

Castlebrook High School

Parr Lane, Bury, Lancashire BL9 8LP

Inspection dates

27–28 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Governors have failed to carry out their statutory duties. Safeguarding is not effective and safeguarding arrangements do not meet statutory requirements.
- Governors have been too dependent on what was presented to them and have not been proactive enough in asking challenging questions and insisting on knowing what is their right and duty to know.
- Pupils' learning and progress are slowed as too many are taught by long-term supply teachers or non-subject specialists.
- Low-level disruption happens too often in lessons and this is having a negative impact on pupils' learning.
- The standards achieved in modern foreign languages are too low. This is significant as the large majority of pupils study a modern foreign language through to GCSE.
- While many necessary changes and developments have happened in a short period of time, they have not been fully implemented or embedded. This has led to an inconsistent quality of provision for pupils. Parents feel that the school has not communicated well enough with them.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has, in a very short period of time, brought a new energy and drive to improving the school.
- Leaders and the overwhelming majority of staff are committed to the school and determined to raise standards.
- Teaching is improving and is particularly strong in English and sociology.
- Pupils are given a voice at this school. The work of the student council is contributing to the improvements in teaching, learning and the school environment.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability achieve very well and much better than their peers.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take urgent steps to secure safeguarding policies and procedures by ensuring that:
 - all policies and procedures are up to date and fulfil statutory requirements
 - all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, receive current and appropriate statutory safeguarding training
 - the procedure for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns is understood by all staff, both teaching and non-teaching.

- Raise the quality of teaching and so improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - reducing reliance on temporary staff and non-specialist teachers
 - reviewing the curriculum provision so as to reduce the number of teachers teaching outside their subject specialisms
 - improving behaviour and reducing the frequency of low-level disruption in the classroom.

- Ensure that the improvements required in the school are described clearly in policies and that these are implemented consistently by all staff and are communicated to parents.

- Improve standards in, and the provision for, modern foreign languages.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- The governors have failed in their statutory duties to ensure that safeguarding policies, practices and procedures are effective and meet requirements. Pupils have been left vulnerable due to a lack of adequate and statutory training for all staff, out-of-date policies and unclear procedures. There has been a period of uncertainty in leadership and management and this has hindered improvement since the last inspection.
- Since taking on the role in November 2015, the acting headteacher has brought ambition, drive and vision for where the school needs to be. She is supported by a small but dedicated leadership team. Although working tirelessly to move the school on apace, these leaders have all maintained heavy teaching responsibilities. Consequently, they have not been able to improve the school quickly.
- The overwhelming majority of staff and a large proportion of parents are supportive of the actions the acting headteacher has taken since her appointment. Difficult decisions have had to be made and still need to be made. The acting headteacher has not been afraid to make these decisions in the best interests of the pupils.
- Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to the leadership of teaching and learning. There is still work to do to improve teaching, but leaders know what action needs to be taken.
- Despite all the positive changes that have been made, parents feel that the school could have been more effective in communicating with them about improvements.
- Staff feel that they are held more to account by leaders and feel empowered to take responsibility for raising standards and improving progress.
- The curriculum is broad and pupils are offered a very wide range of subjects. Pupils have not always attained as well as they could, as they have had to study for some GCSE-level subjects in too short a period of time. Leaders have recently reviewed this policy and there is now an appropriate balance to the curriculum. The key stage 3 curriculum gives pupils good opportunities to make informed choices about which subjects to study at key stage 4. This is further enhanced by the effective and timely careers education, information, advice and guidance that pupils receive.
- There has been a considerable investment in developing leaders and in staff's professional development. This is linked to performance management, which has become much more rigorous and linked to improving outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils are prepared well for modern life in Britain. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is promoted effectively across the curriculum and in the extra-curricular activities provided. The pupils are committed to developing their own social awareness and have raised significant amounts of money for local charities. The school is increasingly diverse and pupils welcome the cultural differences that exist.
- The school is part of the Bury Secondary Learning Collaborative and through this partnership has been able to provide leadership development for both senior and middle leaders.
- **The governance of the school**
 - It is only recently that governors have been provided with the information that they need to enable them to provide the strategic direction that the role requires of them.
 - While governors know that pupils are making progress and how the pupil premium funding is spent, they are too vague about the effectiveness of these strategies and the impact they are having.
 - The governors are very committed and resolute in their desire for the school to improve. They want nothing but the best for the pupils, but they have been too slow to secure concrete and robust actions to improve the quality of provision.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Although pupils feel safe, the leaders and governors of the school have not been attentive enough to the statutory safeguarding requirements.
- The school may continue to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Too many pupils are being taught by long-term supply teachers or non-subject specialists. This was evident during the inspection and was a recurring theme in comments from both parents and pupils. It is preventing pupils from learning as well as they should.
- The expectations that teachers have of pupils are not consistently high enough. The standard of presentation of pupils' work and adherence to the school's marking policy are too variable. Pupils commented on how some teachers' effective feedback really helps them to understand how they can improve their work.
- All too often learning is interrupted by low-level disruptive behaviour.
- Pupils' literacy skills are supported well in some subjects, but in others literacy errors are overlooked and the same basic mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar are repeated.
- Teaching is improving. In subjects where teaching is good, teachers plan carefully work that builds on pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, and this enables them to give precise guidance for pupils on how to improve their work. This was seen in a mathematics lesson where pupils were required to explain their ideas, using specific mathematical terminology.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils across the curriculum. They have made a significant contribution to the progress that pupils with special education needs or disability make.
- Weaker learning is characterised by tasks that do not build properly on what pupils already know and understand. Some pupils commented that the work they are set is too easy.
- The school has recently adopted a new homework system and pupils are confident that this is helping them to develop their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- There are weaknesses in the safeguarding policy, procedures and staff training. In spite of this, pupils say that they feel safe at school. They are able to list whom they would turn to if they had a safeguarding concern.
- Pupils are aware of the various types of bullying, including homophobic, racist and cyber-bullying. The pupils comment that when bullying happens, it is dealt with quickly.
- Pupils are well supported by the 'student services' in school. They feel cared for and know whom to go to for advice and support. The newly appointed senior leader of student services has made a notable impact on this aspect of the school's provision, for example, through the range of assemblies that have taken place on the Prevent duty.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong. The pupils respect their teachers and teachers are very quick to ensure that any inappropriate language or stereotyping is not tolerated.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Low-level disruption in lessons is too common. This is a concern for parents and pupils alike. A new policy is due to be implemented which seeks to ensure consistency of expectations and approaches to eradicating this problem.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced since the last inspection, but there has been a high number of permanent exclusions this academic year alone.
- Pupils are generally well behaved during social times. They are well mannered and confident.
- Attendance overall and for all groups is improving modestly. The rate of persistent absenteeism is reducing because staff who are responsible for pupils' attendance are more vigilant in responding to unexplained absence.
- Pupils are more punctual to school and to lessons as a result of a recent drive to reduce lateness.
- The behaviour and attendance of the small number of pupils attending alternative provision are well managed.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015, the proportion of pupils who left with five GCSE qualifications at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, was below the national average.
- The very large majority of pupils study a modern foreign language to GCSE level. The standards achieved by pupils in modern foreign languages are persistently low.
- The current progress of pupils across both key stages and subjects requires improvement because it is too variable and not fast enough. This is most notable in mathematics and modern foreign languages and in subjects taught by long-term supply teachers and non-specialists.
- There is a notable gap between the performance of girls and boys. Boys' achievement is significantly better than that of girls. Current analysis of data and subsequent action to support pupils' learning do not pay sufficient regard to these gaps.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school is closing at a slow pace. In 2015, disadvantaged pupils achieved half a grade lower than their peers in English and two thirds of a grade lower than their peers in mathematics. The current assessment information shows that the gaps are persistent in mathematics, humanities and modern foreign languages.
- While the most-able pupils make the progress that is expected of them, too few excel or make rapid progress. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades in a range of subjects is not high enough.
- The school's policy of pupils completing their option subjects in one year has meant that not enough time was given for pupils to deepen their skills, knowledge and understanding in a number of subjects. The school has since changed this policy, but the legacy of the earlier policy will continue to affect pupils currently in key stage 4.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress. Their achievement is similar to that of their peers nationally. They receive a high standard of effective support across the curriculum and consequently do very well.
- Pupils who entered the school needing to catch up with their peers make good progress. They are supported well and the funded interventions have clearly had an impact.
- The school's assessment information shows that pupils attending alternative provision maintain a similar standard as they would have achieved if they were still at the school, and this requires improvement.
- Almost all pupils leaving the school go on to further education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	105363
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10012157

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	810
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Boucher
Headteacher	Anthony Roberts
Telephone number	0161 796 9820
Website	www.castlebrookhighschool.co.uk
Email address	castlebrook@bury.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 June 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is similar to the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding given to schools for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average. The proportion who have education, health and care plans is twice the national average.
- The school is part of the Bury Secondary Learning Collaborative, which provides training and national qualifications for staff.
- Since November 2015, the deputy headteacher has been appointed as acting headteacher due to the long-term absence of the substantive headteacher. An assistant headteacher has been acting as deputy headteacher since January 2016. A significant amount of teaching is covered by long-term supply teachers.
- The school uses Milltown House as its alternative provider.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school does not meet the requirements for information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons across all subjects and across all year groups. Four lessons were observed with the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. Pupils' work was reviewed during these observed lessons.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from both key stages about their experience of school and their learning.
- Inspectors considered 48 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 59 responses from staff to Ofsted's survey. There were two pupil responses to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire. Inspectors also considered the school's own surveys of parents' and pupils' opinions.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and five other governors, and three representatives from the local authority. Meetings were also held with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation, including: the school's own self-evaluation and development plan; minutes of governing body meetings; anonymised performance management documents; school support reviews from the local authority; school policies and procedures; and the school's own assessment information. A range of documentation regarding safeguarding was scrutinised, including behaviour and attendance records and bullying logs.

Inspection team

Jonathan Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Pritiben Patel	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Smart	Ofsted Inspector

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