

Name of School:	Castlebar
Headteacher:	Paul Adair
Hub:	London Special and Alternative Provision
School type:	Community Special
MAT:	Not applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	LEADING
Date of this Review:	23/01/2020
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	OUTSTANDING
Date of last QA Review:	31/01/2018
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	OUTSTANDING
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	20/06/2018

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 Accredited. Creating a culture of successful partnerships with parents and carers. How this impacts on academic and social outcomes for pupils.

**Previously accredited valid Areas
of Excellence** Multi-disciplinary working,
31/10/2018
Therapies, 18/01/2017

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate Leading

Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed peer evaluation estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

1. Context and character of the school

Castlebar is a local authority maintained special school catering for 162 pupils from Reception to Year 6. All pupils have education, health and care plans (EHCPs). Almost two thirds of the pupils have severe learning difficulties (SLD) and over a third have moderate learning difficulties (MLD). A third of the pupils also have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition (ASC).

Over half of the pupils speak English as an additional language and just over half of the pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Castlebar is the lead school in the Ealing Primary Teaching Alliance and is a National Support School. The headteacher is a National Leader of Education and several leaders are Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs).

Castlebar has won many awards, including the 360 certificate for safeguarding and STARS Sustainable Travel accreditation (Gold).

The school is outward looking, forming many useful partnerships to develop and share excellent practice. These include partnership with Ealing Learning Partnership, Brunel University, Ealing's extended school service and Mencap.

Castlebar has a long and successful record of providing outstanding education for pupils and excellent development of staff. This means that everyone achieves their potential.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Governors are well connected with the school in many ways, including supporting a parent support group and conducting learning walks. Local authority and in-school training enable them to hold leaders to account effectively.
- Senior leaders are realistic about their school. Their clear vision is shared across the school. All stakeholders contribute to school self-evaluation. This leads to a concise, incisive, school improvement plan.
- Senior leaders actively support staff to work smarter not harder. Leaders provide a termly staff breakfast and provide two mental health first aiders on site. The innovative staff well-being team uses a variety of initiatives. These are based on researched approaches, including 'Ten keys to happiness', to improve staff well-being.
- Staff development is a major strength of Castlebar. Leaders organise targeted continuous professional development (CPD), including training linked to each role and preparation for the next role. Leaders use whole school training for new interventions followed by refreshers and 'bite-sized' training to reinforce new

initiatives and ensure high quality teaching. Coaching and modelling are used across the school to improve subject knowledge and knowledge of how pupils learn.

- Senior leaders continue to develop highly skilled middle leaders using a combination of approaches. These include coaching, mentoring and national professional leadership qualifications. Middle leaders are given support and autonomy to innovate within clear boundaries. They have significant impact on pupils' progress using a combination of learning walks, lesson study, work scrutiny and data analysis. Middle leaders have an increasingly important role in moderation, within school and across special and mainstream schools in Ealing.
- Teaching Assistants (TAs) are highly valued. They have a clear career structure and their input to improve pupils' lives is key to the smooth running of the school.
- Leaders ensure that therapists and teaching staff plan and teach together to directly inform and further improve Castlebars' excellent communication practice. Lesson study continues to evolve and develop. Lessons study now includes therapists in teacher groups. There are measurable effects on pupils' outcomes as well as a developing culture of higher order reflection and critical self-evaluation.
- The curriculum at Castlebar is broad. It includes humanities and creative arts. Forest school, let's get cooking and movement programmes complement the core and wider curriculum. Pupils take advantage of a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Transition in to and out of Castlebar is carefully thought out. The school is involved in the Ealing schools peer review process with a focus on transition. Senior leaders have joined with special school secondary colleagues in the school which most pupils join in Year 7. This will support the secondary school in considering a more primary focussed model in Year 7 and Year 8.
- Leaders adopt a graded approach of clear boundaries and consequences to improve the attendance of all pupils, especially those who are persistently absent. They also provide practical and emotional support for parents, including drop in social work sessions and support with behaviour. Attendance overall continues to be in line with the national mainstream primary school average.

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

...leaders ensured that all teachers and class staff promote and build on the seven areas engagement to maximise learning opportunities in their curriculum area.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- At Castlebar, there is a calm and purposeful learning ethos. Pupils are highly motivated and engaged in their learning. Relationships across the school are

warm and trusting.

- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and are keen to engage with visitors. An older pupil met one of the external reviewers, introduced herself and found out his name. Later in the day she clearly remembered him and proudly said his name.
- Teachers and TAs have excellent subject knowledge. They know their pupils well and the way in which they learn. They use this knowledge expertly, to support and challenge pupils.
- Teachers and TAs work well in teams, accurately assessing and using this information to adjust their teaching. In a class where a pupil needed space and quietness to calm, the communication between staff was highly effective without using words.
- Teaching staff use a wide range of approaches, supported by excellent resources, to teach reading, including phonics.
- Staff organise classrooms well. Space is well used. Visual environments do not over stimulate but are warm and inviting. Teaching staff separate pupils when needed and reduce noise levels. Teaching staff speak quietly, clearly and calmly.
- Teaching staff ensure that pupils' sensory needs are met. There is a mix of alerting and calming activities to reduce the chances of pupils becoming over stimulated.
- Communication and language development are an exceptional feature of the school. Staff use a variety of approaches according to pupil need - including, intensive interaction, PECS, signing and colourful semantics.
- In Reception and Year 1, children develop basic independent working routines. These are built on further up the school, where pupils are able to work even more productively when working independently.
- Pupils' conduct around school is exemplary. At lunchtime, the number of adults supervising has been slightly reduced to encourage more peer to peer interaction and independence.
- Increased emphasis on developing functional skills and applying learning in a real-life context, prepares pupils well for the next phase of their education. An example of this is a visit to a pony centre where pupils take responsibility for animal care.
- In a well-planned and resourced art lesson, the teacher created a sense of awe and wonder. Pupils used their senses, when painting ice, to inspire their creation of a winter scene.
- TAs at Castlebar enthusiastically lead learning with great skill, using their pupil knowledge to promote excellent learning for pupils.
- As pupils progress through school, they readily take up opportunities to be responsible for the efficient running of the school. School council has responsibilities, for example, to set up school lunchtimes and conduct learning walks.
- In 2019, outcomes at Castlebar were again excellent. Pupils made excellent progress from their low starting points. In literacy and numeracy almost all pupils

achieved three or more steps of progress. A significant proportion of pupils made exceptional progress in communication, reading and writing, mathematics and personal and social development. The school is developing even more challenging and appropriate targets, Age/SEN targets take account of cognitive ability and age to vary the learning steps needed to make very good or exceptional progress. Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 has significantly increased in the past three years. In the past two years, writing progress has been especially strong.

- In the autumn term 2019, well over three-quarters of pupils made very good progress against the more demanding age/ SEN targets in communication, reading and writing and mathematics. Book scrutiny showed high expectations for learning and clear progress made since September in numeracy and literacy. In the early years foundation stage, significant progress in children's learning journals is backed up by what was observed in classrooms.

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

...staff further developed opportunities for peer to peer interaction.

...staff ensured consistency in all books to demonstrate specific next steps and follow on in learning.

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

- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are not significantly different to that of non-disadvantaged pupils. This is due to the vigilance and targeted support provided by staff at Castlebar. School leaders and the review team agreed that a more useful group of pupils to consider was the pupils requiring higher staff ratios due to sensory and behavioural issues that impact on learning.
- During the review, pupils' conduct across the whole school was exceptionally positive. This is the result of careful planning, person centred approaches and the development of trusting relationships.
- Pupils whose behaviour can be particularly challenging are well engaged and on task. The management of their behaviour has been highly skilful and effective. Staff have used redirection or temporary reduction in the challenge of an activity followed by reintroduction of the challenge as soon as possible. Some pupils spend short periods of learning in separate areas to reduce distractions.
- Pupils who are harder to reach and challenging, are often initially more interested in their own agenda. Staff use 'pairing' to develop trust and confidence with one person who then helps the pupils to navigate their learning. This is not an exclusive relationship but is useful to begin the process of engaging and

enthusing pupils with learning. Intensive interaction is one of the tools used to support this process.

- Work scrutiny shows that some pupils, who may present behaviours that challenge, make excellent academic progress. The standard of presentation of work is high. Other pupils make slower academic progress but make strong progress toward their EHCP targets and have action plans to improve academic progress over time. Where progress is likely to be slower, teachers use mapping and assessing personal progress to plan for and show smaller steps of progress. The introduction of age/SEN targets make the targets more realistic, but still challenging.

4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...

...pupils had increased access to learning opportunities through the seven areas of engagement.

5. Area of Excellence

AoE title: Creating a culture of successful partnerships with parents and carers. How this impacts on academic and social outcomes for pupils.

Accredited

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

As a teaching school, Castlebar offers a range of training opportunities within Ealing and beyond. These include colourful semantics, handwriting without tears and positive management of behaviours for children with complex needs. The six SLE's deliver training to other schools, including Autism Education Trust tiers one, two and three. This expertise is shared with pupils in the school and their families to improve outcomes for all.

Castlebar has developed a total communication approach, working seamlessly with the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). This has consistently resulted in excellent outcomes for all pupils. A Makaton tutor and cross school Makaton team promote the use of signing across the school and beyond. Symbols for communication, symbolised text, aided

language stimulation boards, PECS books and colourful semantics are expertly used in meaningful contexts to promote and develop understanding and expression.

The school successfully engages parents and families in general, including those families who are harder to reach. Castlebar continues the dialogue with parents using both formal and informal, and personalised approaches. The school uses structured conversations with parents and engages in regular meetings throughout the year. Alongside discussions about children's progress, parents devise with staff, meaningful practical, academic, health and well-being goals for their children.

Parents and families have easy access to the skills, expertise and support of the MDT and school staff, to improve holistic outcomes for their children. The school, using the above expertise and experience, has developed a comprehensive and relevant programme of workshops, training and drop-ins for parents and family carers. This includes therapist coffee mornings to cover positive behaviour, 'you and me', about relationships, fine motor skills for daily living, and toileting and self-care. Families have easy access to a social worker, to provide practical advice and support. Therapists join school staff on home visits to build relationships, share expertise and build family resilience.

A key aspect to the approach of supporting families and their children is the culture of inclusivity at school social events. Here, staff and their own families often join together to make the event a success. Pupil and family well-being are promoted in many ways, including an Easter holiday club, supported by school. The school arranges days out for the whole family.

Parents say that their children are safe, well looked after and happy and, as parents, they feel welcome at school.

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

Academic and social outcomes at Castlebar continue to be excellent. The MDT tracker is completed termly by class teachers. On this tracker all of the interventions are tracked to monitor each intervention that each individual child is receiving and the progress that they are making. Pupils make very strong progress from their starting points in English and mathematics. There is significant evidence of 'closing the gap' between specific groups of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged.

Over time, due to the formal and informal support from teaching staff and the MDT, parents gain confidence to attend school meetings and make informal contact with the school.

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

Name: Melanie Hogan

Title: Deputy Headteacher

Email: mhogan@castlebar.ealing.sch.uk

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

Castlebar is an outward facing school, well-connected within the local Challenge Partner hub and nationally. Leaders are able to provide and request support as required.

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.