

# Castle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104269
<b>Local Authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	308556
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jeffery Plumb

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	93
6th form	21
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andy Roberts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christine Fraser
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 December 2003
<b>School address</b>	Odell Road Leamore Walsall WS3 2ED
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 710129
<b>Fax number</b>	01922 710835

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<b>Age group</b>	4-19
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Castle Business and Enterprise College provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. There is an increase in the number of pupils with more complex needs since the last inspection. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are a few ethnic minority pupils. Very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above that found typically in a school of this type. Attainment on entry is well below the national average, reflecting the complexity of pupils' needs. A few pupils are in public care. The local authority's strategy for provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties is under review, and the headteacher has only been in post for a few months. The school gained specialist schools status in Business and Enterprise in September 2007. Important refurbishment is underway to improve the accommodation for business, food technology and resistant materials. There are funded plans to improve the sixth form accommodation and the outside play area for children in the Foundation Stage. The college has gained the following awards: Healthy Schools Award, Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark, Active Mark Eco Green Flag Award, Creative Partnerships Innovation Centre Award, Every Child Matters Gold Award, Leading Parent Partnership Award, Information Communication Technology Award and the Becta Information Communication Technology Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The headteacher and dedicated staff team do not see pupils' disabilities as a barrier to their learning. They work ceaselessly to ensure that all pupils make rapid gains in their learning. Consequently, pupils' achievement is outstanding. Curriculum planning enables each pupil to be successful, and as independent in life as is possible. Parents are thrilled with what this school achieves for their children. They say, 'Our children are happy, enjoy school and they make excellent progress.' Inspection evidence confirms achievement in English, mathematics and science is outstanding. Teaching is outstanding, relevant and lively. It contributes to pupils' very significant gains in independent learning skills. Pupils make rapid gains in working out problems for themselves, and so become confident and independent young people. Their work-related skills are particularly well developed. By Key Stage 4, pupils access learning at college through a range of relevant vocational courses alongside their mainstream peers. Inclusion is outstanding.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. It lies at the heart of this very successful school. By Key Stage 4, pupils can read a bus timetable and travel independently and safely to college. They are skilful at handling money and shop confidently and independently. They are particularly adept at solving practical problems. Pupils say, 'This school expands our horizons and we enjoy the gains we make in our independence'. Innovative curriculum experiences promote pupils health, fitness and safety exceptionally well. The pupils' vibrant voice is listened to in a host of creative ways. The school acts positively on what pupils say to make meaningful improvements in their educational experience. Enterprise projects make a very valuable contribution to pupils' acquisition of business skills, but the system for tracking their progress in these skills is not sufficiently refined. Information to improve planning to raise achievement in enterprise skills is not robust enough. Nonetheless, by the end of Key Stage 4, pupils receive a wide range of accreditation and are well-developed and confident young people, well equipped for their next step in education. Behaviour is good. Overall, pupils with challenging behaviours related to their difficulties show remarkable improvements. Counselling and support for these pupils is outstanding and exclusions are falling dramatically year on year. However, pupils in Key Stage 3 with emotional and behavioural difficulties experience a disproportionate number of fixed-term exclusions compared with pupils with other needs, and there has not been a detailed analysis of the triggers which lead to their challenging behaviours.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and integral to the success of this school. The learning mentors go well beyond the call of duty to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Parents say, 'This is a very caring school.' Tracking of pupils' progress in academic subjects over time is meticulous, and they are set challenging targets regularly and frequently to raise their achievement. Pupils are actively involved in setting their own targets. Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. Governance is very effective and provides a very good balance of support and challenge to the headteacher. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, as is the capacity for further improvement. The school provides outstanding value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Students make outstanding progress so that by the time the vast majority leave college, they are exceptionally well equipped to enter further education colleges, enabling them to reach their full potential. The innovative curriculum is outstanding and ensures that students extend the important lifeskills and relevant work-related skills they build up successfully earlier in college. The outstanding opportunities started in Key Stage 4 to work alongside mainstream pupils at college continue. Students in the sixth form are mature and take responsibility for caring for and supporting younger pupils. Their accommodation remains somewhat squashed, as at the time of the last inspection, but excellent use of off-site accommodation compensates for this deficiency. There is a funded plan to improve accommodation, and work starts on a refurbishment imminently. Outstanding teaching and learning ensures students are equipped with excellent work-related skills, and that they gain in confidence to live independently. They become assertive about their rights, whilst being made very aware of their responsibilities. An external careers advisor provides excellent support in enabling sixth form students to access the very best further education courses when they leave college.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Curriculum planning and the quality of teaching and learning are outstanding. The leadership and management are outstanding. There is a strong focus on learning through play, and assessment of progress is outstanding.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the system for tracking pupils' progress in enterprise skills over time, and use data from the system more effectively to inform planning to raise pupil achievement.
- Analyse what triggers inappropriate behavioural incidents for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and use this data to plan to improve their behaviour.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Achievement is outstanding. Pupils make outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science. Throughout Key Stage 1, pupils make rapid gains in speaking and listening, because of the high-quality speech therapy support they receive. With support, they develop pre-reading skills. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils build on their foundation in speaking and listening but, in addition, assisted by computers, develop outstanding writing skills. By Key Stage 4, the vast majority of pupils have the literacy skills necessary to work alongside their mainstream peers at college. They travel independently to college, cope well with reading bus timetables and access relevant vocational courses with the same confidence as mainstream pupils. Progress in mathematics is outstanding across all key stages. Confidence in recognising numbers and counting is built up in Key Stage 1. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils count in lots. By Key Stage 4, pupils have gained very important practical mathematical skills. They handle money with confidence as they pay their bus fare, shop independently and tell the time with accuracy. They have important measuring and weighing skills, which they apply accurately in the catering,

construction and business courses they follow. Their problem-solving and critical thinking skills are very good. Opportunities to be involved in interesting enterprise projects ensure that pupils develop important work-related skills. In science, pupils by Key Stage 4 ask deep questions and shape scientific hypotheses. Accreditation opportunities are very good, relevant and expanding. Year 10 pupils make outstanding progress in food technology and in information and communication technology GCSE courses.

Pupils with additional needs make outstanding progress. Teachers carefully position pupils with visual impairment and modify resources to meet their needs. Consequently, these pupils make the same rapid gains in learning as their peers. Skilful management of pupils with autism enables them to improve their communication and behaviour. Gifted pupils experience an inclusion opportunity in mainstream schools and excel with their talents, for example in sports studies.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils enjoy school. Overwhelmingly, they have positive attitudes to learning. They greatly appreciate that, as they say, 'Our teachers let us figure things out for ourselves and so we become independent'. Pupils express their views through a vibrant school council, which has led to significant improvements to their quality of education. The school successfully promotes pupils' interest in healthy eating. An all-inclusive and exciting physical education programme contributes exceptionally well to pupils' physical fitness. Enterprise projects enable pupils to gain confidence in handling money. Independent travel training supports pupils in getting to college under their own steam, and ensures that they develop the very important skills required to keep safe. Behaviour is good. As pupils with autism develop communication skills, they become less frustrated and begin to co-operate with their peers. Exclusions have fallen significantly since the last inspection. However, pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties experience more fixed-term exclusions than other learning difficulty sub-groups. Attendance is very good. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding and lies at the heart of this successful school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Teachers' enthusiasm and commitment to remove barriers to learning for pupils with disabilities give their teaching a sparkle. The hands-on experiences they plan so exceptionally well to meet the needs of the pupils motivate pupils to learn. Relationships are excellent and pupils are confident that their teachers will give them sufficient space to solve problems in lessons for themselves, but are always ready to step in to give them support. Teaching is characterised by a brisk pace, and pupils remain on task with their learning in lessons. Consequently, they make outstanding progress. Teaching assistants are very skilful in ensuring that all pupils are included in the activities in lessons and in managing their behaviour. Teachers use computers effectively to support pupils' learning. Expectations are consistently high and so pupils often surprise themselves by the rapid gains they make in their learning. Pupils sum this up aptly, saying, 'We would not be where we are today if it was not for this school.' Teachers skilfully use assessments

of what pupils know and can do to plan their next steps in learning in lessons. Outstanding planning based on individual needs ensures that all pupils move forward quickly with their learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Innovative, creative and relevant, the curriculum effectively meets the needs of pupils. Each pupil has an individual tailor-made learning programme matched to needs. Planning is fit for purpose. For example, the curriculum for pupils with autism is suitably structured and these pupils have specific resources to develop their communication skills. Therapy is integral to the curriculum, thus reducing the amount of time therapists remove pupils from class for support with their speech and behavioural difficulties. Suitably modified, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies develop pupils' literacy and practical numeracy skills. Thus, they are prepared to live as independent young people. Vocational courses at Key Stage 4 are outstanding and prepare pupils well for more advanced college courses later in life, and for the world of work. Work experience is varied and benefits pupils very significantly, developing their work-related skills. Enterprise projects provide fun and challenge for the pupils. Accreditation opportunities are a particularly strong feature. Inclusion experiences benefit a very significant proportion of pupils and accelerate their learning. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is outstanding. The range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum is outstanding. Exciting outdoor activities and residential trips make a very valuable contribution to pupils' social skills development, whilst promoting joy and enrichment in learning. The school's 'Sunshine Band' is outstanding. Parents say, 'Our children play in the Sunshine Band, which helps expand their horizons'.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The learning mentors/family workers very successfully remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils and their families. Parents say, 'They are worth their weight in gold'. Health professionals work in a very effective partnership with a dedicated education staff to support pupils with disabilities in overcoming difficulties, and so accelerate their learning. The speech and language therapy support helps pupils to communicate independent choices, and as pupils say, to believe in themselves and what they can do. Transition arrangements are excellent. Risk assessments, including of pupil behaviour, are detailed and thorough. Robust child-protection procedures are in place and meet government regulations. The system for tracking pupils' academic progress is outstanding. The school uses it very effectively to set pupils targets to raise their achievement. However, the system for tracking pupils' gains in enterprise skills is not sufficiently refined to show their progress over time in this very important aspect of their development.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The headteacher provides a clearly articulated vision. Shared by all staff, it focuses on removing barriers to learning for pupils with disabilities, and developing their independent lifeskills and work-related skills. The dedicated senior management team are clear about their roles and make a valuable contribution to developing the curriculum and raising pupil achievement. Subject leadership is very effective. Self-evaluation is outstanding. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses, and plans exceptionally well to address its few weaknesses. The monitoring of teaching and learning is very effective in bringing about improvements in teaching and raising pupil achievement. Whole-school strategic planning and the senior management structure are under review, but existing planning successfully leads to improvements in practice and to raising standards. Governance is very effective and makes a valuable contribution to the success of this outstanding school.



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## 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?	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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	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

<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.

## Annex A

**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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Business and Enterprise College, Walsall WS3 2ED

The inspectors greatly enjoyed visiting your school and seeing all of the interesting and exciting work you do. It was a privilege and joy to talk with so many of you and your teachers, teaching assistants and other staff.

We think that your school is an outstanding school. You achieve outstandingly well in English, mathematics and science, because of the excellent teaching you receive. The school cares for you so well and you make rapid gains in confidence and independence. Your relevant curriculum prepares you exceptionally well for college and the world of work. Your headteacher and her dedicated staff team ensure that your school is led and managed exceptionally well.

We have asked your headteacher to improve just a couple of things so that your school becomes even better. We would like her to find out why a few of you have difficulties in behaving in certain situations, and to plan to improve your behaviour. This is important because the behaviour of most of you is good. We would like her to gather even better information than at present about your development of enterprise skills and use that information to plan to raise your achievement in these important skills.

We thank you for all of your hard work. We are delighted that you enjoy school so very much and ask you to support your headteacher, staff and governors to make your school an even better school than it already is.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb Lead inspector