

Chauncy School

Park Road, Ware, SG12 0DP

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Chauncy is an inspiring and exciting place to be.
- Pupils at Key Stage 3 and 4 make good progress.
- Pupils work hard in their lessons. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.
- Pupils are serious learners, who are determined to succeed.
- Pupils' behaviour is extremely respectful and considerate.
- Staff and pupils get on very well with each other. Every pupil is known as an individual.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- The sixth form is good. It provides a wide range of courses and opportunities for pupils.
- Leaders and managers set high targets for both pupils and staff, which have improved teaching and progress.
- Managers will not accept any teaching which is less than good.
- Staff are committed to doing the best they can for the pupils.
- The range of subjects on offer for pupils is excellent.
- The school is well respected by the local community. It is popular and over-subscribed.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Most teaching is good rather than outstanding.
- There are not opportunities in all subjects to practise writing in different styles.
- Pupils are not always given work in lessons which pushes them enough.
- The school does not use information collected well enough, so that they understand how fast pupils are making progress, in order to help them to get higher GCSE grades.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 lessons or part lessons, taught by 43 teachers. Nine lessons were observed jointly with leaders and managers.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school’s documents on self-evaluation and safeguarding. They observed the school’s work, looked at pupils’ books and the tracking system used to monitor their progress.
- Inspectors considered the 230 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, and the questionnaires returned by staff. Inspectors took into account the views of parents who telephoned or wrote to the inspection team.

Inspection team

Miranda Perry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sarah Murrell

Additional Inspector

Kewal Goel

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Sa’ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Chauncy is an average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This provides additional funding for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school uses alternative provision provided by Hertfordshire Regional College.
- The school has a collaborative sixth form with four other schools.
- Chauncy School converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school, The Chauncy School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that most lessons are outstanding by:
 - giving pupils the chance to practise different forms of writing, particularly extended writing, in all subjects
 - making sure that all pupils in every class have work which is difficult enough for them.
- Measure pupils' progress more sharply, so that the appropriate support and challenge is put in place to ensure more pupils reach high GCSE grades.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school works successfully in partnership with primary schools so that pupils make good progress as soon as they arrive at Chauncy and over their time in Key Stage 3.
- Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4 because every pupil has targets which are demanding and specific to them. One Year 11 pupil said, 'It seems like every day they make my target harder, but that's what I want, and I always get the targets.'
- In the majority of subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4, attainment is above average. For example, in 2012, the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE grades A* to C in French, German, Spanish, history, geography, art, biology, chemistry, physics, design and technology, music, religious studies and statistics was above average. Attainment in mathematics for grades A* to C was average. Attainment in the science Key Stage 4 vocational course was well above average.
- The school is contesting the 2012 English GCSE results. The proportion of pupils attaining A* to C in English was average. The school contests that the proportion is above average.
- In geography, Spanish, art and statistics, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to A was above average. In the majority of subjects, attainment at grades A* to A was broadly average. The school does not measure pupils' progress with the accuracy needed to offer appropriate support for pupils capable of reaching higher GCSE grades.
- Pupils are only entered early for GCSE if it produces the best results, particularly for the more able. For example, pupils are entered early for statistics GCSE, and their overall progress and attainment is well above average.
- In mathematics lessons at Key Stage 3, pupils do well because the teachers always share with them how well they are doing and what they have to do to get better. This gives the pupils confidence. In a Key Stage 3 mathematics lesson, a boy said, 'Sir never lets us get stuck because we don't understand. We know what to do in this class.'
- Pupils make good progress in English because the teachers understand clearly what the examination requirements are. In a Year 10 English lesson, pupils were able to correct their answers with the teacher's help so that they immediately got more marks per question.
- The standards that pupils who are eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium achieve are as high as their peers. The school uses the pupil premium to give all pupils equal access to learning. For example, the school provides buses for pupils attending alternative provision.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do well and some of them do better than their peers. The school understands what exactly each pupil's special educational needs are, and what progress they are capable of.
- More-able pupils make good progress because they are excited and inspired by the programme of activities which the school provides for them.
- Pupils in the sixth form achieve well because they are given demanding targets and individual study plans.

- Pupils who attend the alternative provision make good progress because a learning programme is developed for them which is highly personalised.
- In some lessons, pupils are given activities which do not demand enough of them. Pupils are sometimes all given the same work, when there is a range of abilities in class, and so not all pupils make as much progress as they could.
- There is range of sessions held for pupils before school to close any gaps they might have in their learning and understanding. This has a positive impact on progress. Pupils can revise their chemistry, practise their letters and sounds, and improve their homework, while being served breakfast by the headteacher.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good, and the pupils benefit from some outstanding lessons.
- In the best lessons, pupils achieve high standards. In a sixth form dance lesson, the rapid pace of the learning meant that pupils, within 15 minutes, had learnt a highly sophisticated sequence, using impressive dance skills.
- Pupils learn well because questions force them to think and develop their ideas. In a Year 11 science lesson, the teacher questioned pupils so they could apply their understanding of mass and weight to conditions on Earth, the moon and Jupiter.
- Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to measure their own progress and the progress of their peers. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, pupils quickly revised their knowledge of metric conversions by checking each other's answers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are taught well, particularly because adults in the class work together to support them. In a Year 9 food technology lesson about bread making, all pupils, regardless of their needs, made good progress because the teacher and the technician questioned pupils together to promote understanding.
- Pupils benefit from learning materials which give them the opportunity to achieve the best they can. Pupils in a Year 8 French lesson were given sentence-starters which meant that they were confident enough to practise new vocabulary for discussion.
- In the best English lessons, pupils make good progress because they are interested in the texts they are studying. One Year 11 pupil said, 'I don't like the river god, the poet doesn't like the river god, and the words he uses show me why.'
- When mathematics teaching is outstanding, teachers' subject knowledge is very good, expectations are very high, and the pace of lessons is demanding.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good, and sometimes outstanding. In a Year 12 physical education lesson, pupils learnt well because the teacher had a thorough understanding of the examination requirements.
- The school works closely with Hertfordshire Regional College, and checks the pupils' progress very regularly to ensure teaching is consistently good.

- Sometimes, lesson plans focus on the activities in the lesson, rather than what the pupils are going to learn from doing the activities. As a result, some activities do not give pupils the chance to learn as much as they could.
- In the few lessons where progress is not good, pupils are not given the chance to practise writing accurately and at length. On these occasions, for example, pupils do not develop the skills to answer examination questions to the best of their ability.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are extremely polite, and courteous. Around the school, they have high expectations of their own behaviour. All public spaces are well ordered.
- The school promotes an attitude of respect among its staff and pupils. Everyone has the same chance to succeed because every pupil is understood and known by the school as an individual.
- Staff model outstanding behaviour to the pupils. One Year 11 pupil said, 'We would not be rude to teachers here. They are always polite to us.'
- Pupils manage their own behaviour in class. It is common practice for pupils to lead parts of the lessons themselves, and insist on their peers' attention and co-operation.
- Pupils support each other to learn. They work very well in pairs and groups and are eager to praise each other. They get on very well with each other.
- Parents feel that their children are very safe at the school, and pupils agree. One parent telephoned the inspection team to explain that the school could not have done more to make her children feel happy, safe and well looked after.
- Pupils and parents feel that bullying is very rare and that, if it does occur, staff deal with it immediately and successfully.
- The school is successful at rapidly improving the behaviour of pupils who can find it difficult to behave well. This is because the school works hard to understand how a pupil's friendships, family and local community can have an effect on their behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour in the local community is very well regarded. The school always receives praise for its pupils' behaviour at its annual, locally famous, 'community day'.
- Pupils relish the praise and rewards they get for their outstanding behaviour. The school has a system where all good behaviour in class is recognised. One pupil in Key Stage 3 said, 'It makes my day when I get a bronze award. I'll put everything into getting it.'
- The school applies its same high expectations of behaviour to pupils attending alternative provision, and checks daily that these standards have been maintained.
- Attendance is high and pupils are punctual because pupils want to come to school and learn.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers know the pupils as individuals. Pupils make good progress because they feel their success has been recognised by leaders and managers. One Year 11 pupil said, 'When I get better at something, the headteacher congratulates me personally. This makes me work hard.'
 - The school has excellent relationships with parents. Parents feel that the school always sees the best in their children, and celebrates success whenever it can.
 - The subjects and activities on offer for the pupils are outstanding. Because the school works with four other schools in the sixth form, pupils have a stimulating range of courses available to them.
 - The school works hard to find a course that meets a pupil's needs, so that pupils who attend alternative provision succeed and stay on at the college, post-16.
 - Leaders and managers have a very effective system of setting targets for teachers to improve their teaching. One teacher in charge of a subject area said, 'The targets are very clear. They mean we have been able to focus on the detail and move teaching forward.'
 - Teaching is consistently good because teaching is checked in lots of different ways by leaders and managers so that they can put different programmes in place that have a positive impact. For example, lessons are regularly observed, formally and informally, teachers observe and grade each other's lessons, and particular aspects of teaching, for example marking or planning, are regularly sampled.
 - Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. The system to check and reward behaviour that has been in place for a year has rapidly reduced the number of exclusions.
 - The school is thorough in gathering information about how well individual pupils are doing, The school does not use this information well enough to establish how quickly pupils are making progress that is better than average, and how much better than average this progress is. This makes it difficult for the school to take action to increase the number of pupils who get the highest GCSE grades.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governors work well in partnership with the school's other leaders and managers. They have a thorough understanding of how good teaching is, because of regular, thorough updates from the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They understand how well pupils perform, although they have a better understanding of attainment than they do of progress against national averages. The governors work with an external adviser to make sure that the targets they set the headteacher will help to push the school forward. They are clear that teachers get a pay rise if their pupils make at least good progress, and that teachers do not if their pupils' progress is not good enough. In his weekly meetings with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body regularly checks that the pupil premium is having a positive impact on pupils' progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137090
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	403689

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	979
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Watson
Headteacher	Dennis O'Sullivan
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01920 411200
Fax number	01920 411201
Email address	admin@chauncy.org.uk

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