



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR CASTLEDON SCHOOL

<b>Name of School:</b>	Castledon School
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Simon Holliday
<b>Hub:</b>	London Special and AP Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	5-19 Years
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Castledon School Academy Trust

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	09/02/2022
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	This the school's first review
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	Not applicable
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	11/12/2018



## 1. Context and character of the school

Castledon School is a special school for pupils aged 5-19. The school was originally set up as a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. There is now a significant and increasing number of pupils with more complex and challenging learning difficulties.

The school campus is spread across a range of sites. The Sixth Form is in a college building that opened in 2017 separate from the main school. There is an off-site classroom for alternative outdoor learning at the Wat Tyler Country Park and a community cafe that 'pops-up' at different venues.

Pupils join the school at different points in their education. There are larger admission points in primary classes, year 7 and 12. Castledon School has 225 pupils and there are 98 members of staff. All of the pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

The school is a highly specialised environment and a county autism hub. The school provides an autism outreach hub to support the wider education community.

The school is organised through key stage departments with three curricula - lifeskills, vocational and academic. Pupils are grouped in bespoke ways within these curricula. This can be by ability, age and/or cognitive stage.

### 2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The headteacher and leadership team can clearly evidence the widening complexity of the cohort. Leaders understand that the school needs to evolve as the cohort changes. They are passionate and invested in ensuring that every pupil joining the school gets a fantastic education no matter how traumatic and challenging their life in education has been to this point. Leaders are restless for consistent improvements in standards. At this school, second best is not good enough.
- To achieve this the headteacher has engineered an extended leadership team. The scope and depth of the team adds the voice of leading professionals into the leadership dialogue. This team now includes the original senior leaders and phase leads; subject leads; school funded therapeutic leads for Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and Occupational Therapy (OT); and the school's specialist destinations advisor.
- The school has been recognised for its exceptional work on 'addressing the language gap' in the book 'Addressing Educational Disadvantage in Schools and Colleges' published in 2021. This publication has been endorsed by David Laws,

Schools Minister 2012-2015, in that it 'provides carefully considered, practical and impactful advice for schools'. For example, teachers have linked language comprehension and social isolation with pupils' anxiety, self-confidence and self-esteem. Powerful and caring relationships reduce the pupils' background stress so they can make the most of their time at school.

- The leaders at Castledon School are able to explain in detail how progress is being made across the school. To achieve this, leaders have developed a wide range of indicators to show this development. For example, in classrooms this includes work produced by pupils in an empowering 'hot write' in Key Stage 2 English and number bonds to ten work in Key Stage 1. It could also include the impact of the SALT on developing teaching staff's deeper understanding of receptive and expressive language for each pupil in each class.
- Leaders at this school have a vision that all members of staff are invested in and have the opportunity for development. This reflects the diversity of the workforce, their starting points and their potential. The headteacher is clear on the school's commitment to continuing professional development. The talent within the staffing is recognised and invested in. For example, leaders are constantly looking to develop their own qualified teachers from their pool of support staff. Castledon is a school where the leadership team is justifiably proud of the positive impact it is having on creating a progressive and positive professional teaching culture.
- Leaders have made a substantial commitment to support their families through the Family Inclusion Team (FIT) and a team of therapists. The team includes SALT, OT, the assistant head, deputy head and family support workers. These colleagues hold coffee mornings and workshops to support parents and carers. They help with writing visual timetables and e-safety in the home. They support families with bereavement and divorce, and include within the support, home visits with the school nursing team.

## **2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if...**

... leaders linked their discussions on the success pupils made at the school with evidence showing this progress. This needs to be achieved across a wider range of the school's work from the self-evaluation form (SEF) to individual lesson visits.

## **3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well**

- Pupils at the school are consistently engaged and active within their learning even for the most challenged. Deep, caring relationships are constantly evident between pupils and staff.
- All of the pupils are assessed on entry into the school in order to establish a baseline using a range of assessments. The information from these assessments

provides teaching colleagues with a rich range of targets to be written into each pupil's bespoke Personal Learning Intentions (PLI) linking to each pupil's individual EHCP.

- Classes at the school are very well organised. In a school where often there may be four adults working with the pupils, teachers' planning is precise and clear. Every member of staff understands their role and the expectation of what they have to achieve to support the pupils to succeed. This is then reflected through the pride and resilience the pupils show in achieving. For example, in one English lesson pupils wrote stories relating to their interests in an agreed format. Pupils then read these back to each other and adults and had real pride in the work produced. By writing within their special interests the pupils were energised and excited for their learning.
- The SALT and teachers are working together to fully support pupils' learning. Teachers have training to understand the levels of expressive and receptive communication needed in each class. By increasing the ease with which pupils can communicate in class, teachers have created a safe and caring environment where pupils are able to open up and engage in their learning.
- Assessment for and of learning links into pupil progress meetings. This ensures that each pupil is on the appropriate curricula pathway. On the rare occasion that this is not the case, leaders are unafraid to carefully move pupils to the right curriculum, at any point, in order that every pupil is able to flourish.
- Last year the school had 24 leavers and all students moved into education, employment or training (EET). The employability coach and leaders for the sixth form track pupils' success at the next stage of their EET for three years. This then links back to the careers' information, advice and guidance that the pupils and their families receive from age 14 to plan for their life beyond school.
- Castledon School ensures that every pupil in Key Stages 4 and 5 has a bespoke plan to enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes when they leave the school. This includes the exceptional 'into employment route' with local employers using 'into employment' apprenticeships.
- Relationships, health and sex education is a real strength of the school. Leaders have undertaken a wide-ranging review with the school community. The school has recognised the contextual issues that pupils have growing up in modern Britain. Staff have been empowered to feedback the areas of the subject content for improvement. For example, in Key Stages 4 and 5 improved content has been sought to inform pupils about LGBTQ+ lifestyles and, in Key Stage 3, more work has been added to support the pupils' understanding of consent.
- The quality of teaching and learning across the provision that has been engineered by the leadership team is reflected in the calm and inspiring environment the pupils learn in. As one pupil put it, 'The teachers here are very helpful. I want to be a teacher.'

### **3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if...**

...leaders had a greater focus on developing the depth of Early Years Foundation Stage specialist staff to support this expanding aspect of the school's work.

#### **4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - What went well**

- Leaders have a range of alternative provisions they use for bespoke packages for pupils at the school. These can be within the school's alternative provision including the outdoor learning classroom at the Wat Tyler Country Park or Poppies Cafe. It also includes some fabulous local providers including Rally Sports providing a level one qualification 'ABC in Motor mechanics' or Lauriston Farm providing an offer 'into employment' supported internships.
- During a visit to Wat Tyler Country Park, employability classroom teachers and pupils work carefully together to practise bushcraft skills. The specialist teacher and team work exceptionally well to allow pupils with greater challenges to achieve within a forest environment. Pupil 'Pen Portraits' share the aspirations of the pupils, so staff are quickly able to build a rapport with pupils around their interests.
- The pupils join the school either at the start of a key stage or mid-year as needed. The biggest pupil intake is in Year 7. Often pupils have had a difficult time in education prior to coming to the school and the careful structuring of support in lessons supports their behaviour exceptionally well.
- Pupils who have found previous school placements challenging learn how to manage their emotions and anxiety to enable them to build trusting and caring relationships with the staff and each other. As one pupil said, 'The best thing about this school is playing with my friends'. These powerful relationships are clear to see on an interactive playground that has been designed to encourage play and facilitate shared joy.
- Where there is the chance for a more creative curriculum, outcomes are exceptional. For example, in a free-flowing music lesson pupils entered the lesson with winter visuals, Vivaldi's 'Winter' playing loudly and a sensory activity to replicate snow. After this initial introduction, the pupils were then supported to take an active role despite the wide range of challenges to their learning. This then linked into a Valentine's song with dance that then covered the concepts of consent within relationships.
- Pupils at this exceptional school are taught about their rights under the Equalities Act 2010. They learn how to share the reasonable adjustments they need with their future employers, educators and/or trainers. As one leader pointed out, 'It's an ethos thing. It's about expectations and consistency'.

#### **4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and**

**pupils with additional needs - Even better if...**

...No EBI's identified.

**5. Area of Excellence**

The school has not submitted an Area of Excellence.

**6. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?**

For Castledon colleagues to have the opportunity to complete their Challenge Partners training and for middle leaders to start to take an active role in reviews of other special schools.

For Castledon School leaders to visit other specialist EYFS provisions.

To build a collegiate group of special school leaders that share data and evidence in relation to specific pupil groups.

**Following the QA Review**

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, the main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities and CP will collate and



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**analyse report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.**

**Schools can access the School Support Directory; the Challenge Partners online tool that enables schools to connect with other schools in your hub and across the national network of schools.**

**Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.**

**Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website.**