

Inspection of a good school: Castle Academy

St George's Street, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN1 2TR

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 January 2022

Outcome

Castle Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Castle Academy feel happy and safe. They enjoy being at school with their friends. They understand that they are expected to work hard and uphold the school's rules. One pupil summed up the views of many when he said, 'Good things happen here. Everyone helps each other.'

Pupils demonstrate the school's values of respect, hope, pride and trust through their actions. They behave in a calm and orderly manner. They believe that the new lunchtime routines and activities have helped to improve behaviour during social times. Pupils said that instances of bullying are rare but when it does happen, they know adults will sort it out. They understand who to talk to about their worries and feel that their concerns are taken seriously. Pupils appreciate having the 'calm corners' to go to when they feel anxious and need support.

Parents and carers value the efforts staff make to develop their children's understanding of right and wrong. They are proud of how the school celebrates pupils' differences and diversity.

Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer. However, they have fewer opportunities for music and cultural learning.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders want to give all pupils the best possible start to their education. They regularly consider how they can improve the curriculum and pastoral support to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive additional help to access the same curriculum as other pupils.

Pupils say that they enjoy learning. One commented how teachers 'help us to be smart,' by helping them to learn new things while checking that they have remembered key knowledge from previous work. The delivery of the curriculum is more successful in some

subjects than in others. In some subjects, such as mathematics, leaders have adapted the curriculum to help teachers revisit and make checks on key knowledge that pupils may have missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not the case in all subjects. Sometimes teaching methods do not help pupils to know more about a particular subject. In some curriculum subjects, leaders have not planned carefully enough the order in which pupils will learn things. Pupils do not consistently use their knowledge to develop a deeper understanding of a subject over time.

The teaching of early reading is a strength of the school. Leaders ensure that all pupils learn to read as quickly as possible. They make sure that pupils receive books that match the sounds they are learning. Leaders ensure that pupils who need extra support with reading receive the right support quickly. Pupils learn to say sounds accurately. Children in Nursery sing songs and rhymes to develop their communication and listening skills. Many pupils in the early years are learning English as an additional language. Leaders ensure that pupils learn to sound out words alongside their development of spoken English. Pupils say that the school library is a special place because they can choose books that will help them to learn new words.

Leaders ensure that families receive the support they need to help their children attend school every day.

Leaders understand that some pupils may not have access to sports opportunities outside of school. They ensure that additional sports activities are provided during the school day so that all pupils have equal access to sports and the outdoors.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They say that leaders always listen to them and provide support. Staff say that workload is managed well.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that developing subject leadership and enhancing the personal development offer may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide frequent information and training for staff on different aspects of safeguarding. Staff know what to do should they have any concerns about pupils. All staff are vigilant and look for signs of pupils who may be at risk of abuse. The inclusion team ensures that pupils and families get the help they need. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that all adults are suitable to work in school.

Pupils have a variety of opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. They learn about permission, consent and respectful relationships, both online and offline.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that all teachers are as effective as they could be in enabling all pupils, including those with SEND, to know and remember more. As a result, pupils do not have enough depth to their understanding and knowledge of a subject over time. Leaders should support and monitor the choices of teaching methods made by staff to deliver the school's curriculum so that pupils are able to develop a deeper understanding of a subject over time.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop interest or talents in creative subjects or extend their understanding of wider cultural opportunities. This means that pupils' cultural development, particularly in music, is not as well established as other aspects of their personal development. Leaders should ensure that pupils are able to broaden their knowledge of the arts and develop their understanding and talents in music.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Castle Academy to be good in November 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140362
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10211612
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	439
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin Crompton
Headteacher	Zoe McIntyre (Executive headteacher) Daniel Lugg (Head of school)
Website	www.castle.emat.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Castle Academy is part of the East Midlands Academy Trust.
- The executive headteacher took up post in September 2021. The role involves leadership of three schools.
- Since the last inspection, a new head of school, an early years leader and a special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) have been appointed. Significant changes and restructuring in governance have also taken place.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector met with school leaders, including the SENDCo, the early years leader, representatives of the local governing body and the trust, curriculum leaders and teachers.

- In order to judge the quality of education, the inspector focused on specific subjects of the school's curriculum. This involved meeting with subject leaders, consideration of leaders' curriculum organisation, visiting lessons, meeting with staff and pupils and sampling pupils' work. The subjects that were selected for this focus were early reading, mathematics and history. Aspects of the school's personal, social, health and economic education programme as well as geography and computing organisation were also sampled.
- Information on attendance, behaviour logs and safeguarding records was analysed. Meetings with leaders to discuss the safeguarding of pupils were also conducted.
- Pupils' behaviour was considered at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime.
- The views of parents, pupils and staff were considered through the Ofsted surveys and by meeting parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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