

The Castle School

Love Lane, Newbury. RG14 2JG

Inspection dates 7–8 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school because:

- Much of the teaching over time has been consistently outstanding and has improved since the previous inspection.
- The pupils make outstanding progress particularly in communication, reading and number work.
- Younger children in the Nursery and Reception classes are very well prepared for school life through excellent teaching. Children make outstanding progress in developing their academic and personal skills.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Pupils make exceptional progress both academically and in preparing for further education at the local college.
- Teachers know their pupils very well. They carefully check their progress and adapt activities with great skill so that activities are set at the right level.
- Adults are well trained in the use of additional communication aids. They make excellent use of these to help remove barriers to learning experienced by pupils with complex needs.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils respond well to the interesting and varied activities they experience. They enjoy school and their attendance is above average
- The extremely high quality of personal care each pupil receives results in them feeling safe and secure.
- The headteacher has led the development of an outstanding leadership team. Together, they regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They also inspire teachers and other adults to strive to help pupils achieve their best.
- Governors are well informed about all aspects of the school's work. As a result, they bring a high level of challenge and support to the school's leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and parts of lessons, all of which were joint observations with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with pupils, teachers, senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, another governor and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the school's surveys of parents' opinions about the school. There were insufficient entries on Parent View (on-line questionnaire), to be considered. The inspection team also took account of the 61 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including self-evaluation and development planning. Inspectors checked records of pupils' progress and behaviour since the previous inspection as well as monitoring reports on the quality of teaching and the range of subjects. Pupils' attendance records were analysed as well as all aspects of procedures relating to the safeguarding of the children.

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thoroughgood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs that include severe and profound learning difficulties and those with a diagnosis of autism. All the pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. About two thirds of pupils are boys.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional government funding, known as the pupil premium is above average. This is funding intended to support eligible pupils who are entitled to free school meals or are who looked after by the local authority. All Year 7 pupils are eligible for additional government 'Catch-up' funding to improve their literacy and numeracy.
- The school does not enter pupils early for public examinations.
- The school is on three sites. The main school provides for pupils aged 5–16. There is a separate nursery, where pupils attend part time and students in the sixth form are taught in specialist facilities at Newbury College

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers and other staff record the small steps in progress made by pupils during lessons, in a consistent format so that:
 - records can be more effectively shared with other teachers as pupils move through the school
 - senior leaders can access and make use of information on the pupils' progress, more easily.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Senior leaders demonstrate an uncompromising drive to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They are very well led by the headteacher whose ambition to ensure all pupils fulfil their potential is effectively supported by the governing body.
- The newly appointed middle leaders for English and mathematics have already beginning to have a positive impact on improving teaching and pupils' progress. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form is outstanding. Staff morale is high. Many staff commented how proud they felt to be part of 'such a wonderful school'. There is a culture of high expectations of both pupils and staff to which all members of the school's community aspire.
- A key feature of the school's success lies in the continual rigorous and comprehensive checking of every aspect of its work. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Leaders are very well supported by the local authority and monitored rigorously by governors, which demonstrates strong capacity to improve further.
- The school maintains detailed overall records of pupils' achievement and well-being. The checking of each pupil's progress is a strength of the school. As a result, support is quickly put in place, should pupils not perform as well as they should. However, not all teachers record pupils' progress in the same format. This means that sharing the information between classes take more time. Additional government funding, has been used well to ensure disadvantaged pupils can achieve as well as their peers, especially in communication and literacy.
- Pupils with complex learning difficulties and those with a diagnosis of autism receive skilled teaching and as a result, achieve very well. The equal opportunities of every pupil are fully promoted. There is no discrimination and this helps to ensure that the school is a cohesive community.
- The quality of teaching is checked regularly. There are very effective strategies in setting targets for teachers clearly linked to pupils' progress. There encourage and challenge teachers' improvement and reward good performance. The training and development of all staff has made a significant impact on raising teaching standards.
- The school offers a wide range of subjects. Children in the Nursery and Reception Year make excellent progress in all areas of learning and in their personal development. Pupils higher up the school experience activities that are set at the right level, particularly in the areas of communication, literacy and mathematics. Older pupils have the opportunity to follow a wide range of academic and work related courses leading to qualifications at GCSE, or Entry Level. The courses are maintained and built on into the sixth form in close liaison with Newbury College
- Reading, for instance, has been a priority in recent years and has been extremely successful in raising standards throughout the school. Reading, writing and number are practised in every subject.
- The additional government sports funding has been well used to promote the well-being of primary aged pupils through staff training in dance and gymnastics and through the purchase of equipment. Also, older pupils studying sports leadership qualifications write about aspects of fitness and sporting activity.
- Pupils experience a range of cultural experiences designed to challenge them to achieve as highly as they can. Pupils, for instance, are able to study for nationally recognised qualifications in playing musical instruments, such as the tenor horn. A group of pupils performed with professionals in a concert at the Royal Albert Hall. The curriculum has a positive impact on the pupils' academic achievement. Their behaviour and well-being contributes very well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Parents are overwhelming very satisfied with the school's work. They value the communication with school and are confident that their children are taught well and effectively cared for.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure and meet current statutory requirements
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very well informed and have a good understanding of information on pupils' progress, how it compares with similar schools, and the management of teachers' performance. They effectively oversee financial control including the salary arrangements for teaching. They maintain close supervision of additional government funding and regularly check the impact on the pupils' progress and well-being. They often visit the school, informally observing teaching and speaking with staff. There are regular health and safety checks. Consequently, governors are able to challenge school leaders very effectively. They take part in regular training, such as in aspects of child protection and safeguarding and in the use of performance information on pupils' progress. They ensure that current statutory requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils love their school. They have very positive attitudes to all their learning and enjoy taking part in all their activities. Their attendance is well above national expectations. As a result, they make excellent progress.
- The school is a calm and harmonious place of learning. The pupils' behaviour in the dining room and outside is outstanding. Pupils are supportive of each other, they share play equipment without fuss and they are very responsive to adults looking after them. Over time, they gain a good understanding of how their behaviour affects others and gradually learn to take responsibility for their own conduct.
- Bullying is almost unknown. The pupils try very hard to get along with everyone. One pupil said that, 'The bully would be very unpopular'. The school's records confirm that there are very few incidents.
- Pupils gain a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including internet safety. There have been no incidents of racist or homophobic language.
- The staff manage behaviour extremely well. There are exemplary policies and written procedures which are consistently followed as a result of on-going training for all staff. When on occasion, a pupil becomes upset or confused and behaviour becomes challenging, incidents are dealt with professionally and positively. Pupils quickly calm down and continue their learning.
- The school's comprehensive records show a significant decrease in incidents since the previous inspection. Any incidents are carefully recorded and specific action taken. Tailored very precisely for the individual pupil and based on the detailed knowledge adults have of their pupils' personal development.
- All adults are very well trained in providing for the needs of the pupils. Adults communicate extremely effectively with the pupils on a level and in a way best suited to the individual pupil. They make sure that pupils understand clearly what to do and what to expect in each situation. This has a significant positive impact in helping to reduce the pupils' anxiety and ensuring both lessons and less formal situations are calm and purposeful.
- Parents, staff and pupils are very positive about the management of behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Statutory safeguarding requirements are met and scrupulously followed. The protection of all the pupils is the major priority of the school staff. The pupils are very well supervised at all times. Adults manage the pupils' care effectively, for instance in moving and hoisting pupils with severe disabilities. Risk assessments for all aspects of the pupils' care are detailed and thorough and very well monitored.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching over time is outstanding. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection because of regular and rigorous monitoring by senior staff, accompanied by extensive and supportive training. As a result, pupils' progress is outstanding.
- Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils' achievement. Pupils' progress in each session is scrupulously checked and recorded. This leads to targets which are reviewed on a daily basis and which effectively challenge the pupils to make the best progress that they can. Each teacher maintains excellent records but there is no uniform system for this procedure across the school. This can on occasion make the transfer of records between teachers more difficult and can be a hindrance to senior staff as they check on the pupils' progress.
- Teachers are very successful in providing interesting activities in English and mathematics, which are set at the right level, which build effectively on what they have already learned.
- Adults are skilled in responding to the needs of all the pupils. They use structured language well and precisely with individual pupils to promote their vocabulary and understanding. Additional communication aids such as symbols and pictures are used effectively to help pupils understand their learning and what is expected of them. Pupils with additional complex physical and learning disabilities are carefully helped to make sense of their world through very well designed sensory experiences.
- The most able pupils are set more challenging activities tailored to their ability and interests, which helps them to make excellent progress.
- There are very effective teams of adults. Support staff have been very well trained and provide high quality teaching, under the teacher's direction, for individual pupils. Adults use their very good understanding of their pupils to adapt work throughout the lesson in order to accelerate their progress. Pupils consistently are made aware of when they have done well and how they can make their

work better.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils, including the smaller proportion of girls, make sustained progress throughout the school, including in the Nursery, Reception year and the sixth form. Their attainment remains low but from their different starting points almost every pupil makes good or better progress when compared with similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils' progress in communication and in reading is exceptional. Their progress in writing and mathematics, while still outstanding is slightly below this. As a result of skilled teaching in communication, including reading, pupils achieve very well. The school's records show impressive gains in reading ability over a sustained period.
- Pupils with complex needs achieve very well as a result of excellent teaching, using a range of additional communication aids. Communication, at a variety of levels, is taught very successfully in the Nursery and Reception Year and this prepares pupils well to make further progress. As pupils move through the school they make outstanding progress in identifying shapes then letters, and using the sounds letters make. The most able pupils successfully go on to read increasingly complex texts and reading books. This prepares them very well for success in gaining accreditation in Year 11 and through the sixth form.
- Pupils who are eligible for additional government funding, including pupil premium and 'catch-up' funding, make equally good progress. The school's detailed tracking records clearly show that there are no differences in the attainment of these pupils in English or mathematics, to the rest of the school and they achieve more highly than pupils nationally with similar learning disabilities.
- More able pupils are successfully challenged to achieve as highly as they can, with some taking GCSEs.
- Older pupils without exception gain a range of qualifications suitable to their abilities. On occasion, pupils are successful in GCSE mathematics. The most able pupils achieve a variety of Entry Level qualifications in English and mathematics, science and other more work related subjects.
- Students in sixth form continue these courses at higher levels, in partnership with Newbury College. The students are well prepared for the transition to further college education. For instance, in recent years, all students have gone on to further education or training. A few of the most able students have been successfully encouraged and supported into full-time work placements and later employment.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Most children enter the provision with low levels of attainment. From these starting points, they make excellent progress in all areas of their learning. Teachers and other adults carefully analyse their needs and abilities and provide personalised learning. This enables them to make outstanding progress and prepares them very well for their life in school.
- The children thrive in a very well resourced and stimulating environment, shared with other mainstream children. They are highly motivated, demonstrate good levels of curiosity and concentration and are responsive to adults and each other. As a result, children make excellent progress in their personal skills and in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching by all adults is outstanding. A variety of communication strategies, are used to ensure clear and consistent modelling of behaviour. Adults encourage children to take part in a rich variety of 'free' and more formal learning activities.
- Adults very effectively check on the childrens' learning and progress. The childrens' 'learning journals' contain regular, detailed observations of their progress, accompanied by photographic records. There are excellent partnerships with parents. They greatly appreciate the way they are welcomed into the nursery and most are successfully involved in checking the progress of their child.
- The childrens' behaviour is outstanding. They quickly learn to take turns and to interact socially. For example during 'free flow activities', they integrate well with mainstream children. They eat and drink their snacks sensibly and demonstrate 'good manners', because of the high expectations of adults.
- The children are kept very safe and secure. There are robust policies and procedures to guarantee their well being.
- The provision is managed outstandingly well. There are very high expectations of the performance of staff. The high levels of expertise are well supported by regular further training.

The sixth form provision**is outstanding**

- Students achieve highly because of excellent teaching and courses which are very well adapted to the students' abilities and interests. The curriculum ensures students gain basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics across a range of academic, work related and leisure activities. Almost all students successfully gain qualifications in basic skills and in subjects such as catering, agriculture, animal care and sports leadership.
- Courses are very well adapted to the abilities of the students. Students with profound and complex needs make excellent progress in communication, in learning to make choices and in personal and social development. The most able students are given outstanding encouragement and guidance in choosing the most appropriate programmes of study to meet their future needs and ambitions. The school ensures that parents are fully involved in making these choices.
- There are excellent links with local business. Students have valuable opportunities to take part in a range of work related learning and work experience. As a result, some students have successfully made the transition to full-time employment.
- Teaching is outstanding. Adults regard the students as partners in their learning and fully involve them in self assessment of their work and in discussing their progress. Students are confident in knowing how well they are doing and how to improve their work. Teachers have very high expectations of their students' work and conduct. Students respond very well to the challenges they are given and this has a significant impact on their outstanding progress.
- There are generally seamless links into college life. When students are judged to be ready for full-time college attendance, they move onto related courses. All the students complete their courses. All students over the past few years have successfully gained further qualifications at either Newbury or other local colleges.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Leaders ensure that students follow a curriculum which is effectively tailored to their individual needs. They rigorously check on teaching standards and make sure that students receive very high quality careers advice and guidance. Leaders effectively ensure the students' safety.

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	110182
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	447948

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	149
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Connolly
Headteacher	Jon Hewitt
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 July 2012
Telephone number	01635 42976
Fax number	01635 51725
Email address	headteacher@castle.w-berks.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

