



Characteristics of the School **Castleton Primary School** **10 March 2026**

Overview

Castleton Primary School is a two-form entry primary school with a nursery class located to the south of Rochdale town centre. Inclusion and supporting families at the earliest point of need (Early Help) are central themes in the school's work to enable children to fulfil their potential and for the school to play a key role within the local community.

The school is housed in a Victorian building that has been extended over time. Considerable effort has been made to improve the external environment. Visitors frequently comment on the spacious classrooms, light and airy feel of the building, and the positive learning atmosphere throughout the school.

According to the most recent data (2025), the school has 314 pupils on roll, including 33 children in the nursery class. The school community reflects a number of characteristics:

- 60% disadvantaged pupils
- 25% pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- 32% eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)
- Within the top 30% most deprived areas nationally
- 12% of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- 6% with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Pupil mobility is a notable factor within the school and should be considered when reviewing pupil outcomes.

IDSR Summary

The most recent IDSR indicates the following:

- Numbers on roll are close to the national average (335 in IDSR; currently 352 including nursery, 314 without).
- FSM Ever6 is close to average, the first time this has been the case.
- SEND support is close to average (12%).
- EHCP proportion is above average (6%).
- EAL is close to average (IDSR 23%; current school figure 28%).
- School stability is well below average (74%).
- Children in Need (CIN) are above average in IDSR (5%), though currently lower in school.
- Attendance (94.9%) was close to average and improved from the previous year, including for FSM and SEND pupils.
- Persistent absence was also close to average, showing improvement.
- Suspensions were close to national averages.
- Exclusion data for 2023–24 is inaccurate in the IDSR.
- Writing progress remains a focus, as IDSR identifies it as below in several areas. However, national distribution banding places Year 6 WRM as close to average, which represents improvement from previous years.
- Disadvantaged pupils have remained within this band for the second consecutive year.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard remains below national averages.

School Context

Castleton Primary School is often described as having “a little bit of everything”. As a result, inclusion, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and relational approaches underpin the school's vision and practice.

Many pupils and families require additional support to overcome barriers to learning. The school community is ethnically diverse, with 25% of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and around 19 languages spoken.

The school provides:

- A before-school care service and breakfast club
- A Family Hub within the school building, supporting partnership working
- A library area
- A sensory room
- Two internal inclusive provisions
- A forest school area
- The beginnings of an outdoor learning classroom, currently affected by flood damage

Community Context

The school serves a community facing a range of challenges including poverty, deprivation, housing instability and mental health issues. Housing in the catchment area includes private housing, social housing and privately rented accommodation.

The school has implemented a range of measures to support families experiencing food insecurity and housing difficulties. As a result, the school has developed a strong reputation for multi-agency working and collaborative partnerships with external services.

Ofsted Inspection

The most recent inspection took place on 15–16 November 2023 as a Section 5 inspection, where the school was judged to be Requires Improvement overall.

Inspectors recognised:

- The strong ambition of staff to give every child the best start
- High levels of pupil engagement
- The caring and nurturing ethos of the school
- Improving pupil progress
- The governing board's strong knowledge of the school
- Positive behaviour and attitudes
- Strong leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteachers, providing clear direction

Inspectors acknowledged strengths in the curriculum but identified areas requiring further development:

- Further refinement of key knowledge pupils should acquire
- Ensuring lesson activities build secure knowledge across the curriculum
- Clarifying and strengthening the Early Years curriculum

Since the inspection, leaders have refined the foundation subject curriculum and focused on essential knowledge and skills to support pupils' learning from 2024–25 onwards, recognising that recovery will be a longer-term process.

School Improvement Priorities (2025–26)

1. Raise standards across all three key stages, particularly in writing and mathematics, while sustaining strong progress in reading.
2. Embed high-quality foundation subject and science curriculum plans, ensuring teaching, learning and assessment policies are consistently applied so pupils know and remember more.
3. Strengthen SEND adaptations and improve attendance for pupils with SEND.
4. Improve overall attendance and continue developing effective relational behaviour approaches.
5. Increase learning opportunities beyond the classroom in KS1 and KS2 and improve Nursery outdoor provision.
6. Strengthen leadership and governance capacity by:
 - Ensuring strong impact from phase leaders, subject leaders and governors
 - Refining approaches to secure excellent curriculum delivery
 - Continuing to prioritise behaviour and personal development through the Rights of the Child

- Addressing variations in provision through monitoring, feedback and professional development

Attainment

Early Years Foundation Stage

Baseline assessments show many pupils enter school with significantly underdeveloped communication and language skills. Improving outcomes in the Early Years has therefore been a key focus.

In 2025, 57% of pupils achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) from low starting points. While outcomes improved beyond expectations, the school recognised that stronger outcomes for girls masked lower attainment among other groups.

Phonics

In 2025, 75% of Year 1 pupils achieved the expected standard in phonics, below the national average.

Disadvantaged pupils were the lowest attaining group.

Key Stage 1

By the end of Year 2 in 2025, 59% of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Although disadvantaged pupils performed less well, progress measures indicated that targeted interventions were having a positive impact. Overall trends show improvement.

Key Stage 2

By the end of Year 6 in 2025, 54% of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Of pupils whose progress could be tracked, 66.7% met the expected standard.

Leadership has clearly identified areas for improvement and progress in reading, writing and mathematics is showing an improving trend. Boys' attainment has masked underachievement among some other groups.

More recent internal data suggests a broadly stable picture, although Years 3 and 4 remain priority year groups.

Current Challenges

Castleton Primary School serves an increasingly deprived community. Supporting families while maintaining strong learning outcomes requires careful and sensitive adaptation.

The ongoing economic climate continues to present additional challenges for the school and the community it serves.

Factors Contributing to Success

Despite these challenges, the school has demonstrated sustained commitment to improvement, particularly since the previous inspection and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. School improvement planning is well established, supported by clear systems and processes aligned with the school's vision.

Leaders prioritise staff wellbeing and emotional support for pupils, ensuring a balanced approach to improvement.

The headteacher, deputy headteachers and wider leadership team have demonstrated resilience and determination in pursuing high aspirations for all pupils. Leadership responsibilities are widely distributed, strengthening leadership capacity across the school.

The headteacher has fostered a "can-do together" culture, ensuring staff collaborate effectively and feel supported in challenging situations.

The school is a UNICEF Rights Respecting Gold School, the first in the borough, and pupil voice is strong through the work of the Rights Respecting Schools team, School Council and Eco Team.

A strong listening culture has been developed, supporting staff wellbeing and maintaining morale during challenging periods. Surveys of pupils, parents and staff remain consistently positive.

The school is an active member of the RUSC Collaborative and works closely with a local secondary school to support professional development. The school also contributes to initial teacher training and regularly participates in Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) research projects.

Currently the school operates within a TPA arrangement with Altus, although governors continue to consider future structural options for the school.