

Inspection of a good school: Castle Donington College

Mount Pleasant, Castle Donington, Derby, Derbyshire DE74 2LN

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 June 2024

Outcome

Castle Donington College continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Lisa Walton. This school is part of the East Midlands Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Robert McDonough, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Hindmarsh.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite, friendly and outgoing. Most pupils are happy at school. There is a keen sense of community. This helps pupils feel safe and secure. They know that there are always adults around to help them if they need support.

All pupils follow an ambitious curriculum. The school has high expectations of every pupil's achievement and behaviour. The motto, 'Work hard. Take responsibility. Be kind', sums up the school's philosophy well. Most pupils meet the school's high expectations. They apply themselves well in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is typically good. They understand what bullying is and how to report it. Many pupils say that the school deals with bullying quickly and effectively.

The school offers good opportunities for pupils' personal development. Many pupils take part in extra-curricular activities, such as clubs and trips. There is a well-established Duke of Edinburgh's Award group. The curriculum has high-quality opportunities that develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. There is an active school council, which helps to develop pupils' leadership qualities. Pupils follow an effective careers programme. This includes work experience for every pupil in Year 10. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education and employment.

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

The school has a broad, ambitious curriculum. This develops pupils' understanding of their subjects carefully over time. In history, for example, pupils learn about Medieval Africa first, so that they have a solid background for their later work on the slave trade. However, the proportion of pupils taking the English Baccaulaureate (EBacc) suite of

qualifications is lower than the government's ambition. To address this, the school is increasing the number of pupils taking a modern foreign language at GCSE, so that the EBacc is at the heart of the curriculum.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. Most teachers use effective methods and resources so that pupils learn the curriculum as the school intends. However, in a small number of instances, the checks made on pupils' understanding are not as effective as they could be. This makes it difficult for teachers to know how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum and to identify any knowledge gaps that pupils may have.

The school has recently had specialist support to help improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This work has ensured that most staff now have a secure understanding of how to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of these pupils. For example, the school has recently reviewed the information that staff receive about pupils with SEND to help them to know how best to support these pupils in their learning. Staff use these documents well which, in turn, is helping pupils with SEND to be successful. However, some parents and carers of pupils with SEND do not think that their children get as much help as they need. Some parents are concerned that they do not receive sufficient information about the support that their children receive.

The school promotes a love of reading. Every day, key stage 3 pupils 'drop everything and read' to encourage pupils to read for pleasure. The school provides a dedicated programme to help pupils who struggle to read gain the skills they need. This ensures that they become fluent, confident readers.

Most pupils behave well. The school's behaviour policy is clear about how staff should respond to poor behaviour. However, not all staff consistently follow the policy. This leads to a minority of pupils being disruptive in a small number of lessons.

Leaders closely monitor attendance. They work hard to provide support to those pupils who need it to help them attend regularly.

The school supports pupils' personal development well, both through the curriculum and the wider life of the school. Pupils learn about different beliefs and different cultures, for example. They learn about important topics such as online safety, through the dedicated personal, social and health education programme they study.

Staff appreciate the school's support for their well-being. The trust has acted effectively to support the school through a difficult period of leadership change. This support included bringing in expert staff to help the school. After a turbulent time, the school has rapidly improved. The school has tried to keep parents informed about the changes it is making. However, not all parents receive the information they need to understand the reasons for the school's actions and the positive impact these actions are having.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some parents raise concerns that the school does not communicate with them well enough, including about the support that their children are receiving. As a result, parents do not fully understand the changes and improvements the school is making, including to the provision for pupils with SEND. The school needs to make sure that there is an effective strategy in place for communicating with parents, so that parents fully understand the reasons behind any changes that take place, and the positive impact such changes are having on the learning and welfare of pupils, including those with SEND.
- The school has not ensured that its approach to assessment is used consistently across the school. This hampers how well pupils' misconceptions and knowledge gaps are identified and addressed. The school should ensure that all teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to apply the school's assessment approach, so that they can check pupils' understanding and plan the next steps in pupils' learning.
- The school has made changes to its approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Behaviour at the school has improved considerably, as a result. However, the school has not ensured that its new behaviour policy is applied consistently. This means that, in some lessons, the boundaries for pupils' behaviour are not clearly set. This can lead to low-level disruption which, in turn, can prevent pupils from learning. The school needs to ensure that all staff understand how to apply the school's behaviour policy, so that pupils understand the school's rules, and disruption to learning does not happen.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2019.

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	138820
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10339675
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	651
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Hindmarsh
CEO of the trust	Robert McDonough
Principal	Lisa Walton
Website	www.cdcollege.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the East Midlands Education Trust. It joined the trust in January 2022.
- The current principal took up their post in April 2024.
- The school currently uses the services of three registered and four unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in history, geography, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, talked to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at breaktimes. They spoke to pupils during the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors met with the principal and several senior leaders.
- An inspector met with trust executives, the chair of the trust, and members of the local governing body.
- To evaluate safeguarding, 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' needs first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and the planning for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors took account of the parents' letters, emails and phone calls they received during the on-site inspection. Inspectors also considered parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the free-text comments. Additionally, inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ellenor Beighton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mel Wicks

Ofsted Inspector

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