

Chesham Grammar School

Whitehill, Chesham, HP5 1BA

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and students

This is an outstanding school.

- Achievement is outstanding. Almost all students make strong progress through both key stages. The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is consistently higher than national averages.
- All groups of students, including those eligible for the student premium, disabled students, students with special educational needs, and those who need special help to catch up, make at least good and often outstanding progress through the school.
- Teaching is outstanding because it is typically good and is often outstanding. Teachers are good role models for their students, set high expectations, match the work closely to students' needs, and motivate them well.
- The sixth form is outstanding. In almost all subjects students make excellent progress and achieve very good results. This is due to the excellent pastoral care and high quality teaching they receive.
- Behaviour is outstanding because it is typically so. Students say they are very happy at the school. They have extremely positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary.
- Safeguarding is good. Students say they feel safe in school and their well-being is given high priority by all staff and governors.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and both he and his senior team are passionate about providing the best possible education for all students.
- The well-trained and enthusiastic governing body is committed to school improvement. It provides outstanding governance and, through careful review of all activities, ensures there is an excellent balance of challenge and support that has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and in students' attendance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 48 lessons, of which two were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors talked with students, looked at samples of their work, and listened to a group of Year 7 students read.
- Meetings were also held with teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the headteacher, senior leadership team, and the school's other leaders. A meeting was held with the school's improvement consultant to discuss the extent and impact of support provided to the school.
- The inspectors took account of the 273 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, two letters from parents, and 87 questionnaires returned by school staff.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at many documents including the school's website, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, performance management documentation, planning documents, monitoring and assessment information, school policies, and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

John Collins, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Teresa Gilpin	Additional Inspector
Valerie Houlday	Additional Inspector
Pamela Rutherford	Additional Inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It converted to become an academy school in August 2011. When its predecessor school, also known as Chesham Grammar School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school benefits from its own sixth form, which is open to both boys and girls from other schools. About 20 students per year join the sixth form by this route.
- The school has a relatively small number of students who join part way through their secondary education.
- No students are provided with alternative education either in the school or elsewhere.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average and all have a good command of the English language.
- Approximately one in 40 of the students is eligible for the student premium; this is well below the national average. Student premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus are lower than average though high for a selective school. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is also below average, but high for schools of this type.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has gained Investor in People and Investor in Careers Awards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' rate of attendance by:
 - analysing attendance data for each year group and investigating patterns of absence
 - strengthening the system of rewards and sanctions for good attendance appropriately, having regard to students' age and circumstances.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students is outstanding

- Almost all students entering Year 7 are from the top 30% of the ability range. By the time they leave in Year 11, almost all students have achieved at least five GCSE grades A* to C and about two thirds of the grades are A* or A. Their results are consistently significantly higher than national averages and high in comparison with similar students nationally.
- The proportion obtaining EBacc (GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics, science, a language and the humanities) is also well above the national average and has improved year on year.
- Students who join the school part way through their secondary education make strong progress and there is no significant difference between their achievements and those of students entering in Year 7.
- Inspection evidence and school information indicate that the great majority of students make excellent progress in all years, but especially in Years 10 and 11.
- In the sixth form, the progress of the great majority of students is excellent, and GCE AS-level and A-level results are consistently high in comparison with national averages and are why the sixth form is outstanding.
- These outstanding achievements are a direct result of teachers striving to obtain the best from every student together with confident, accurate, high quality teaching and strong pastoral support. The most able students do exceptionally well and there are Oxbridge entries every year.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and provide skilful support to individual students in their learning. As a result these students make good or better progress.
- Reading is encouraged for all students and, as a result, almost all read widely for pleasure. Years 7 and 8 students that enter with below average reading scores benefit greatly from catch-up funding and the various reading programmes and make exceptionally good progress. The school library is frequently and well used by students.
- The school has in the past entered its students early for GCSE examinations but, after much discussion, has opted not to do this in future.
- Students from all different ethnic backgrounds achieve at a similar outstanding level. The school ensures all students, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities for learning that are appropriate to their needs.
- School records and inspection evidence for students currently supported by the student premium show that there is no gap in achievement between these and other students in either English or mathematics. This is because of the high quality support they receive from subject teachers and the various intervention programmes provided by the school.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good in almost all subjects, and is occasionally spectacular. This is largely because of the supportive way the school encourages its students to persevere, but also because of the high quality teaching and support they receive.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Overall, the quality of teaching is outstanding. It is typically good and is often excellent.
- Teachers set high expectations for their students and students respond very well to the challenge. They have high aspirations and make good, and often better, progress as a result. Examples of outstanding teaching and learning abound in all subjects.
- In a Year 7 science lesson, students were learning about chemical reactions. They were knowledgeable and confident when responding to questions asking them where such changes occurred in everyday life. One student explained, with a smile, that when baking a cake, the original ingredients undergo chemical change so it tastes better than the separate ingredients.

- In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students explained with confidence and clarity to the inspector how they could compare two sets of data using special graphs and diagrams. In a sixth form psychology lesson, skilful, probing questioning by the teacher revealed in-depth understanding of the features of different kinds of stress. In a sixth form economics lesson, students' clear understanding of market forces led to remarkably insightful and mature oral and written work of high quality.
- In all the lessons seen the climate for learning was at least good and good relationships between teachers and students, as well as among students, featured strongly.
- Teaching in mathematics and in English is at least good and often outstanding. Most teachers use student progress information and assessment effectively to track and monitor their progress; they use this information to challenge all groups. Lessons are planned and structured to meet the needs of all students. This has had a clear impact on raising standards in both subjects.
- When assessing students' written work, a small number of teachers do not provide sufficient written information to enable students to understand what they have to do to improve and to move to the next level; they also do not correct spelling mistakes. However, the great majority give high quality advice and guidance to which students respond appropriately.
- In the sixth form, teachers have high expectations of their students and this encourages them to achieve well. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of individual students. Much of the teaching is outstanding as a result.
- Most teachers throughout the school support the development of students' literacy skills effectively in all subjects. Students who have difficulty in English and/or mathematics benefit from the school's strategies that enable them to catch up rapidly with their classmates.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View said that teaching was good and that they were pleased with the quality of homework set.

The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding

- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are smartly dressed, courteous, and helpful to each other and to visitors. They are respectful of each other's views, beliefs, property and feelings. As a result the school is a calm, orderly community and has a strong ethos for learning.
- A consequence of the vast majority of students' thirst for learning, and frequent checking and follow-up by staff, is that their attendance has steadily improved and is now at the national average. However, there remains work to be done to bring attendance up to the level of similar schools nationally.
- Students' high levels of motivation are coupled with good ability to concentrate and it is clear that the great majority strive to do their best. This is evident in the careful and systematic way most students present their written work. They make effective use of teachers' comments for improvement when they are given them, responding in writing.
- The pastoral care system provides excellent support for all students. They say they feel cared for by their teachers and are happy to be at the school.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is developed well by the school, and there are clear indications of the good impact of the school's values and caring ethos. For example, students regularly organise charity events and raise large sums of money to help others. Some regularly visit countries such as Ghana and Madagascar, sometimes taking clothes and books with them to help those in need.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good; it is given high priority by staff and governors. Without exception, groups of students in conversation with inspectors said they feel safe at school.
- Students have a good awareness of unsafe situations, including internet safety and road and rail safety, and they know how to keep safe. Students say bullying rarely happens but if it does, and the teacher is told, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. They know that other students provide excellent support when they share any worries. They are very tolerant of the differences in

others and know that, if they are worried, they can also talk with an adult in the school.

- The very positive views of the majority of parents and staff support the inspection findings about behaviour and safety.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader. He is strongly supported by senior leaders who are themselves highly effective and skilled practitioners. All are passionate about improving the school and the achievements of its students. They have ensured that all staff, parents and students have a clear understanding of the school's aims and their part in achieving the school's vision.
- Leaders at all levels influence decision-making and take an active part in starting, and leading, improvement activities. Most middle leaders in particular are knowledgeable, incisive and committed to improvement in the areas they lead.
- The school's own checks on its strengths and weaknesses are accurate and its plans for improvement are correctly focused on improving teaching, attendance and students' achievement. Teaching and learning are extremely well managed and consequently outstanding.
- The school has earned the Investors in People Award largely because the headteacher and governing body have ensured that most teachers, middle leaders, and other school staff have had relevant and appropriate training in areas that required improvement. This has been effective, for example, in producing improvements in students' attendance and in their progress in almost all subjects.
- Students speak highly of the advice they receive for gap years and for their future careers and this is reflected in the school's achievement of the Investors in Careers Award.
- The school has received very effective support from external consultants, especially for the improvement of the quality of teaching and 'getting from good to great' in leadership and management.
- The school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in offering the required wide range of well-planned learning activities, including sport, which motivates the students and helps them to develop well, academically and personally. The sixth form courses available very much reflect the outcomes of a survey of parents and students. The school does not offer vocational courses but guides students, when appropriate, to suitable high quality provision nearby.
- Equality of opportunity and inclusion underpin the work and ethos of the school.
- The vast majority of parents, through Parent View, and staff, through questionnaires and in conversation, are very positive about the leadership and management of the school. Parents are very supportive of the school and contribute significantly to improvements in school facilities and to school events.

■ The governance of the school:

The highly committed, enthusiastic, and well-trained governors provide outstanding governance to the school. They have gone to great lengths in consulting stakeholders to make sure that all share the school's vision. As a result the staff, parents and students work as a team that is determined to continually improve in all they do. Governors are able to hold the school to account because they have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and make effective use of national information to compare the school's achievements with relevant national averages. This enables them to take a major role in school improvement planning and in policy making. Their awareness of the need to maintain the good progress for the students that are eligible for student premium funding, disabled students and those with special educational needs led to the allocation of funds to provide additional support for those students where necessary. As a result, their progress is similar to, and often above, that of their peers. Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching, and are very much involved in decisions about teachers' status and pay; they use safe recruitment procedures and do not permit unjustified promotion or salary increases. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met, and have good capacity to assist the school with further improvements.

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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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	137091
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	430244
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of students	11–19
Gender of students	Mixed
Gender of students in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	1216
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	371
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Walton
Headteacher	Philip Wayne
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01494 782854
Fax number	01494 775414
Email address	office@cheshamgrammar.bucks.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

