



# The Castle School

ACHIEVE | BELONG | PARTICIPATE



Achieve

Belong

Participate

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# Welcome

I am delighted that you have decided to find out about the opportunities available for students at The Castle School. We are very proud of our school and the achievements of our students, which are many and which show particular excellence in sports, music and the arts. The Castle School is a vibrant and lively school that bustles and is full of energy. I always encourage parents to visit so you can meet our students, who are our greatest asset and our staff who are our best resource. It also means that you can imagine your child here and genuinely see if this is the right environment for your child and family.

At The Castle School, we value strong positive relationships, and this makes the school such a vibrant and lively place.

The history and tradition of The Castle School is what makes it such a privilege to be part of this family. Our aim continues to be for every child to achieve, belong and participate and this is at the heart of everything we do at The Castle School. We have been for some years now not only at the top of the performance tables in Somerset but in the top 5% of schools nationally for academic achievements. You can see our latest exam results on our website.

We believe that education should empower young people, giving them the knowledge to make sense of the world and grow into citizens who make a difference. Our curriculum gives our students powerful knowledge enabling them to think for themselves and show strength of character, shaped by what they



need to know, understand and fulfil, to have happy, successful and prosperous lives.

If you think The Castle School is the right school for your child, please do contact the school and make an appointment to come to one of our Open Mornings. Our students are always delighted to show off their school and answer any questions. We look forward to your family being part of our success.

Mr James Lamb

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Lamb'.

Headteacher





# Our approach

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“Pupils flourish at The Castle School. Staff care about them and have very high expectations of pupils. Pupils feel valued as individuals within the school ‘family’.”  
Ofsted - 2023

### Our aims and values

#### **Every Child Achieves. Every Child Belongs. Every Child Participates.**

Our aims are simple. We want every child at The Castle School to achieve their true potential, participate fully, and enjoy a strong sense of belonging. We achieve this by delivering high quality teaching and learning through a broad and balanced knowledge-rich curriculum; in a safe and structured environment, where all students can thrive, supported by exceptional pastoral care. We encourage a ‘can do’ attitude that means every child can and will take part in enrichment.

The curriculum will:

- help ensure knowledge ‘sticks’ and students learn the curriculum, not just encounter it;
- encourage independent learning and positive thinking amongst all students. Prepare them for life beyond school;
- be personalised to meet the needs of individual students.
- build on the primary phase;
- ensure students are literate and numerate;
- ensure equity of access for all;
- reinforce kindness, empathy and celebrate equality and diversity.

# Our school

“The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. They strive to live in accordance with the school’s ethos. Pupils are courteous and helpful to their peers. The atmosphere is warm, friendly and harmonious.” Ofsted - 2023

We teach 1,200 students aged 11-16 at our extensive campus off Wellington Road, where we foster a supportive, family atmosphere and a strong sense of belonging for every student.

## Our Facilities

Our excellent facilities enhance life at The Castle School, supporting both the students’ learning and their personal development.

## The Arts

We have an outstanding reputation in all the Arts and hold a number of Arts Showcase events throughout the year. We have a well-resourced Music Department with specialist classrooms and a suite of practice rooms and school musical instruments for students’ use. There are subsidised instrumental lessons and a plethora of bands, choirs and orchestras, for example, the Jazz Band, Tour Band, Percussion Group, Steelband, Brass Group and Staff and Student Choir. In Drama and Dance, there are a whole host of performances which students can become involved in including being part of the Tech Team (Technical Crew) who operate the sound and lighting equipment under the supervision of our technician. We have a national representation and are regularly invited to perform at conferences, national concerts and events.

## Sports Facilities

On campus, we enjoy an all-weather sports pitch (with synthetic turf), an athletics track, sports hall, a well-equipped gym and two dance studios. Along with our excellent coaching staff, these facilities support many of our students to compete at regional and national level in a huge range of sports. We invariably win a good number of county cups and regional leagues as a school.

## Technologies and IT Facilities

Our newest building is the Naylor building, housing state-of-the-art Design and Technology classrooms. In addition to classroom IT resources, we have six dedicated computer rooms, and encourage students to apply IT skills across the curriculum. There is wi-fi across the school and we allow students to use their own mobile devices in school and in lessons to support their own learning and independence. There are also class sets of ‘Surface Go’ laptops to assist students with their research.

## The Dining Hall

We have a fabulous bright and airy dining hall which opened in September 2020. It has a variety of social seating options, the most popular of which are the booths, and an outside patio area.

## The Library

Our library is an integrated learning centre with forty computers, two smart boards and a seminar room, offering a safe, quiet place for school work, homework and reading for pleasure. The library is supervised until 5pm and is open to all students until that time.

## Disabled Access

We are committed to constantly improving our access at The Castle School.





**“Thanks to you all for the excellent work you do for our children at The Castle School. My daughter has excelled as a child, a pupil and now a teenager ready for college, thanks to the support you gave her.”**

**Parent of Year 11 student**



“The atmosphere is warm, friendly and harmonious.” Ofsted - 2023



# Achieve

At The Castle School we want to challenge students to think better, further, and more clearly. All students are stretched and challenged in lessons to inspire young people to learn and to encourage them to question.

We aim to ensure our students achieve their full potential and for our more able students to achieve grade 9 at GCSE.

Our aim is also for all teachers to engage and challenge all of our students in lessons.

Most of our students participate in at least one of the enrichment activities on offer at the school including:

- School Council;
- Activities at Kilve Court and Hestercombe House;
- Public Speaking and debating;
- Music;
- Creative Writing;
- Maths Challenge.

## Reading

“Books give a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to imagination, and life to everything.” Plato

At The Castle School, reading is integral to our students' education. We ensure students have opportunities to read regularly in all lessons but also during tutor time. Strategies for reading are used across the taught curriculum as well as the personal development programme, in tutor time and PSHE.

## Special Educational Needs

Our Learning Support Department offers extra help to students experiencing learning difficulties; from relatively minor problems to significant difficulties with literacy, language & communication or numeracy. We also support students with social, emotional or mental health issues, physical disabilities, medical needs and attendance concerns. Help is available in the classroom, individually or in small groups (depending on circumstances) and there are daily clubs where students can access help with homework. Please ask to see the school's policy on SEND, or refer to the School Offer, which is on the school website.



# The curriculum

“The curriculum is broad and highly ambitious. The school knows exactly what knowledge pupils need to know and remember.” Ofsted - 2023

## The Curriculum

The school ethos of all students achieving, belonging and participating to secure the best possible qualifications in a positive and resilient way is fundamental to our philosophy.

Our knowledge-rich curriculum is designed to be well-balanced and gives varied opportunities. It promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of our students and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Our aim is to provide a curriculum that is highly effective in delivering outcomes but also ensures our students will be widely educated, with experiences that include consideration of the best that humanity has produced: words, art, ideas and science. We aim to ensure that students leave The Castle School very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment, and educated so that they enjoy life and live well.



## Subjects for Years 7, 8 and 9

All students are taught core subjects: English including Philosophy for Children, Mathematics, Science, Religious Education and Physical Education (PE).

In addition, they are also taught the following:

- Humanities subjects: History and Geography.
- Modern Foreign Languages: one language from French, Spanish, German and Mandarin. There is an opportunity to pick up a second language at the end of Year 8.
- Arts: Art, Textiles, Performing Arts (Dance and Drama) and Music.
- Design Technology, Computing and Food.
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) is delivered in three ways at The Castle School: Through the PSHE specialist team, through tutor times and through enrichment days, where we invite external partners and speakers in to support the delivery.



## Subjects for Years 10 and 11

All students study English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science, PE, PSHE, Careers and Religious Education. Students select a further three option subjects. These options include:

- Modern Foreign Languages: French, German, Spanish, Mandarin.
- Humanities: Geography, History, Religion and Philosophy and Child Development.
- Computer Science or Information Communication Technology.
- The Arts: Music, Drama, Dance, Fine Art, Photography, Textiles.
- Design and Technology.
- Health related subjects: GCSE PE or Food Preparation and Nutrition.

## Homework

We believe that homework makes an invaluable contribution to students' progress, and so we support them to find good independent learning habits either at home, or in the school library with its extensive IT facilities. Students prefer variety in the tasks set and to have choice, therefore, tasks and projects range from interviews, experiments, research and essay writing. At The Castle School, we use the ClassCharts website and app. We have found ClassCharts to be exceptional, in terms of communicating successfully with families. Parents and carers, as well as students, can download versions of the ClassCharts app to their devices.





# Personal development

“Pupils want to do well . They work hard in lessons. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly and are respectful of one another . Learning is rarely interrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils who need to improve their behaviour get support to do so.” Ofsted - 2023

We recognise that “the curriculum” is not just the timetabled lessons and that engagement in universal and choice enrichment opportunities is integral to our Personal Development Programme and school ethos.

We go far beyond the National Curriculum and use the curriculum time to shape kindness and empathy, celebrate equality and diversity, delivering rich and broad experiences, securing belonging and participation. Our aim is for students to leave The Castle School having the strongest sense of right and wrong, being ambitious for themselves and with the knowledge of how to navigate the world and their responsibilities within it.

While qualifications are vitally important, we also want to equip our students with the knowledge, skills and attributes required to succeed in life.

We do this by motivating students to participate in enrichment which develops their skills. It is an important part of the curriculum that we inform students of choices for careers and further education and encourage lifelong learning and discussion on ethics, health and sexual relationships.

## Recognising success

We have high expectations of our students, and recognise and reward those who achieve success, or who strive to improve on their performance in any area of school life. These awards come in many shapes and sizes, from ‘colours’ awarded for sport, music, dance and drama, to achievement awards given for a student’s contribution to their House.

## The House Trophy

At the end of the school year, students in the winning House are invited to our rewards celebration event. We open up the school field and bring in inflatables and other rides, such as the dodgems. Students are also able to spend their House points on this rewards event, so they can spend some time taking part in this too.

Our annual Awards Evening allows us to recognise both attainment and progress. Family photos are taken and displayed proudly in our main entrance, representing our core family-driven values and the ambition that children see for themselves daily.

## Student Leadership Opportunities

At The Castle School, students and staff elect Year 11 students to be Senior Students who meet regularly with the Strategic Leadership Team. They also co-ordinate the School Council Committees, to which students from all years contribute. Prefects, House Captains and Deputies are appointed by the Houses and there are Captains of all the school teams.

Leadership plays a very important part in sport. Students begin leadership opportunities as early as Year 7. In Year 8, students receive sports leadership training; they organise the sports festival and primary school events. There are opportunities for students to gain qualifications in officiating and helping run House and school matches.

## Careers guidance

Our students receive guidance on careers during PSHE and enrichment days as well as:

- Access to careers advice offering guidance on education and training;
- All students in Years 9,10 and 11 will have at least one careers interview;
- University visits;
- Employer visits;
- Work experience in Year 10.

## Sex, Health and Religious Education

We teach students to lead a healthy lifestyle and develop positive attitudes to their relationships. We teach tolerance and an open mind, with discussions on ethical issues and different beliefs, cultures and attitudes that exist in society.

We deliver these topics through Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), Religious Education (RE) and Science. As part of our sex education programme, we invite health professionals to work with students in Years 9 and 10. We address mental and emotional health issues through the PSHE days and health professionals run workshops and talks for students.

If you are concerned about any aspect of this teaching, please contact the school. All parents have a right to withdraw students from Religious Education and Sex Education classes.

As a school, we have a strong tradition of participation and supporting each other. We have great respect for all individuals, and we promote the core British Values. We encourage all our students to be fully involved in school life, to be tolerant, respectful of rules and to value others.

# Belong

“Pupils make a tangible contribution to the life of the school and wider community. For instance, they raise funds for charities and volunteer in the community.” Ofsted - 2023

We actively involve students, parents, carers and members from the local community in the daily life of the school.

## The Houses

The Houses are essential in fostering the strong family ethos at The Castle School. We very much believe in the partnership between parents and the school. The House system enables us to work with you as families; siblings always go into the same House so we get to know you as families.

On joining The Castle School, students are allocated to one of six Houses - Balmoral, Lancaster, Caernarvon, Buckingham, Windsor and Sandringham - and students spend part of each school day with their tutor group. The Houses ensure every child belongs and has a sense of their own worth, through participation in various House competitions such as House Languages, House Drama, House Dance and House Sports.

This system not only creates a culture of support and belonging among House members of all ages, it provides valuable pastoral support. Tutors usually stay with their tutor group throughout the full five years and will oversee your child's progress providing vital knowledge of their personal development.

In the first term you will have an opportunity to meet with the tutor and Head of House to check how your child is settling in. Later in the year there are opportunities to meet with subject teachers and tutors at progress evenings.

You will receive regular reports and access to online information that tracks your child's progress. We do encourage parents/carers to contact tutors or subject teachers with any concerns.

Parents/carers, students and staff enter into a home-school agreement, which outlines everyone's responsibility in supporting the aims and values of the school.

## Local community links

We encourage students to make a positive contribution to the community here, such as raising money for local charities and participating in local exhibitions, performances and sports clubs. Over the last 12 months, students at The Castle School have raised over £8,000 for charity. There is always some sort of fundraising going on in school, initiated by students.

To enrich our students' learning, we have created strong links with leaders in local business, industry, public service and the arts and we regularly invite speakers, lecturers and performers to the school.

## The Castle Challenge

Students in Year 9 will complete The Castle Challenge Award. This complements the Duke of Edinburgh Award in Year 10 as well as our intent for students' personal development at The Castle School. We ensure that students have the planned opportunities to build resilience, to work as part of a team and to access challenges outside their comfort zone. It is also a focused plan to ensure that students value the work of the community and see their role within it, through some volunteering and/or service.

The Castle Challenge Award can be completed at three tiers: Bronze, Silver and Gold. To gain The Castle Challenge award accreditation at a bronze level, students will need to meet the following criteria:

1. Complete an expedition – this will be part of one of the curriculum enrichment days within the academic year where all students go to Exmoor and complete challenges as a team.
2. Take part in a community activity that can be completed independently or as part of a tutor group. Some opportunities have included:
  - Litter picking in school and in the local area;
  - Bag packing in local shops;
  - Volunteering in charity shops in Taunton;
  - Supporting / stewarding on Park Run events in Long Run Meadow, next to the school;
  - Donations, delivery and working in the local food banks.



The gifts are for  
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# Participate

“The school provides exceptional personal development. Pupils learn to be good citizens and they learn the value of making a positive contribution to society. They know how to challenge attitudes and behaviour that are not acceptable.” Ofsted - 2023

What goes on in the classroom is only part of The Castle School education. Equally important is our students' participation in extra-curricular activities, as we know this builds character and can foster participation in activities for a lifetime. Students are free to explore and develop their leadership skills, creativity, sporting talents, travel, and musical ambitions.

With such an enthusiastic and vibrant school community, it is not surprising that there is something for everyone. Clubs include: creative writing, public speaking, debating, drama, photography, art and languages.

## Music and The Arts

We are extremely proud of our creative and performing arts provision. There are many opportunities for students to get involved in The Arts, from attending clubs and workshops to major performances.

Our annual House Dance competition gives students the chance to get involved in a major dance performance, while our senior students develop Arts leadership and choreography. In Art, Photography and Textiles students work towards competitions, exhibitions, and with visiting artists.

An impressive number of students choose to learn to play instruments with us. To foster this talent and enthusiasm we provide free, out-of-school music groups, for example, Jazz Band, Steelband, Choir and Percussion Group.

There are many occasions for our students to perform both in school and in the wider community. We have a well-resourced music department comprising of a PC suite and specialist practice rooms which contain school musical instruments for students' use. Visiting peripatetic music teachers provide 1-2-1 lessons in a wide variety of instruments. A large number of students participate in an impressive array of ensembles including Orchestra, Junior and Senior Steel Band, String Group, SATB Choir, Junior Choir, Percussion Group and Junior Band alongside other smaller ensembles. Students have the opportunity to perform in concerts, gigs, European concert tours and full musicals.

A highlight of the school year is our school production; a chance for all students to get involved in a major performing arts production and, for those who prefer behind-the-scenes, the Design and Tech Teams provide an exceptional service of professional quality.

## Sport and PE

We have outstanding facilities, including an all-weather pitch and one of the only athletics tracks in the area and enjoy a superb sporting reputation at county, regional and national level.

We have a very popular lunch and after-school club offer which caters for a huge range of sporting abilities and interests, including the traditional sports (rugby, hockey, football, netball, cricket, rounders, basketball, tennis, and athletics) as well as more diverse sports/activities such as long sword club, trampolining, judo, strength and conditioning, archery and the Fitness Suite.

## Recent notable sporting achievements:

### Football

- District Cup winners for Year 7,8,9 and 11
- District Cup runners up Year 10
- County winners - Year 9 boys
- District cup winners - Year 8,9 & 10 boys

### Futsal

- County winners - Year 9 and 11 boys
- County winners - Year 9 girls

### Cricket

- National and Regional Champions for Girls indoor and outdoor cricket
- Under 15 Boys County Winners
- Under 15 Girls Broderick Tournament runners up
- Under 13 Girls Indoor County runners up
- Under 15 Boys Indoor County runners up
- County 3rd place in girls Under 13s and Under 15s
- County 3rd place in boys Under 13s and Under 15s
- County Softball - girls Under 13s and Under 15s finalists

### Netball

- Years 7,8,10 & 11 County Winners
- Year 9 County runners up

### Badminton

- Taunton Schools League - U18 boys Div 4 - winners & Under 15 boys Div 1 - runners up
- National Schools Competition - Year 7, 8 & 9 girls
- County finals - Silver & Years 10 & 11 boys - Silver

### Hockey

- County winners Year 7, 9 and 10 boys
- County winners Year 9 and 11 girls

# Clubs, activities, expeditions and enrichment days

With such an enthusiastic and vibrant school community, it is not surprising that there is something for everyone at lunch or after school. Clubs and societies include creative writing, public speaking, debating, drama, photography, art and languages.

We also offer outdoor education and teambuilding activities for various year groups within enrichment days and House activities. The school runs The Castle Challenge, a Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme which gives an exciting opportunity for older students to experience a physical and mental challenge and develop their team and leadership skills. We also encourage our Year 11 Leavers to get involved with the National Citizenship Award.

Other opportunities for travel include exchange trips to Spain and Germany, a ski trip to Courchevel, a water sports activity visit to the Ardèche in France as well as various other trips to Cambodia, Paris, New York, China, Sorrento, Berlin and Auschwitz in Poland.

Regular study and cultural visits are organised through subject departments, both here and abroad.

We have six enrichment days on three occasions throughout the academic year. Each year group has their own bespoke provision to ensure they experience opportunities linked to the curriculum. Every student is expected to engage in this provision and reinforces our aims and ethos. We are committed to ensure all our students have a universal offer that includes visits to places of worship, first aid training in Year 8 and 11, outdoor education visits, careers days, visits to universities, art galleries and the theatre.







# Joining the school

## **Open mornings**

Choosing your child's secondary school is an important decision for every parent. You will want to ensure that it reflects your child's academic, sporting and creative ambitions, and that the culture suits their individual needs and personality.

That is why we encourage every prospective parent and student to visit us during one of our open mornings. Our students will give you a tour during a normal school day. This way parents can imagine their child attending lessons, making friends, using the library, playing sports, and enjoying our clubs and activities.

To attend an open morning, please call the School Office or email [office@castle.somerset.sch.uk](mailto:office@castle.somerset.sch.uk)

## **Reception of new Year 7 students**

Going to a new school can be daunting for children and parents, so we do everything we can to ease the transfer.

All new students spend two days at the school during the summer term, and we hold a welcome evening for parents. If your child has special needs, we can discuss their requirements in more detail.

Our teachers also work closely with staff at contributory schools to devise appropriate educational topics to bridge the end of primary and a student's first few weeks at The Castle School. Working on familiar projects in a new environment helps build confidence and provides curriculum continuity.

Our House system is especially comforting for new students. We team them with a 'buddy' in their House - a caring Year 8 student who will look out for them and show them the ropes. Most Year 8s thoroughly look forward to being a 'buddy' as they all appreciated having an older 'brother' or 'sister' to look after them in their own first few months. Some of these relationships can last throughout school life and encourage the very supportive ethos within the Houses and beyond.

## **Admission to the school**

If you have attended an open morning and would like to apply for a place at The Castle School, Somerset County Council operates a co-ordinated admissions process for the Year 6 to Year 7 transfers in September and you should contact the Admissions Team via Somerset Direct. For in-year admissions, please contact Julie Gregory at the school. Further information is available on our website.

Because places at the school are currently over-subscribed, we recommend registering your child before the closing date of 31 October. This cannot be stressed enough - even if you live in the catchment area, a late application often means you are forced to go to appeal and there is no guarantee of a place. Please see the school website for the admissions criteria.

# The safety of students

At The Castle School, the safety and welfare of our students is paramount. We work closely with other agencies such as social services and health professionals to ensure this. If any student or adult has a concern about a child's safety, please contact Mr Wordsworth, Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead. We take Child Protection very seriously and all allegations or concerns will be fully investigated. There are links on our website to take parents or students straight to CEOPS, SAFE or Childline if anyone, child, parent or staff member, feels uncomfortable with any safety concerns. We are determined to maintain a culture of vigilance at The Castle School.

## Equality for all

We are fully committed to providing equality of opportunity and access to all of our students. Please see our equalities statement on our website: [www.castleschool.co.uk](http://www.castleschool.co.uk)







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