

Castlegreen Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108878
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	324854
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Mel Blackband

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	85
Sixth form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Graham
Headteacher	Mr Ian Reed
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Craigshaw Road Hylton Castle Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR5 3NF
Telephone number	0191 5535335
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Castlegreen has recently been in a period of transition following the re designation of the school in September 2007 as provision for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). The school roll has fallen by almost half since the previous inspection. Approximately 75% of the students now have SEBD and the remainder, most of whom are in post-16 provision, have moderate learning difficulties (MLD). A high proportion of students are eligible for free school meals and 18 students are in the care of the local authority. Almost all the students are White British.

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. Standards have risen considerably since the previous inspection and particularly so in the last year. There has been particular improvement over the last year. This is because new systems and procedures, which were put in place as the school's provision changed, are now proving effective in raising standards throughout the school.

Standards attained by students at the time of their entry to the school are below average often due to disruption in their education. Almost all the students, however, achieve well and a few make outstanding progress. The students with moderate learning difficulties, who are now mostly in the post-16 provision, have also achieved well. The quality of teaching continues to improve and, overall, teaching and learning are now good throughout the school. Teachers ensure that lessons are interesting and well paced. As a result, the students enjoy their work and respond by trying their best. Teachers know their students well, but there is some inconsistency in the way teachers record the small steps in students' progress. As a result, the targets which they set for students are not always sufficiently challenging or focused clearly on each individual's learning needs. They do not help students to gain a clear understanding of their own progress or how to improve their work. The curriculum is effective, particularly in activities which provide students with practical experiences of working life and which lead to a variety of challenging vocational qualifications. This aspect of provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The provision is good for students with learning difficulties that are additional to those for which the school routinely provides. These students are well supported and follow specifically adapted programmes where this is appropriate. The curriculum is enriched by educational visits which extend the students' social and cultural understanding.

All the students make excellent progress in their personal development. This underpins the students' continuing motivation to learn and their good achievement. Students thrive within the caring and supportive ethos of the school. Students with continuing behaviour problems or personal difficulties are very quickly identified and supported. Each staff member has responsibility as a personal tutor for a small group of students. The quality of this support for students is one of the school's strengths and has a significant impact on the students' emotional development and the continuing improvement in their behaviour. As a result of this support and guidance and the good programmes in personal, social and health education, the students learn to keep themselves safe and healthy. The students' good progress in acquiring and using basic skills, the excellence of their community involvement such as the outstanding link with the captain and crew of HMS Ocean and their very good progress in learning about the world of work, prepares them very well for their future lives.

The students value their school. This is evident through the exceptional relationships they have with staff and their good attendance. Parents are happy for their children to attend, knowing that they enjoy their lessons and that the school has high expectations of their progress. One parent commented, 'He loves school and his attitude and behaviour have dramatically improved.'

The headteacher has led the school well in improving its effectiveness during a period of significant change, particularly in ensuring that staff work as a close-knit team and share a common vision for the school. A dedicated management team gives him good support. The school now has efficient systems to evaluate its work and, as a result, development planning has improved to focus clearly on the school's priorities for improvement. The governing body

is supportive and keeps a close eye on the school's performance. Good improvement has occurred since the previous inspection and, as a result of the effective procedures now embedded within the school, it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Most students make excellent progress in their personal development and good progress in their basic literacy and numeracy, their life skills training, and in their work related learning. The staff promote an adult ethos and mature behaviour. Students achieve their potential through a wide range of accredited qualifications which are tailored to their ability and interests. The school has developed good links with the local college whereby students complete their sixth form courses in the college itself. As a result, almost all the students leave for further education courses which build on the qualifications they have already achieved. The provision is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers consistently record the small steps in students' learning to inform students' learning targets and ensure they match individual needs more closely.
- Raise achievement further by working closely with students to set suitably challenging learning targets which give clear guidance about how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The attainment of students with SEBD, when they join the school, is generally below what is typical for their age. Many have large gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The first group of SEBD students, who joined the school a year ago, have achieved well, however, and a few have made outstanding progress. These few have caught up with students in mainstream schools. Students with MLD who have spent more time in the school have also achieved well. The more able students within this group did particularly well in 2008 and achieved GCSE and Entry Level results which were only slightly below those expected of mainstream students. In addition to this, in summer 2008, the higher ability students in Year 11 and the students in post-16 provision achieved success in a range of vocational GCSEs and in National vocational qualifications (NVQ) and The Business & Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Students with additional learning difficulties and those in the care of the local authority achieve equally well and there is no evidence of underachievement. The students make good progress in literacy and numeracy. They make particularly good progress in meeting challenging behavioural targets and this has a strong impact on their academic success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The students' excellent progress in personal development reflects the school's strong and supportive management of behaviour. Students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is outstanding, as demonstrated, for instance, in their thoughtful and sensitive responses to Remembrance Day in the daily 'Circle Time'. Their social development is outstanding and a major strength of the school. The students and staff share open and friendly relationships and the staff provide excellent role models. Students respond very well to the praise and support

they are given for their efforts. As a result, they work harder, behave very well and therefore make good progress.

The school is calm because students feel safe and confident, conduct themselves very sensibly and know what teachers expect from them. When students' behaviour becomes unacceptable it is dealt with calmly and with understanding and support for the student involved. Students were emphatic that bullying is rare and dealt with quickly. Students further develop their understanding of their behaviour and responsibilities to others through very good personal, social and health education programmes. They gain an excellent knowledge of how to stay fit and healthy. Many take advantage of the good opportunities to take part in physical activity during the day and at lunchtimes. Attendance is good because students enjoy all aspects of the school day and are delighted with, and proud of, their progress.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know their students well and this enables them to plan interesting, well paced lessons. Relationships between students and their teachers are very positive and, consequently, students enjoy their lessons and try their best. Students gain confidence to learn new things because they receive a high level of individual tuition from their teacher and the well trained teaching assistants. This enables them to make good progress. The management of behaviour is excellent. Students understand and respond to clear routines. The tracking of students' progress in basic skills has been made much more effective. Teachers are now able to maintain a clear overview of students' achievements. The teachers, however, do not consistently record the small steps in progress which the students make. As a result, they are sometimes less confident in sharpening students' learning targets and involving them in understanding exactly what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Subject leaders monitor schemes of work to ensure they both interest the students and challenge them to learn new things. The school has good provision for teaching the basic skills. The school's curriculum is underpinned, very successfully, by programmes to ensure students understand the value of living healthily and about how to keep themselves and others safe. There are many and varied trips and visits so that students learn new things in different situations. The oldest students have outstanding programmes to teach them about the world of work and which encourage them to gain a range of vocationally based qualifications. The school has good relationships with a similar school to share facilities such as a motor vehicle workshop and a construction area at the other school. The activities successfully motivate almost all the students to continue their education in college or on training places.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a high standard of care for all of its students. Students are proud of their success and they like the way that staff discuss with them how well they are doing in their personal development and behaviour and how they can improve even faster. This has a very positive impact on their achievement. However, teachers do not generally write the students'

learning targets with sufficient precision to enable them to understand how to improve their work. Parents report a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their children's education. Students receive good advice and support as they are about to leave school. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet government requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior teachers have successfully steered the staff team through a substantial period of change. The school has emerged with new systems and procedures which have produced rapid improvements in students' progress and which promise well for future development. These new systems have been effectively linked to procedures for managing the performance of teachers and other staff. This has made a significant contribution to improving the consistency of teaching and, in turn, students' good achievement. The senior staff monitor the students' personal development and behaviour targets exceptionally well and leaders maintain a good overview of students' progress. The school's leaders, for instance, have recently implemented procedures which make it easier for teachers to track the progress which students make. The senior team are aware, however, that teachers do not yet set clear enough targets for the students and their development planning has focused appropriately on this priority for improving their performance.

Morale is high in the school and communication is excellent. Governors effectively monitor each aspect of the school's performance and provide strong support to students and staff.

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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	2
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	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Castlegreen Community School, Sunderland, SR5 3NF

Not long ago I came to your school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classroom, at the breakfast club and in the dining room. Thank you and well done!

I was only with you for two days. That was long enough for me to realise that you go to a good school. I could see that you all really enjoy school and that your behaviour has improved rapidly. These are the main strengths of the school.

You work hard and make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your behaviour and personal development.

You have a good range of activities, including excellent programmes to prepare you for when you go on to further education or training after you leave school.

All the adults at the school have a real interest in your welfare and look after you very well.

Lessons are interesting. This means you enjoy learning and do your best.

Your school is well run.

I think the school could improve further in two ways.

All the small improvements you make in your work should be written down so that your learning targets match your different needs more closely.

Your targets need to be more challenging to help improve your progress and they need to give you a better idea of what you need to do to improve your work.

You can help yourselves too continuing to try as hard as you are doing in lessons. Please thank your parents for the comments they made on the questionnaires which showed how much they like the school and the way it helps you all to learn and behave well.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead inspector