



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Castle House School

June 2022

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School's Details

School	Castle House School			
DfE number	894/6002			
Early Years registration number	EY2654095			
Registered charity number	510515			
Address	Castle House School Chetwynd End Newport Shropshire TF10 7JE			
Telephone number	01952 567600			
Email address	admin@castlehouseschool.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Ian Sterling			
Chair of governors	Mr Kevin Paton-Feaver			
Age range	0 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	73			
	EYFS	39	Preparatory	34
Inspection dates	7 to 10 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Castle House School is a co-educational, day preparatory school founded in 1944. The school is owned and run by Castle House School Trust Limited, a charitable trust with a governing body.
- 1.2 The school is comprised of three sections: A nursery unit for children aged under two; the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children aged from three to five years; and a Preparatory School for those in Years 1 to 6.
- 1.3 The nursery unit was opened in September 2021 and is awaiting an OFSTED inspection.
- 1.4 The current chair of governors was appointed in January 2022.
- 1.5 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.6 The school aspires to provide an innovative and extensive curriculum that fosters a love of learning; to inspire children to be adventurous and committed; to help children develop a sense of their own unique self; to develop collaboration in order to become happy and active citizens; to develop strong and positive relationships with parents, and the wider community in order to establish a strong family atmosphere, a 'home away from home'.

About the pupils

- 1.7 Most pupils come from the Newport area. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified ten pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), eight of whom receive additional support, due to a range of needs. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school modifies the curriculum for the most able pupils in its population.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils display excellent attitudes to their studies.
- Pupils exhibit great confidence when speaking in discussions and in public.
- Pupils develop good higher-order thinking skills.
- Pupils' handwriting has not developed in line with expectations for their age and ability.
- Pupils enjoy some success in external competitions but opportunities for this are limited.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.

- Pupils show a very high capacity for collaborative work and there are excellent relationships across age groups.
- Pupils adhere well to the school motto of 'kindness counts', using this to develop their excellent moral understanding.
- Pupils' understanding of how to stay safe is excellent.
- Pupils contribute strongly to the school community but this level is not matched by their participation to local groups or charities.

Recommendations

3.3 The school should make the following improvements:

- Enable pupils to improve the speed, neatness and fluency of their handwriting.
- Enable pupils to enhance and widen their achievement by greater involvement in external competitions.
- Ensure that pupils' proven capacity for supporting each other in school, is utilised in greater involvement in the local community.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Pupils display excellent attitudes to their studies. They work well in groups and successfully collaborate to solve problems in their work. Inspectors noted a high level of engagement with pupils eager to do their best. Older pupils understand the benefits of challenging themselves by selecting the appropriate

level of work to extend their learning, as explained in discussions about tasks in mathematics. In their lesson, Year 6 pupils undertook investigative problem-solving activities and worked with good levels of independence and initiative. They also showed very good application and significant resilience in keeping going even when they found things difficult. Children in EYFS display excellent attitudes. For example, partaking sensibly and enthusiastically as part of the wider group whilst sharing a rendition of the 'Hokey-Cokey'. In interviews, pupils were eager to communicate their belief that they make good progress because the teachers make learning fun. All parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that the teaching enabled their children to make good progress.

- 3.6 Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across their wide range of subjects are good. Pupils' knowledge and understanding develop well, facilitated by the strong subject knowledge of their teachers and work that both challenges and supports their learning. Additionally, pupils achieve well in their extensive range of co-curricular clubs and activities covering sport, music, aesthetic and intellectual pursuits. Pupils are effective in applying their knowledge across the curriculum. For example, Year 6 pupils showed very good technical knowledge when discussing the attributes of Brunel's suspension bridge, identifying pylons, deck and anchors and their function in keeping the bridge stable. Year 1 pupils demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the water cycle in their geography work. This included definitions of technical terms such as precipitation and evaporation. Displays around school show a range of high quality creative endeavours by the pupils such as artworks and a feature on poetry in the style of the Jabberwocky where pupils had designed their own phrases and language. Pupils' basic skills benefit from the 'core' sessions provided each morning which is an initiative introduced by the school's leadership since the recent Covid lockdowns. The school meets its aim to provide an innovative and extensive curriculum that fosters a love of learning and provides a sense of fulfilment and joy.
- 3.7 Pupils' achievements as measured by examination results and the change in their performance over time are good. Data provided by the school using externally standardised tests show that attainment is in line with that of pupils taking the same tests nationally. Pupils with SEND and those who are more able achieve in line with their potential and make good progress. Pupils with EAL make rapid progress. In the EYFS attainment is above that of the national average for maintained schools. An analysis of leavers shows that most or all pupils gain entry to their first choice of secondary school including a range of selective independent schools and maintained grammar schools.
- 3.8 Pupils' communication skills are good. Many show high levels of confidence in speaking. For example, older pupils used characterisation and clear enunciation when rehearsing for their end of year production. Other pupils confidently contributed to school assemblies by eloquently reading a story to the school. In a Year 3 geography lesson, pupils spoke well to their partners showing a strong ability to summarise key facts. They also listened politely to each other, demonstrating good active listening skills. Children in the EYFS also show good listening skills and readily respond to instructions from their teachers or suggestions from their peers. Older pupils practise these skills in their LAMDA work, by undertaking regular class presentations and speaking in assemblies or in church.
- 3.9 Pupils' writing shows good progress since the start of the year and reaches an appropriate standard, often reflecting good vocabulary choices. In their English lesson, Year 6 pupils showed a suitable grasp of punctuation including the use of speech marks, question marks and exclamation marks as they successfully added dialogue for their story characters. In Year 1, more able pupils showed a very good ability to write extended sentences, for example regarding their visit to Stafford castle in their history work. From Year 3 most pupils exhibit an emerging cursive handwriting style though for many pupils this is not well developed which can inhibit the speed, fluency and neatness of their output.
- 3.10 Pupils show good attainment in a range of mathematics topics including calculation, measurements and fractions. Throughout the age range, more able pupils frequently show attainment above the expectations for their age. This is encouraged by the provision of tiered levels of work which offer appropriate support for those with SEND and allow the more able to tackle more sophisticated problems. Pupils successfully apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, Year 1

pupils were able to interpret pictograms to analyse the week's weather from information on their weather record activity sheets. Others eagerly set problem solving challenges for their peers in another class, designing questions about the quantities of food needed on a picnic, using the information from the menu of a well-known bakery chain.

- 3.11 Pupils exhibit good skills and development in their competence using information and communications technology (ICT) and apply these skills successfully across the curriculum. Older pupils showed well-developed skills whilst using search engines to research aspects of the Queen's jubilee in order to confidently write newspaper articles using a word processor. Pupils with additional needs make good progress in the development of their skills and one group were observed independently using the dictation features in their word processor to help them with their writing. In other classes pupils were observed competently using the collaborative features in their software to create a group leaflet about hill-walking equipment. Pupils' skills develop due to the careful planning by the staff which provides opportunities to integrate ICT to aid learning.
- 3.12 The pupils develop good study skills. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, agreed that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life. Pupils in Year 3 drew upon a range of sources including the Internet and each other in order to successfully research mountain ranges. Pupils in Year 1 used good skills of prediction and hypothesis in science experiments to test different materials to see if they were waterproof. They readily concluded that those materials where water would not pass through would make better materials for an umbrella. Older pupils solving puzzles as part of their 11 plus preparation showed excellent examples of higher-order thinking asking questions such as, 'what if?', 'does that mean?' and, 'it can't be that answer because...' In several lessons observed, the good questioning skills of teachers provided an appropriate structure for pupils to develop higher-order thinking.
- 3.13 Pupils' achievements beyond the formal curriculum are satisfactory. In drama and the performing arts, success and achievement is attained through LAMDA, with many pupils in recent years receiving merits or distinctions. Inspectors observed high-quality individual performances in rehearsals for the school's forthcoming production. In music, pupils sit various music grade examinations with some achieving appropriate levels. Pupils are provided with a limited range of sporting opportunities to enrich their experiences. Teams have previously competed in ISA swimming galas. Pupils have been entered into various mathematics and science challenges at senior schools and a few other local competitions. Pupil achievements in school are celebrated in their Learning Passport which provides a record of achievement in a range of academic work and house points.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.15 Many aspects of pupils' social development are excellent. They work highly effectively in groups to achieve a range of goals. These include contributing to house activity days where older pupils are very supportive of younger team members. Outstanding collaboration is seen in the ability of pupils to work across age groups and this is a key feature in the life of the school. Older pupils listen to younger pupils read, they play together at break times and work together in clubs and events. During Cheerleading Club, the oldest pupils led the group, choreographing routines and teaching the younger pupils in readiness to perform to parents. In their questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents believed that the school helps their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills. This could be seen in a construction kit club where a mixed-age group collaborated to work on interlocking structures. They found bricks for each other and encouraged each other. Such social development begins with the youngest children. For example, mature collaborative skills were exhibited in EYFS when children helped each other to prepare for painting activities. Independently, pupils selected an apron and then assisted their peer to ensure it was worn and fastened correctly. The school meets its

ambition for its pupils to develop skills of compassion, communication and collaboration in order to become happy and active citizens.

- 3.16 Pupils' moral understanding and behaviour are excellent. In their pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of pupils stated that they are expected to behave well and that the school sorts out poor behaviour. This was confirmed in observations by inspectors who noted that behaviour in lessons is appropriate for learning and that pupils move around the school in an orderly manner. On the rare occasions when misbehaviour may occur, pupils report that staff deal with issues quickly and effectively, often by asking a pupil to reflect upon why their behaviour was inappropriate. Pupils' understanding is bolstered by formal study of aspects of the legal system in their PSHE work and by external visitors such as the local police.
- 3.17 Pupils' self-understanding is strong. They can reflect effectively on their personal strengths and weaknesses and how this might affect their learning. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson several pupils recognised that they found problem solving activities easier using concrete resources. Others spoke earnestly about what they are looking forward to and what they are worried about in their move to secondary school. Following a Year 3 geography lesson, pupils were asked to complete a self-reflection sheet including what they knew well, what they were not sure about and a question they would still like answered. They did this in a mature fashion showing excellent levels of reflection. Those with SEND were well supported to articulate their feelings about their progress. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Pupils often display high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Individuals in the older years undertook solos and duets during rehearsals for the end of year production, confidently performing in front of their peers. The school meets its ambition to help children develop a sense of identity and understanding of their own unique self.
- 3.18 Pupils show a good capacity to make decisions in their learning. Children within the EYFS respond well to opportunities to make choices. For example, selecting tasks centred around symmetry and butterflies; choosing whether to paint, design a butterfly with shapes or investigate symmetry from photographs. As they progress through school, pupils practise evaluating the facts involved in making a good decision by working through scenarios, such as how to respond to a stranger, in their PSHE lessons. In mathematics, older pupils effectively select which level of work they wish to tackle depending upon their expertise and confidence. In other lessons they demonstrate good decision making in completing a task within given parameters such as choosing a story plot or deciding how to fulfil a design brief in design and technology. They are eager to take advantages of opportunities to contribute to whole school decision making through their contribution to the school council such as deciding which charities to support. Pupils learn how they can make a difference to their school community as they respond to surveys, for example on the school menu or on bullying policy.
- 3.19 Pupils show a well-developed capacity for appreciating the non-material aspects of life. During assembly, pupils respectfully recited the Lord's Prayer and exhibited moments of peaceful reflection. Pupils appreciate the natural world. Following a visit to a local zoo Year 1 pupils wrote about their sense of awe for the birds of prey and their delight in being able to stroke and feed some of the creatures. Year 3 pupils were eager to share their sense of pride in recent successes in rock climbing. Year 6 pupils revealed a growing aesthetic appreciation in the artwork they produced and displayed around school. In their work, older pupils responded well on a philosophical level, describing their values of global citizenship and the role they can play in developing these aspects in the future.
- 3.20 Pupils' contribution to the school is excellent. Pupils take their responsibilities in fulfilling a wide range of roles very seriously. These include heads of school and house captains along with school councillors. Wider involvement for pupils is facilitated by a range of responsibilities for aspects of school life such as care of the library and ICT monitors. A selection of specially trained pupils make a particularly responsible contribution to the safety and harmony of the school community in their role as peer mentors. Pupils are proud of their charity endeavours and eagerly discussed the sums raised for national and local charities and particularly for a local cancer charity which was close to their hearts.

However, beyond their charity work pupils do not instinctively seek to make a difference in the local community.

- 3.21 Pupils show a well-developed respect for diversity and cultural understanding. In interview pupils were very aware of the features that make humans the same and different and were adamant that we are all the same on the inside. They show a keen sense of fairness and argue that any comments to discriminate against any other pupil because of a protected characteristic would be wrong. In discussion, pupils repeatedly referred to the school ethos that 'kindness counts'. This sentiment was echoed by parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire where the overwhelming majority of respondents believed that the school treats children fairly, regardless of their sex, faith, race or needs and the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. The school meets its aim to encourage warm, loving and Christian values centred on the core Castle House belief that 'Kindness Counts'. Pupils show a strong awareness of other faiths through their discussions with friends of other backgrounds and the formal curriculum. This includes the study of the key teachings of a range of faiths including key festivals such as Diwali or Hanukkah. Pupils also demonstrate a solid understanding of British cultural events. For example, in their work, Year 1 pupils studied St David's Day and Christian festivals such as Easter, along with Remembrance Day and why people wear poppies.
- 3.22 Pupils demonstrate a robust knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy. The notion of being safe begins in EYFS. For example, the children showed a well-developed understanding of the need to be careful when making the transition from inside to outside, instinctively holding hands with a peer or adult. A scrutiny of work from slightly older pupils showed a very good understanding of safety on bonfire night, being able to identify the importance of not throwing fireworks and standing well away from fire. Pupils were able to persuasively articulate the value of exercise and balanced diet, along with the importance of sleep and the potential dangers of electronic devices. Pupils make appropriate choices of food at lunchtimes, responding well to suggestions by the catering team. Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of how to stay safe online as a result of the strong emphasis in this area from the school, including the use of visiting speakers. Pupils exhibit an excellent understanding of who they can turn to if they have an emotional issue, and they appreciate the provision by the school of specialist staff and other pupils trained as peer mentors for this purpose.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Robert Lilley	Reporting inspector
Mrs Julia Langford	Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Marcus Cook	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)