

Inspection of Castlebar School

Hathaway Gardens, Ealing, London W13 0DH

Inspection dates:	21 and 22 January 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

This exceptional school is highly valued by pupils and their parents and carers. Staff and leaders ensure consistently high-quality provision for pupils. They are deeply proud of their school and pupils' achievements.

All staff work together to make sure that pupils are safe and that they feel safe at school. Relationships between staff and pupils, and staff communication with pupils, are excellent. At rare moments when pupils become upset or angry, skilled support to help pupils feel calm is provided. For instance, therapeutic strategies are used effectively.

Through the curriculum and staff interactions across the school day, pupils develop their communication and independence. Pupils learn to do daily tasks like putting on and removing their coats themselves. They also learn to communicate politely and show regard for others.

Ambitious and determined school leaders and governors have driven continuous improvement. As a result, pupils gain secure knowledge across a well-designed curriculum. Pupils receive the right support, at the right time, to learn to read. Pupils' enjoyment of their learning is clear to see.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is very well designed and delivered. The school has identified the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn, and how this builds over time. This means that pupils develop strong knowledge and achieve well. Teachers make careful checks of what pupils have understood. They use this information well to inform the next stages of learning. For example, the school uses precise strategies to help pupils learn to count by specifically practising assigning each number to an object. This helps pupils count correctly and not to skip an item. Pupils build well on what they already know and can do. The school uses pupils' personalised targets to effectively inform teaching.

Staff have the knowledge they need to teach phonics extremely well. They gather and use precise information about how well individual pupils are learning to read. This means that pupils receive the right help to improve their reading. For instance, staff may model a mouth shape to help a pupil form the right letter sound. Pupils practise reading through books matched to their level of knowledge. Staff are quick to identify pupils that need additional help with reading, or those that require different help to meet their learning needs. As a result, these pupils' reading improves. Due to the school's superb support, pupils find joy in reading and achieve well.

Staff are expert in developing pupils' communication. For instance, staff use photographs, symbols, gestures, sign, and/or language to support their communication with pupils. Pupils are skilfully supported by staff to use similar aids to express themselves. This range of communication support is well matched to individual pupils' needs. Communication support, strong staff-pupil relationships and clear routines help pupils to be consistently calm and happy. Well-implemented guidance from specialists, such as speech and

language and occupational therapists, also helps create readiness to learn. Staff and leaders work closely with parents to improve attendance, for instance helping pupils overcome anxiety about attending school.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is exceptional. Pupils learn how to interact politely and respectfully with others. They learn cooperative play. Pupils gain appropriate knowledge of diversity through accessing stories from a range of cultures. The curriculum is enriched by theatrical and musical performances and activities, including dry slope skiing and horse riding. For older pupils, a range of overnight stays are offered. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Leaders ensure the voice of pupils, staff and parents are considered when implementing change. Governors make effective checks to ensure that the actions of leaders are having the impact they intend. Teachers are positive about the support that leaders provide with workload. The school's work is deeply valued by families. One parent commented, 'Castlebar School has taught me not to underestimate my son.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	101966
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	10345761
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mary Delger
Headteacher	Paul Adair
Website	www.castlebar.ealing.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 November 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for primary-aged pupils, many of whom have severe learning difficulties and autism. Some have moderate learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy and assistant headteachers and other leaders.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and other governors.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and early reading, mathematics, personal and social development, and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They considered the responses to Ofsted's confidential survey for staff.

Inspection team

Barney Geen, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jeremy Loukes	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Neary	Ofsted Inspector
Jacquie Fairhurst	Ofsted Inspector

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