



# Castlebrook High School



● INSPIRE ● CHALLENGE ● EXCEL ●

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Academy Principal: Mrs S. Armstrong BA (Hons), NPQH

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Dear Parent/Carer

This term has really flown by and once again I am delighted to write to you all and keep you up to date with what has been happening throughout this busy and most productive Autumn term.

### **Summer 2017 GCSE results and progress update**

We had another very good set of GCSE results this Summer with Castlebrook now ranked 4<sup>th</sup> out of the 12 schools in the Bury Authority when ranked using the progress 8 measure (last academic year we were ranked 9<sup>th</sup> across Bury LA). This is another considerable step forward on our journey to outstanding and all credit must go to all our learners, staff and parents/carers for their hard work and support in achieving these excellent outcomes.

This year was the first of the new Maths and English examinations, with grades awarded from 1 to 9, with the grade 4 (standard pass) being the equivalent to a grade C last year. In both Maths and English Castlebrook's percentage of grade 4's or above, were above the national averages. There were excellent results in Art, Biology, Chemistry, Child Development, Construction, Food Technology, History, ICT, Physical Education, Photography, Religious Education and Sociology. There were some fantastic individual learner performances too. A great set of results all round!

<b>Measure</b>	<b>2017 National</b>	<b>2017 Castlebrook</b>
Attainment 8	44.2	45.7
Progress 8	0.00	+0.01
% Grade 5 or above in English & Maths	39 %	39 %
English 4+(Standard Pass)	69.9 %*	71.8 %
Maths 4+(Standard Pass)	70.7 %*	74.6

Progress 8 is a measure of the progress children make between the end of primary school and the end of secondary school. It is designed to encourage good quality teaching across a broad curriculum.

Progress 8 is based on pupils' performance in eight qualifications. These are English and maths, at least one science, and students' five highest scores from a range of other qualifications, including GCSEs and approved non-GCSEs. English and maths are given double weighting to reflect their importance. The results are compared to the national average of other pupils with similar starting positions (in other words, similar KS2 SATs results).

A school's Progress 8 score is usually between -1 and +1. A score of +1 means that pupils in that school achieve one grade higher in each qualification than other similar pupils nationally. A score of -1 means they achieve one grade lower.

The average Progress 8 score of all secondary schools nationally is 0. Schools with a Progress 8 score of below -0.5 are not achieving the minimum standard expected by the Government. A score of +0.5 or above shows that pupils in that school are making well above the expected level of progress.

A more detailed breakdown of our GCSE results Summer 2017 can be found on our school website. Key progress targets for this academic year are to increase rates of progress for pupil premium learners, boys, and learners with low prior attainment. Outcomes for learners must also improve in Modern Foreign Languages and Trilogy Science. Our Pupil Premium action plan can also be found on the school website.

### **Staffing Update**

Several of our teaching staff are leaving us at the end of this term and we send our grateful thanks and best wishes for the future to: Mrs Lawrence, Mrs Banks, Mrs Ogden, Mrs Egan-Daynes and Mr Hewitt. I am delighted to inform you that Mr Shabaz (Science) and Mr Harter (maths) have recently secured teaching posts with us. Joining us as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 will be Miss Atkinson (SENCO), Mrs Hill (Head of Chemistry) and Mr Gilmore (Head of Simpson House). In January Miss Minshall takes up the post of acting head of MFL and Mr Duckham will join us part time in Music. We have every confidence that these appointments will support us in our relentless drive to secure the best outcomes for all our learners, whatever their starting points. Rates of staff attendance are the highest they have ever been.

### **Attendance**

Attendance remains a key whole school priority this academic year. We need all our learners in school, every single school day, in class and working to the very best of their ability. Mr Fair, Deputy Principal, leads on our attendance drive and our whole school attendance figure is currently 94.9%, up from 91.6% this time last academic year. Whilst this is a significant improvement, **it is still below the government's minimum target of 95%** and some considerable way off our school target of 98% which we are determined to achieve by the end of this academic year.

Unfortunately, our attendance figures have been hit this term by some families who have taken holidays in term time. I must remind you that this is something we cannot authorise and I urge all parents to refrain from booking holidays outside of the school holidays. Please can parents/carers also make every effort to ensure that their child attends every day. If medical appointments are truly unavoidable during the school day, then please ensure your child comes to school for 8.45am, signs out for the medical appointment and returns for their 12.00 noon statutory registration mark. This way, full attendance for the day can be recorded and your child's attendance record will not be affected. I have included once again the table I included in my last letter to you (July 2017), showing just how quickly a few days' absence can impact on attendance and learning hours lost.

<b>Attendance % for a year</b>	<b>Days absent</b>	<b>Hours of lessons missed</b>
<b>95%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>90%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>85%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>80%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>75%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>70%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>285</b>
<b>65%</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>335</b>

In line with Bury Council’s Code of Conduct (September 2017), the issuing of a Penalty Notice is appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Parentally condoned absences
- Unauthorised holidays in term time
- Persistent late arrival to school

### **Punctuality to school**

Punctuality to school has significantly improved as a result of our robust, no nonsense approach. Mrs Challinor, Head of Foster House, leads this drive, with the full support of all our staff, including the Senior Leadership Team, who are out with Mrs Challinor at the shops and front of school every morning, ensuring that punctuality to school takes precedence over last minute shopping and dawdling with friends. If your child’s punctuality to school needs to improve then please support them the night before by ensuring alarms are set ten minutes earlier, school bags are packed and shoes are by the front door. If you do drop your child off by car, can you please allow extra time for rush hour traffic and especially so as during the winter months. Please remember that lessons (not form time) now begin promptly at 8.45am and any latecomers not only disrupt their own learning, but also the learning of others, which I know you will agree is simply not acceptable.

### **Behaviour**

In November 2017, and at my request, a full day review of behaviour for learning across the school was carried out. The purpose of the review was to evaluate behaviour for learning in the school and make recommendations for next steps. The activities which informed this evaluation of aspects of behaviour were conducted by Julie Yarwood, the Shaw Education Trust Director of Education, Phil Harrison, the Chief Operating Officer for Shaw Education Trust and Lee Nixon, the Principal from Madeley School in Staffordshire (another SET school and one I visited in October 2017 to carry out a similar behaviour review). Lesson visits to all curriculum areas took place with senior members of staff, and meetings were conducted with: the Principal and Vice-Principal, Heads of House, senior members of staff and two groups of learners. Tutor time was visited and behaviour at social time was observed.

### **Key Strengths:**

- There is a noticeable improvement in the behaviour of pupils from the time of the baseline visit in January 2017; the direction of travel in terms of improving this aspect of school is positive.

- Learners were seen to be smart, generally very compliant and well-mannered. A calm learning environment was observed to be in place and learners were well-equipped for learning.
- Learners are very well supervised at social times – at break and lunchtime. The use of high-visibility vests ensures that it is easy to spot members of staff on duty. Staff duty positions are well-considered and ensure that all areas of the school are covered. There is no hiding place.
- Learners' behaviour was calm and controlled with positive relationships evident. Although busy, the dining room has been sensibly managed to ensure that there is a rota of access in place for different year groups on the one-sitting. Activities taking place in the sports hall at lunchtime help to ensure that learners have opportunities to 'let off steam' and play badminton, table tennis and on the astro-turf, football.

Key recommendations which we are already addressing:

- Ensure that all staff use praise to recognise the contributions of learners. Develop the use of rewards to ensure that learners feel recognised for their good work and behaviour.
- Embed the recently introduced and revised Positive Behaviour for Learning Policy which includes a new system of staged consequences and an internal exclusion room, where the emphasis is on working hard to get back into mainstream classes, as opposed to simply being removed from a classroom.

### **Best in School Programme**

In order to raise the profile of good behaviour and effort in class, all learners now automatically receive an achievement point at the start of every lesson. This achievement point will only be removed if poor choices are subsequently made. Learners have responded well to this positive initiative and are pleased to see us focusing on positive as opposed to negative behaviour choices.

Our "Best in School" Programme was introduced in September 2017 to encourage healthy competition, raise aspirations and reward learners for excellent attendance, punctuality, behaviour and effort in lessons. Learners across each year group are then ranked according to a combination of points achieved based on an amalgamation of these points and their individual academic starting points. "Best in School" badges have been distributed to all learners to wear on their lapels and after each Key Performance Indicator (KPI) across the school year, gold star badges and certificates will be awarded to the highest ranking and thereafter most improved learners. League tables of performance are displayed on the "Best in School" noticeboard in the main dining hall, and updated after each KPI. Every learner has the chance to move up their year group league table and this initiative is already rewarding learners and generating healthy competition to do even better on the next data trawl.

### **Enrichment Activities and After School GCSE Revision Classes**

Our enrichment activities programme continues to grow and moving to one lunchtime has enabled us to provide a great lunchtime enrichment offer, all fully supervised by our committed staff. Film club runs every lunchtime in A13. The Independent Learning Zone is open every lunchtime for: reading, homework, research and revision, artwork and playing

board games. Mrs Challinor runs the quiz club every Friday lunchtime in C29. The Sports Hall is open every lunchtime, offering a range of sporting activities including basketball, table tennis and badminton. Football is on offer on the astro turf. All you need to do to engage in the sporting activities is make sure you bring your trainers. An updated full programme of enrichment activities, as well as our programme of GCSE After School Revision Classes is now on our website in both our Parent and learner Zones.

The Independent Learning Zone is open after school from 3.05pm to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday and until 4.00pm on Fridays for private study, homework and revision. Other enrichment activities we have provided this half term include: Cookery Club, Science Club, Year 7 and 11 Residentials, trips to the Good Food Show at the NEC in Birmingham, the Law Department at Bolton University, the Everyman Theatre Liverpool, Bolton Octagon and Bury College. Our sports teams offer continues to grow with many successes in both local and national competitions. We also held the Castlebrook Factor to showcase the amazing talents of our young people. Our Student Council for 2017/18 is in place and congratulations to all those who applied. We look forward to finding out how they will make a positive contribution to school life this academic year. Mr Fletcher has also established a team of PE Sport Leaders, whose main remit is to promote sport and wellbeing and increase learner participation in sporting activities. Follow our tweets to keep up to the minute with what's on and where and check out our website for our full school calendar of what's coming up including Parents/Carers' evenings and our assessment, reporting and recording cycle.

### **Parents' Evenings**

These are very important events, which enable parents/carers and their child to have one to one meetings with subject teachers, the form mentor, head of house and other key staff. You can discuss your child's progress, the next steps to ensure further progress, and ask for any further support and guidance you may require. In order to give parents/carers more support to attend these evenings, we have moved them this academic year, to the later time of 5.00 – 7.30 pm. However, we still need attendance at these evenings to improve. Whilst attendance at the Year 11 Parents' Evening on 12<sup>th</sup> December was very good at 80%, attendance at this term's Year 7 Parents' Evening was only 60%. All parents/carers are really busy people and we know and understand how difficult it can be to fit everything in. However, our Home/School Agreement is the bedrock of a successful home/school partnership and does clearly state that parents/carers agree to 'support our child by attending all Parents' Evenings, support evenings and other meetings, as requested, even if this may cause inconvenience'.

Full details of all Parents' Evenings are on the school website, in the Parent Zone tab, under the Parents' Evenings & ARI Cycle (Assessment Reports and Intervention Cycle). Dates of all key assessments and reports are also in this area. We look to all parents and carers to work with us to secure good attendance at these key events.

### **Parents' Evenings January to May 2018 – all from 5.00pm to 7.30pm.**

**Year 9 Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January**

**Year 11 (2<sup>nd</sup> of 2) Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March**

**Year 8 Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April**

**Year 7 (2<sup>nd</sup> of 2) Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May**

## **Parents' Forum**

Our first Parents' Forum of this academic year took place on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November from 6.30pm to 7.30pm. The turnout was excellent and the event was also supported by Mr McKay one of our academy councillors.

Agenda items included:

- Progress made since the last Ofsted inspection
- Teaching and Learning, Attendance and Behaviour updates
- Enrichment offer
- Transport Links

The meeting provided a valuable opportunity for myself, Mr Fair (Deputy Principal) and Mr McKay to listen to parents, find out face to face what they think we are doing well and how we can improve even further. As a result of this feedback, I have again highlighted the importance of good attendance and shown how it can be maximised despite medical appointments, and after Christmas we will be providing additional information on learners' interim and full comment reports as well as enhancing communications with learners and parents/carers through Show My Homework. The next Parents' Forum will take place on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2017 from 6.30pm to 7.30pm. If you would like to come along then please confirm your attendance with Mrs Settle.

## **Drop Everything and Read!**

Please can all parents/carers support our drive to ensure all our learners are regularly reading and at the same time improving their levels of literacy. Once a week during form there is a regular independent reading slot, when learners are encouraged to read quietly and independently. Please support your child by ensuring they have a suitable reading book, magazine or newspaper with them in school at all times.

## **Charity Events and Fundraising**

This term's charity fundraising has got off to a flying start with over £200 raised at our Macmillan Coffee Morning and over £380 through our Children in Need Charity Fun Day. We have had a great response to our Key 103 Mission Christmas Appeal and our Xmas Jumper/ T Shirt day was also a fantastic success with monies raised yet to be counted. Well done everyone!

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding remains a very high priority here at Castlebrook. This term has seen our Deputy Academy Principal, Mr Fair, along with all four heads of house (Mrs Challinor, Mrs Majerski, Mr Allen and newly appointed Mr Gilmore) and our new SENCO, Miss Atkinson, all level 3 safeguarding trained. They will join myself, Mr Orrell and Mr Whittam who are all already level 3 trained. As of 3<sup>rd</sup> January, Mr Fair will be the school's designated safeguarding lead.

This half term a programme of Safeguarding house assemblies have focused on preventing radicalisation and extremism, promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, and raising the profile of Childline.

We are also committed to keeping all our parents and carers up to date with the latest child protection and safeguarding news. The Children's Commissioner for England and TES have recently produced simplified terms and conditions for Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat and Facebook, to help parents and carers support their children to manage their rights and privacy online. A link to this information can now be found in our Safeguarding Zone on the school website.

### **New Build**

Building work was all set to begin at the start of November 2017. However, the Great Crested Newt has delayed our plans and we now expect building work to commence when we return in January 2018. We will of course keep you regularly updated on the progress of the build.

### **Uniform**

Whilst the vast majority of learners come to school immaculately dressed, can I please take this opportunity to remind everyone of the following:

- Learners can wear one small stud in each ear. Rings on fingers are not allowed. Tongue piercings are also not allowed.
- School shoes must be just that and not trainers.
- Coats and not hoodies are to be worn when the weather is colder.

**And finally....**Please keep taking a look at our website for all the latest school information, including our tweets! Have a look at our testimonials which confirm what a great school this really is. Thank you for all your support this term. Have a wonderful, safe and restful break and we look forward to seeing all our learners, back at school (and on time!) on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Best wishes



Mrs Armstrong  
Academy Principal