

# Caistor Grammar School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 120702               |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Lincolnshire         |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 327345               |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 24–25 September 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Bob Roberts          |

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

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|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Grammar (selective)  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Foundation   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–18  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School (total)                            | 627  |
| Sixth form                                | 163  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mrs Lindsay Fell   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mr Roger Hale  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 7 December 2005  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Church Street<br>Caistor<br>Lincoln<br>Lincolnshire<br>LN7 6QJ |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01472851250  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01472852248  |

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|--------------------------|----------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Caistor Grammar School is a selective school taking some of the most able students from its immediate community and the wider area. It is smaller than average for a school of this nature. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, students receiving free school meals and students who have additional learning needs are all much lower than the national average. The school has been a specialist sports college since 2004. Having been named as a High Performing Specialist School, Caistor Grammar School has undertaken a second specialism in humanities from April 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Caistor Grammar School is an outstanding school. It is proud of its past but shows no complacency. Standards are exceptionally high and the achievements of its students are outstanding. The school provides a close, friendly environment in which students feel that they are treated and supported as individuals yet at the same time are part of a thriving, purposeful community. There are clear goals: to work hard, to achieve to the best of one's potential, and to contribute to the community of the school. Excellent support and guidance and a rich variety of opportunities help students meet these goals. They do not want to miss school. Their attendance is excellent, as is their behaviour and overall personal development. Much of the teaching they receive is outstanding and students thoroughly enjoy their lessons. Some teaching could be further improved by increased use of modern computer technology. The curriculum is broad and suits students' needs and aspirations very well. They feel safe and secure. They are strongly encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and this has a significant impact on them. Almost all the students thrive in an environment which offers them many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. The school's specialist status as a sports college has been a huge success, leading to improvements in the curriculum, opportunities outside the classroom, and ultimately to steady gains in achievement. Caistor has recently embarked upon its second specialism, in humanities, having been given special dispensation to choose this area based upon its proven track record of success. The leadership and management of the school at all levels are outstanding. The headmaster drives improvement at the same time as carefully maintaining a collaborative ethos. Other school leaders and the governors show a similar commitment and quality, although greater rigour and consistency is required in the strategies employed to monitor the quality of teaching particularly by developing the role of heads of department. The school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

### Effectiveness of the sixth form

#### Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding. Leadership and management in the sixth form are of high quality and students wax lyrical about the unfailing support they receive. As one might expect in a selective school, a high proportion of Year 11 students enter the sixth form each year. They do so, however, having been given ample opportunity, even encouragement, to explore other possible routes following their GCSEs. A small number of students transferring from other secondary schools join them each year. The range of courses available is restricted to advanced level, but the range has broadened since the last inspection and suits their aspirations very well. Virtually all students complete their courses successfully. Their achievements are outstanding. Whilst they relish the extra freedom they are given, such as how to dress for school, they remain very much part of the school community. Indeed, they are encouraged and expected to make a significant contribution by taking leading roles in the life of the school. This they do wholeheartedly. Students take a pride in their status as role models. They engage with younger students and the outside world in a host of different ways, and their own personal development is hugely enhanced as a consequence. The teaching they receive is outstanding, and they are very conscious of the excellent care and support that accompanies it. The information, advice and guidance they receive is excellent, and they feel that their needs as individuals are respected and fostered, whether or not they intend, as the very large majority do, to go on to higher education.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the effective use of modern computer technology across the curriculum further to improve teaching and learning.
- Increase the rigour and consistency of the monitoring of teaching and learning, especially by developing the role of heads of department.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

The attainment of students joining the school in Year 7 is well above average. Students make excellent progress during Years 7 to 9 and levels of attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are exceptionally high. Progress continues at a good pace in Years 10 and 11 and in the GCSE examinations students achieve much higher standards than their prior attainment would predict. All the students in Year 11 during 2007-08 achieved seven or more higher grade passes and nearly all achieved eight. The proportion achieving five higher passes or more, including passes in English and mathematics, was 93%, compared to a national average in 2007 of 46%. Of all the GCSE grades obtained, 59% were A/A\* - an exceptionally high figure. The school has had concerns about some aspects of its results in mathematics, and appropriate action has been taken to raise standards in this subject. Those students staying on into the sixth form make excellent progress. Exam pass rates are very high, and the proportions of A and B grades obtained at AS and A level are 54% and 72%, compared to national average figures in 2007 of 29% and 25% respectively. There is a well-established culture of setting challenging targets, most of which in recent years have been met as the school's results have steadily improved.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Students' excellent behaviour and attitudes continue to make a significant contribution to the high standards and achievement referred to in the last report. One parent summarised it as follows: 'My child comes home full of enthusiasm for what has been happening during the day.' Assemblies make an important contribution to students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities for reflection on social, moral and spiritual issues are effectively coupled with opportunities to develop and demonstrate communication and leadership skills. In the assembly seen during the inspection students greeted new assistants to the modern languages departments using French and German to do so. Students appreciate the politeness and respect they encounter in their day-to-day dealings with staff and with each other. Attendance is excellent, indicating how much students enjoy coming to school. Students say that they feel safe in school, bullying is rare and racial abuse is non-existent. The very wide range of opportunities to take physical exercise, in addition to healthy food available in the school's dining room, heightens students' awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle. Most students take active roles and responsibilities in the life of the school and they initiate improvements to the school. Students make a significant contribution to the wider community. For example, during the inspection students were participating in fund raising for MacMillan Cancer Relief. The work experience programme, opportunities to develop leadership skills, and the acquisition of key literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills contribute significantly to students' excellent future economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was judged good. It is now outstanding. Teachers demonstrate a very high level of subject knowledge. They establish very good relations with students founded on their willingness to support and help them in and outside the classroom. There are high expectations of students, but no sense of these being excessive or oppressive. Planning in most of the lessons seen was good. Teachers make effective use of learning objectives and strive to make the tasks varied and enjoyable. Students were quick to tell the inspectors how much they enjoy their lessons. Good resources are well used. There is little spoon-feeding and lessons build well on previous learning. Although spending on computer technology has been generous, and training has been provided so that expertise certainly exists amongst the teachers, the proportion of lessons seen in which modern technology was effectively used to enhance the learning experience was smaller than might be expected. There are areas of the school's work in which the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is under-developed.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum in the main school and sixth form is outstanding and is unashamedly academic. Within that context, it is very broad and offers a first class experience, meeting the needs of these students extremely well. For example, two foreign languages are available in Years 8-9, as well as the opportunity to study Latin, which is enjoyed by many students. It covers the full range of required subjects as well as additional opportunities, many of which derive from the specialist sports status. Frequent use is made of suspended timetable days, such as the Health and Multicultural days in Year 7 and the Enterprise Day in Year 9. These days are integrated very well into the schemes of work of various subjects. The comprehensive Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme meets requirements and is constantly under revision. This leads on to an excellent General Studies programme in the sixth form. Additional advanced level subjects have been introduced in the sixth form, broadening student choice. An outstanding range of enrichment opportunities complements the curriculum and develops students' confidence and skills. The house system acts as a very effective vehicle for many of these. Notable amongst them are the excellent levels of provision in music and sport, alongside the large number of visits and international trips.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Induction procedures for the newly arrived Year 7 students are highly effective, enabling them to settle quickly. The school looks after every individual very well. Child protection procedures are well understood by staff and appropriate training is provided. The school uses a counselling service that deals with students' personal difficulties. A drop-in health clinic is regularly available. As one parent commented, 'When the children have had difficulties they have been able to speak to the relevant teacher and have their concerns dealt with.' Parents are kept very well informed at every stage of students' education through regular letters and informative reports.

Very good academic guidance is provided through a robust tracking system that gathers information about students' progress at regular intervals. Teachers, and a trained learning mentor, monitor the progress of those who cause concern or need extra support. They intervene with a variety of strategies, which contributes to the outstanding progress that students make overall. Those that are talented in a particular subject have the opportunity to pursue their interest through enhanced opportunities.

The school, together with the local Connexions Partnership and the Education Business Partnership, provide excellent careers education and guidance which results in very well informed option choices at key transition times. A very high proportion of students make the positive choice to join the sixth form because they have been encouraged to compare what is on offer at the school to that offered by other local providers. Almost all those that start sixth form courses complete them. The school includes lessons on matters connected to personal safety. For instance, the misuse of drugs and alcohol is dealt with effectively, in part by using visiting speakers. The school meets all the national requirements for safeguarding students' welfare.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. Progress in addressing the improvement issues from the previous inspection is good. The specialist sports college status has had an extremely beneficial impact in terms of providing resources, improving the quality of teaching and has also led to better outreach and curriculum provision.

The vision and leadership of the headmaster is outstanding. He embodies the school's pride in its heritage and its determination to improve further. He has established an open and collaborative ethos. Leaders and managers demonstrate a commitment to both improving achievement and providing the best possible range of opportunities for personal development. The senior leadership team, well supported by a strong team of heads of department, is bringing about effective improvements in a number of areas including the use of students assessing their own learning. Planning firmly identifies priorities which arise from analysis of data and performance. Strategic planning is excellent, as shown by the successful work towards acquiring the second specialism in humanities and is also effectively focused on improving standards. The monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour and is an area for improvement recognised by the school.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is excellent. There are close links with local primary schools and the school is very much a part of the immediate community. Strong exchange links have been forged with towns in France and Germany and, as part of the Dreams and Teams project run by the Youth Sport Trust and the British Council, a school in Senegal. Fund raising by students will enable a group of their Senegalese peers to travel to Caistor in the near future.

Governance is outstanding. The governing body is well informed and well placed to drive development and challenge performance. Financial planning and monitoring are excellent. The school benefits from being part of a number of networks across the region and the country, playing a leading role in many of them. The school provides excellent 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 |
|---|----------------|-------|

**Overall effectiveness**

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 1   | 1   |
| 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?  | 1   | 1   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 1   | 1   |

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 1 | 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   | 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

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 1 | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 1 | 1 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 1   | 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   | 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 | 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**

26 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Caistor Grammar School, Caistor, LN7 6QJ

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection.

Caistor Grammar School is an outstanding school. It has a fine tradition and high standards, yet strives to improve further. You make excellent progress in your subjects and consequently the standards you reach are exceptionally high. The climate of the school is clearly one in which you feel secure and flourish. Your personal development is excellent. You obviously benefit enormously from the huge volume and range of activities and events going on at the school. Being a Sports College has led to wide-ranging improvements at the school, in terms of facilities, in the range of opportunities and in standards. Now that it has more recently become, in addition, a specialist school for humanities it is also beginning to provide you with further opportunities in this area. Attendance is excellent, your behaviour is exemplary and the vast majority of you make a substantial contribution to the school and to the local community.

The headmaster is leading the school extremely well. He is very well supported by the senior leadership team and the school's heads of department. All the staff show a commitment to your progress and welfare, and you are clearly aware of this. The teaching you receive is outstanding, although it could be developed further by wider and more effective use of modern technology. The way in which the school monitors the quality of teaching needs to be more rigorous and consistent. The overwhelming majority of your parents who responded to the questionnaire used as part of the inspection were very positive in their views of the school.

I wish you all well for the future.

Bob Roberts

Lead inspector