



## 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>	Special. 5-19 Years
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Castledon School Single Academy Trust

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	06/02/2023
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of last QA Review:</b>	09/02/2022
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	11/12/2018



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#### Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

**Leadership at all levels** Leading

**Quality of provision and outcomes** Leading

#### AND

**Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs**

**Area of excellence** Improving Employability and Careers for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

**Previously accredited valid areas of excellence** None

**Overall peer evaluation estimate** Leading

***The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.***

## **1. Context and character of the school**

Castledon School has continued on its drive for improvement since the last review. The 224 pupils across the age range of 5-19 benefit from this. In the last year, the school has gained accreditation for well-being, parental engagement, and a business education award for environmental practice. Castledon has Essex's 'SEND Teacher of the Year' on the school staff.

The school is organised along a primary, secondary and college model.

Pupils joining the school have become more complex. This has led to further adaptations for the curriculum offered across the key stages. In Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 there are life skills, vocational and academic curriculum pathways.

The primary phase now has a clear pathway for the most complex pupils, who have the lowest attainment, based on an engagement model.

Pupils are not static within each pathway. Consequently, each pupil has a bespoke package across the pathways that meet their specific learning needs, and individual aspirational outcomes.

Castledon has continued to build on its excellent community links. Within these, even more students in Key Stage 5 are moving on into high quality internships, apprenticeships and vocational work placements.

Castledon is the host of the South Essex autism outreach for mainstream schools.

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

- The leadership team at Castledon is passionate about what pupils can achieve. Leaders have the very highest aspirations for them. This is a leadership team that wants every pupil leaving the school to flourish, able to take an active role in employment, education or training.
- The leadership model at the school continues to evolve so that the talent within the team can be utilised. The extended leadership team now includes pathway leads for different key stages, subject leads for English and mathematics, two leaders who cover relationships and sexual health education (RSHE) and personal, health, social education (PHSE). There is also a careers and employability lead (who oversees 'job coaches').
- The senior leadership team are keen on increasing external scrutiny. This includes annual Challenge Partner reviews, peer reviews by other special school heads, and reports from the school's improvement partner.

- Middle leaders are exposed to every aspect of external validation. They are prepared to be challenged over the quality of their leadership decisions. These leaders are adept at finding the evidence to show the impact of their work.
- The RSHE and PHSE leads are currently taking part in a NSPCC pilot. This involves working with special school leaders on how best to deliver the NSPCC's important messaging to pupils with SEND.
- Leaders know an enormous amount about how to support pupils with autism and associated needs. They have researched, as a team, how to improve the school's internal learning environment. In the newer buildings, the classrooms and corridors have a 'low arousal' approach with neutral colours. Displays in classrooms are limited to those that are necessary. These include those that support pupils to regulate feelings and emotions, and those that remind pupils of agreed classroom rules. 'Working Walls' on either side of the interactive white board only have information that is pertinent to the lesson's aims. The newest classes have calm breakout spaces attached to the classrooms. Discussions are ongoing to renovate older buildings to this same standard.
- A strength of the school is the high quality of trustees working alongside the headteacher in this standalone academy. For example, in a sector that can have higher use of restrictive physical interventions, one of the trustees is a specialist in this area. Trustees work closely with leaders to refine and improve staff understanding so interventions are far reduced, as is pupils' anxiety that leads to dysregulation.

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

...leaders took time to recognise how the curriculum offer across the school leads to such great pupil outcomes. This could then be highlighted across a wider range of the school's information base, from the school website to the self-evaluation form, and on into individual leadership dialogues.

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

- The three distinct pathways for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5, lifeskills, vocational and the academic, are fully embedded. Staff have a deep understanding of the pedagogy used for each of these pathways.
- In the primary department, further work has been undertaken to differentiate the environment and pedagogy, to suit pupil needs best. There is an early years foundation stage class that builds into an engagement model for Key Stages 1 and 2. There is also a discrete vertical class for pupils with autistic spectrum

conditions, and a life skills class.

- RSHE and PSHE are taught as separate subjects at Castledon. Each class has an allocated lesson each week across the school. These lessons reflect the vulnerability of the school's cohort in relation to online grooming or coercion. To match this, staff have undertaken an analysis of their own internal data and have held 'drop down' days to look at online safety when using online platforms, such as WhatsApp or Instagram. Parents and carers also have access to the NSPCC's online parent support package.
- The offsite learning offer, organised and provided by Castledon School, has continued to grow. This includes an outdoor class provided by the school, at Wat Tyler Country Park, and Poppies Cafe.
- The work experience offer now includes a range of businesses on the same site at Barleylands, including Tiptree Cafe, Miso Games and The Hair Salon. Pupils also benefit from work experience with Greater Anglia Railways, and The Print Shop, in Wickford.
- The outcomes for pupils leaving Castledon at the end of Key Stage 4, or having attended Castledon College, are exemplary. Of the cohort leaving in the last academic year, six students went into supported internships, two went into supported apprenticeships, eleven went into college or further education courses, and three went into vocational courses. One pupil became NEET, and in this unusual case the school has a clear chronology explaining why this occurred.
- Castledon tracks the progress of its ex-students wherever it can. From this tracking data, 80% of pupils are still in their placements after three years.
- Careers information, advice and guidance for the pupils is second to none. The careers and employability lead has undertaken research on local jobs available around Basildon and Wickford. This knowledge has then been 'back chained' to ensure that pupils have the right skills needed for local employment. For example, leaders at Castledon are aware that there is a shortage currently of lifeguards and sports leaders for the local leisure centres. They have researched the skills needed for apprenticeships into these roles, and now offer these two qualification routes in the college.
- On the apprenticeship day at Castledon, employers and industry leaders are on-site to share pathways into employment. The school's alumni 'superstars' share their experience of their work lives. One ex-pupil is a 'sports activator', undertaking a post Level 3 apprenticeship delivering physical education in schools. Another is undertaking a land management qualification where his local authority colleagues have had training from the school on the best ways to work with people with autism. As one of them explained, 'It's great to be here, because the school has always been my home from home.'

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

...specialist teachers had more input with non-specialist teachers' planning, to help them improve their targeting of the lessons to pupils' needs, increase outcomes and further reduce teacher workload.

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

- Half of the pupils attending Castledon are in receipt of pupil premium funding. The school's work addressing disadvantaged pupils was recognised in the book 'Addressing Educational Disadvantage in Schools and Colleges' published in 2021. This work has been recognised across the community, and by a previous Minister for Education, as a 'best practice approach'.
- All pupils have an education health and care plan (EHCP). Within these EHCPs section F sets targets that each pupil needs to meet at the end of their key stage. Staff skilfully adapt these into 'personalised learning intentions'. Across the curriculum, pupils and staff reflect where pupils have achieved these, and pupils' next steps.
- Pupils continue to improve their functional skills in English and mathematics throughout the school. These key skills are transferable for life in the wider community, like reading emails, signage or understanding bus timetables. While not all pupils become fluent readers, or fluent mathematicians, great care is taken to ensure college students have the transferable skills to support them to achieve. For example, pupils accessing local bus routes to work and college placements, learn to use their phones to help them keep track of the time, and to track buses to their stops using the local bus company app.
- Pupils and students working at the Wat Tyler site and at Poppies Cafe engage in an exemplary way. This is due to staff enthusiasm and sharp focus on what needs to be achieved for these young people to flourish in wider society. For example, at Poppies Cafe pupils transfer skills developed in school, becoming engaged and attentive cafe staff. In this environment pupils take risks and make mistakes to build their confidence for jobs after their time at Castledon.

#### **4.2 Quality of Provision and Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...**

None identified.

## **5. Area of Excellence**

Improving Employability and Careers for Pupils with SEND.

### **Accredited**

#### **5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?**

At Castledon, leaders have demonstrated a highly effective provision that is successful in developing pathways into work for their young people.

Leaders track all pupils' progress, wherever they can, beyond pupils post 16 and post 19 leaving points. From recent data, more than 80% of ex-pupils are still in employment, education or training after three years. From this evidence, these alumni continue to be successful in their placements, as well as socially and emotionally, in the long term.

Castledon staff have demonstrated consistently that their approach to teaching "readiness for lifelong learning" increases pupils' resilience, self-belief, and ability to achieve in wider society.

Castledon also has a lead for career and lead for employability. This different approach provides the gravitas needed to achieve such great outcomes.

#### **5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?**

Leaders measure the impact of the 'Achieve Careers Curriculum' through a number of key performance indicators. Primarily it measures impact through destination data and the tracking of pupils' progress once they leave the school or college.

This data has shown consistently better pupil outcomes than the national average. For example, in 'Employment Rates for People with Disabilities 2021-22' the employment rate for people with a learning disability was 4.8% (Evidence reference: Base-uk.org, 2018). Previously, for Castledon ex-pupils, the three year figures tell a very different story of the 93 leavers:

- 45 are in college placements (48%)

- 6 are in full time employment (9.3%)
- 13 are still in supported internships (14%)
- 4 are still in supported apprenticeships (6%)

At Castledon, 97.5% of pupils leave, post-16 and post-19, with a planned onward destination for the first year. Impact is also judged through Gatsby Benchmarks and Compass Plus, which are submitted termly to the Careers and Enterprise Company.

Pupil voice is a key part of measuring impact, and this is recorded through the future skills questionnaire. These are completed twice annually to measure the impact of their skills curriculum (in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5).

Performance in the development of skills is benchmarked through the 'Skills Builder Partnership' where records are held in relation to cohort progression.

Through the 'Achieve' qualification, (developed by the Princes Trust) attainment is also used to measure pupils' achievements in the workplace.

The voice of teachers, outside organisations, governors, leadership at all levels, and parent voice is also regularly sought. This has been further strengthened by the introduction of a new data and information package which enables Castledon to capture these voices in improved data snapshots from the full range of stakeholders.

### **5.3 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?**

Name: Michelle Belsey

Title: Careers and Employability Lead

Email: mbelsey@castledon.org

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

For Castledon to link with other Challenge Partner special schools to share best practice in distinct areas relating to curriculum, pedagogy and educational environments.





## **QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW**

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**This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.**

**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.**