effective school. Parents and pupils share this pride and the school has an excellent reputation in the local community. Parental satisfaction is high. This is strengthened by the considerable efforts made by the school to support and cooperate with other organisations, locally and further afield, especially through the work it does as a specialist college for technology and sport. The school contributes extensively to these other organisations. It also works well with them to benefit the school, not least in liaison with the local authority. The management of pupils in lessons and around the school is highly effective leading to considerate behaviour throughout the school. This provides a strong basis for the school's highly effective promotion of equality and community cohesion. Financial and personnel management are excellent. The school is well resourced and maintained, although some circulation areas are too small for comfort and parts of the building need upgrading. The school gives outstanding value for money. All statutory duties are met.

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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

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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

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**

After our inspection of your school I would like to tell you of our conclusions.

- Castleford High is an outstanding school which gives you a thorough education and a first-rate preparation for the future.
- You are cared for and guided really well and as a result, you develop into confident and considerate young people.
- You work hard, behave sensibly and get on well with each other and the staff.
- The teaching is good and sometimes excellent. There is room for some of the school's most effective teaching methods to be more widely used by the staff.
- The staff listen carefully to your ideas and use them to enliven lessons.
- You are given plenty of opportunities to think for yourselves and to learn to cooperate with others. This should help you in later education and work.
- You make good progress throughout the school and attain above average results by the time you leave. However, standards in GCSE English were not as good as in mathematics last year, and boys lag behind girls in most subjects throughout the school.
- The school serves the needs of Castleford people very well and is rightly popular among your parents.
- The school is managed in an excellent way and staff are keen to search for ways of making the school better.

To help with this, some improvements are needed.

- Improve examination results in English in Year 11 and help boys to achieve as well as girls in all subjects.
- Work to ensure that all lessons are taught as well as the best.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future learning at Castleford High.