

Castle Hill School

Newsome Road South, Newsome, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD4 6JL

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They quickly become familiar with the routines which cue them into changes in the day and begin to develop the skills they need to learn.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students enjoy a curriculum which is very well matched to their needs to ensure they are as well prepared as possible for their future lives.
- Achievement is outstanding because teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations for each and every pupil and set them challenging targets. These ensure that all pupils make at least good progress and many make outstanding progress in their academic, personal, social and emotional development.
- Staff develop caring and supportive relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils feel very safe in school and behave exceptionally well.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding across the school. Teachers make learning fun. They plan personalised programmes which are delivered by highly skilled teaching assistants. The teachers and teaching assistants work together in highly effective teams to find imaginative ways to help pupils learn.
- Leadership and management, including the governing body, have not been content with the previous outstanding inspection result. Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, they have been highly ambitious for the school and continued to drive improvements in the quality of teaching and pupil achievement.
- The school has yet to determine the impact that becoming a teaching school is likely to have on the achievement of its own pupils and those at partner schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by 14 different teachers. Short parts of other sessions were also observed to obtain a broad view of all that the school provides.
- Three of the observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors had discussions with health professionals, the communication manager, the family liaison officer, members of the governing body, pupils, senior and middle leaders and other members of staff. Telephone conversations were held with a parent and a representative of the local authority.
- Ten parents made their views known through the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team looked at various documents including those relating to pupil progress, school self-evaluation and improvement planning, the school's own parent-questionnaire analysis, curriculum planning and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the responses in the 83 staff questionnaires returned.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pauline Pitman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The greatest proportion of pupils has severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, many with associated sensory impairments. A minority of students also have autism spectrum conditions.
- A majority of pupils have complex communication, medical and health needs; some of these may be life-limiting.
- Pupils may be admitted to the school at other than the usual starting times and particularly to join the sixth form from other schools.
- About a quarter of pupils are known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium which is higher than the national average.
- Almost half of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and for many of these, English is an additional language.
- Castle Hill staff provide outreach support to schools and other settings in the area on request.
- The school holds a number of awards including specialist status in communication and interaction, quality standards in careers and primary science and the Disport PMLD Kite Mark.
- The school has applied to become a teaching school through the National College of School Leadership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Identify in advance the likely benefits to the achievement of pupils at Castle Hill and partner schools of becoming a teaching school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children start school with skills that are well below those typically expected for their age. Pupils make outstanding progress because the senior leadership team makes every effort to ensure the quality of teaching matches the individual learning needs of every single pupil.
- Children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage make an outstanding start, particularly in their communication, personal and social development. An excellent mix of adult-led and children's own independent explorations helps them to develop the skills they need for learning.
- Pupils' highly personalised programmes enable them to achieve exceptionally well in individual, small group and whole-class sessions because it is always very clear what each pupil is expected to learn.
- Different groups of pupils make equally good and outstanding progress. Those pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding enjoy additional sessions of music therapy, communication and intensive one-to-one programmes and these have resulted in more rapid progress.
- Pupils, including those with additional disabilities such as hearing and visual impairments, enjoy the sensory curriculum. They learn to anticipate what comes next in familiar stories and songs. For example, one boy with visual impairment giggled in delight when he felt a toy mouse running up his leg and was able to predict they would sing 'Hickory Dickory Dock'.
- Staff know the pupils exceptionally well and can quickly identify those who are failing to reach their expected goals. Reasons are investigated and support is put into place to get them back on track. Failure to meet their targets is almost always due to medical reasons.
- Pupils use their counting skills very well in lessons throughout the day. For instance, they count each other and visiting friends from another school in a greeting session. Similarly, pupils use their reading skills in all lessons, matching words and sentences and finding them in books and on labels.
- Sixth-form students achieve a broad range of national awards. Students enjoy their graduation ceremony at the end of the year when they can celebrate their outstanding achievements with their friends. They practise vocational skills and all students, including those who are most profoundly disabled, are offered a work experience placement. For some, this is within the school but, for many, work experience is found in the community. As a result, most students move on confidently to continuing education and are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers plan exceptionally well for the individual needs of their pupils. They continuously assess pupils' small steps of progress to build on prior learning and to practise skills to ensure learning is very secure. As a result of the outstanding quality of teaching, pupils' learning and progress are outstanding.
- Highly effective teamwork is a feature of the school. Teaching assistants are extremely skilled in delivering programmes and they are very effective in their teaching. This teamwork means that all pupils are able to learn through tasks and activities which are closely matched to their learning needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants understand very well that pupils need time to process information but they also accelerate learning for those who can work at a quicker pace. For example, in a lesson about the nativity, some young pupils were listening to the noises the animals might have made when they came to the manger while another was turning the pages of a book about the nativity and recognising some of the letter sounds and words.
- Teachers are highly imaginative in finding resources which will capture their pupils' interest and help them to understand difficult ideas. The communication manager runs a library of sensory toys into which teachers can dip. The toys are often operated by switches so that pupils learn

about cause and effect. Being able to obtain a response when a switch is pushed develops an understanding of how to use communication to express simple needs and wishes. In this way, staff help pupils to learn very effectively how to have some control over their own lives.

- Every lesson includes core aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff encourage pupils to enjoy lessons with those from other schools. The staff help them to share greetings in other languages and to learn to count in Polish and Urdu.
- Teaching staff and health professionals work together exceptionally well. Medical and mobility needs are met as integral parts of the lesson to ensure the development of pupils' physical skills and ensure their well-being.
- Communication is developed with great consistency throughout the day through sign, symbols, switches and objects. The communication manager assesses pupils' communication needs and a number of pupils have been provided with technological aids for communication.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Every effort is made to ensure pupils develop self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance. As a result, those pupils who sometimes experience anxieties or difficulties learn to manage their own behaviour more effectively. There have been no exclusions for at least five years.
- No concerns have been expressed about bullying or safety by parents or pupils in the school's own questionnaires or in the responses on Parent View.
- The school strongly promotes positive behaviour and rewards it. Pupils respond to the highly consistent approaches because staff work to agreed behaviour policies and practices. Pupils help each other to manage their behaviour exceptionally well with comments such as, 'We don't do that to our friends', or, 'That isn't kind.'
- Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is high. Almost all absences are for medical reasons.
- Pupils develop independence and learn to take responsibility very well. Students in the sixth form enjoy demonstrating this independence in running their own common room and having a separate dining room. They run mini-enterprise activities, such as making and selling Christmas gifts.
- Teachers, the family liaison officer, keyworkers and other professionals within the school, work closely with pupils' families to help them manage their children safely when they are at home. They share essential information to ensure pupils' well-being.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and her leadership team have been central to the school's success and reputation as an outstanding school within the local authority and in the region. It has continued to grow and improve and has recently bid to become a teaching school. The school has yet to determine the impact this is likely to have on the achievement of its pupils. There are very strong systems and processes in place to gather and analyse evidence in all aspects of the school's work. This is particularly evident in the monitoring of pupil achievement and in the quality of teaching. There is a shared belief by all staff that every pupil should make the best academic progress they can while being cared for exceptionally well.
- The excellent performance of all staff contributes to continuous improvement. Performance management targets for all staff are closely linked to pupil progress and whole-school development. Teachers are expected to provide robust evidence to support decisions about pay progression and governors monitor this closely. Senior leaders are extremely positive about developing their middle leaders both personally and professionally so that they become leaders of learning.

- The local authority recognises Castle Hill as an exceptional school and provides light touch support. It has supported the school in its application to become a teaching school.
 - Links with parents are very strong. Parents are very confident that their children are well cared for. They say that they feel well informed about what their children are doing in school.
 - Excellent partnerships with the health authority and other specialist services ensure very effective support for pupils' medical and health needs. As part of a network of schools in the area, pupils are able to enjoy learning alongside other children in the local community. The school shares its expertise with others through its outreach role, helping to develop skills of staff in other settings.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body offers an excellent level of support and challenge to the school. Members are well informed through the frequent visits they make to monitor aspects of the school's work and by careful questioning of data and other information. Safeguarding and health and safety are monitored rigorously. Governors have chosen to spend pupil premium funding on one-to-one support and activities for eligible pupils and monitor the results of this. Governors are never complacent and hold the school to account very effectively.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134689
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	403660

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Waddington
Headteacher	Gill Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2008
Telephone number	01484 226659
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