

Christleton High School

Village Road, Christleton, Chester, Cheshire, CH3 7AD

Inspection dates 5–6 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and students

This is an outstanding school.

- Inspirational leadership and governance, extremely skilful and committed staff and the insatiable thirst for knowledge instilled in students, all ensure that the highest levels of teaching and achievement have been sustained.
- All groups of students make rapid progress from their starting points. Progress is better than is usually seen nationally by the end of Year 11.
- Students maintain higher than expected standards from the time they join the school to when they complete their GCSEs. Attainment is consistently high.
- Teaching is very effective because teachers are highly skilled, creative and relentless in their determination to help all students achieve their potential.
- The behaviour of students is exceptional both in and out of classrooms; they are welcoming, courteous and respectful towards each other and to adults.
- Excellent care and support ensures students feel safe in school, and that they know how to look after themselves in all circumstances.
- The curriculum ensures that the aspirations of students are very well met, and that they are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern British society.
- An exemplary, wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities is much appreciated and supported by students. Activities include an enviable range of opportunities that broaden and strengthen students' experiences. This makes a major contribution to students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Middle leaders are very effective in bringing about further improvement in the quality of teaching to ensure that even higher standards are achieved by all students.
- Governors are robust in holding leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the attainment and progress of all students. They ensure that the school is safe. The governing body actively seeks the views of parents through its own surveys, and acts effectively on the feedback received.
- The sixth form is good with several outstanding features, including attainment in many subjects, the behaviour and safety, careers guidance and the destinations of students. The quality of teaching, leadership and achievement in the sixth form are good. At times, assessment information is not used often enough to ensure tasks plug any gaps in understanding and that any potential dips in progress are remedied swiftly. This slows progress for some students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons or parts of lessons, including a joint observation with a member of the senior staff group.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including that relating to attainment and progress, behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings, school publications, safeguarding and other key policies and procedures, as well as the school's evaluation of its performance.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, senior and middle leaders, teachers and students.
- Inspectors examined the work in students' books and listened to a group of students in Years 7 and 8 read.
- The 94 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered, as well as over 500 responses from parents in a survey carried out by the school in the spring of 2014. They also studied the results of 75 responses from a survey of staff carried out by the school this year.

Inspection team

Anne Smedley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Neil MacKenzie	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Additional Inspector
Steven Baker	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Christleton High School converted to become an academy school in August 2011. When its predecessor school, Christleton High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- This is a larger than average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below average, so too is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing and in business and enterprise.
- A very small number of students attend part-time alternative provision at Chester College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students that make outstanding progress in the sixth form by ensuring:
 - the evaluation of students' progress is more frequent and rigorous and ensures timely action if a dip in achievement arises
 - teachers always use assessment information to help plan activities to fill gaps in students' understanding.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is dedicated to ensuring that all students achieve the highest possible standards through the exemplary teaching and care. His passion, values and vision permeate every aspect of the school and they are promoted by governors, staff and students.
- The resulting ethos and culture underpins the work of the school, and leads to a climate where outstanding achievement, behaviour and the quality of teaching and progression are secured.
- Leaders at every level, including middle leaders, are very effective. They sustain high levels of achievement and provision. The school's evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. Future planning is effective in bringing about improvement. Priorities for development are clear and actions very effectively tracked and reviewed against established deadlines and success criteria. Accountability of leaders to bring about change is robust.
- Overall, the tracking of students' progress is very effective and leads to students set aspirational targets that underpin their outstanding achievement, whatever their starting points. They know their targets and how well they are doing, and how to improve. As a result, the promotion of equal opportunities is effective. The school has started to review its assessment policy in the light of new arrangements being introduced nationally.
- Outstanding teaching has been sustained through rigorous checking, with support provided where it is needed, including an exciting and creative professional development programme, where staff work together to share good practice and develop new skills.
- Teachers are set challenging targets linked to how well students perform. Salary rewards are linked to the achievement of these targets.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. It is designed to meet the needs and interests of the different groups of students as they move through the school, and offers a creative and extensive range of choices at GCSE and in the sixth form, underpinned by outstanding careers guidance, which is appreciated by students. They are well informed about what courses and qualifications are available to them make effective choices that ensure that every student obtains a place at a leading British university, college or gains an apprenticeship.
- A huge range of extra-curricular opportunities are enjoyed by most students, and the school benefits from its extensive partnerships with local, national and multi-national businesses, commerce, universities and colleges, sports clubs and the local community to create enjoyable and high quality experiences for students. These range from local visits to places of worship of the main faiths, work experience placements, universities, for example, and foreign travel, such as to Tibet, China, Germany, Russia and Spain. Opportunities for charitable work, attending and performing in musical theatre extend students' cultural experience. They benefit from attending major sporting events and successfully representing the school, City and region in a wide range of competitions.
- The curriculum and these extra opportunities all contribute to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which prepares students extremely well for life in modern British society.
- The school monitors the quality of teaching, achievement and behaviour and safety of the few students who attend alternative provision and ensures that they match those of other students effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors demonstrate exceptional commitment to the school's continued improvement. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors contribute to the development plan and evaluation of the school. They analyse data and are aware of the impact of the pupil premium funding and hold leaders to account for the achievement of disadvantaged students. The school's budget is managed economically using the governors' considerable expertise. There is a robust medium-term plan to ensure that the school's priorities for the future can be funded and achieved. Governors are fully aware of the quality of teaching and are exceptionally rigorous in their management of the headteacher's and the senior leadership team's performance, and are fully involved in agreeing the salary progression of teaching staff. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met, and that staff and students are safe on the school's premises.

The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding.

- Students' attitudes to learning are outstanding, both within and beyond the classroom. They are committed to succeed and respond well to the challenges set by their teachers. They thrive in an environment in which mutual respect is embedded.
- Their conduct is also outstanding; they are welcoming and polite, move around the building sensibly and treat each other with courtesy. They form queues and wait in line patiently. There is no litter around the school and they leave classrooms tidy. Behaviour records confirm this outstanding behaviour is typical over time.
- They have great pride in their school and most would highly recommend the school to a friend.
- Bullying is rare and any is effectively and swiftly dealt with by the school. Students have a thorough understanding, through effective teaching, assemblies and the tutor time programme, of the different types of bullying.
- They attend school punctually and attendance figures compare favourably with the national average.
- The attendance of the very few students who attend part-time alternative provision matches that of other students, as does their behaviour.
- Fixed-term exclusions also compare favourably to the national average and are decreasing. There have been no permanent exclusions since the academy opened.
- Parents say that behaviour is good in the school, both in Parent View and in the school's own survey of parents' opinion.
- Students speak positively of the awards system in school, and appreciate being congratulated by teachers and their tutors when they receive acknowledgement for their excellent behaviour. For example, at lunchtime, a Year 11 tutor was delighted to be able to praise the many members of his group for the praise points they had received that morning in a variety of subjects, and the students were happy to receive the recognition from him.
- Sixth form students are outstanding role models for younger students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements, and the leadership of safeguarding is outstanding. Regular training is in place for all staff.
- Students are very positive about the care and support they receive and parents agree that their children are well cared for in school. Parents are unreservedly positive that their child feels safe in the school.
- Students have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet; they appreciate the dangers of drug abuse and other threats because they are taught well about risks and are able to relate them to their own situation. They understand the benefits of healthy lifestyles.
- Health and safety risk assessments are robust, and school records confirm that students are kept safe.
- The school ensures that the small number of students who attend alternative provision are kept safe.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Consistently high quality teaching over time has a considerable impact on students' progress and attainment. There are many outstanding features in teaching.
- Teachers create a highly positive climate for learning. They expertly harness students' unquenchable thirst for knowledge by a range of highly creative learning activities successfully designed to fascinate, ignite curiosity, challenge and support all groups students, whatever their starting points.
- Many opportunities to work as a group and share ideas further develop high levels of communication through problem-solving and investigative work. For example, Year 11 students working in groups to populate a template in preparation for an essay, sensibly gave each other responsibilities for different aspects of the task, and then drew together everyone's contribution into a very effective plan.
- Teachers build powerful and positive relationships with and between students in a climate of mutual trust and safety. Strategies to involve students in their own learning are well developed and are successful in accelerating and deepening learning. These are carried out within a climate of respect for each other's work and a determination to improve.
- Constructive feedback from teachers enables students to improve and extend their work. For example, a Year 12 art class was gaining an awareness of the work of locally born, world-renowned sculptor Cornelia Parker, incorporating some of her techniques and styles into their own creations. The students were evaluating their own and other students' work, using impressive, critical language in an exceptionally mature and knowledgeable way, while the teacher engaged in highly effective feedback with individuals.

The students were enthusiastic about this approach as they felt firmly that it helped them to learn exceptionally well and to create the outstanding quality of work, which was evident in the room and displayed around the school.

- Teachers' expectations are always high. They check students' understanding throughout lessons. Their expert questioning supports, develops thinking, deepens understanding and ensures that students learn from each other.
- Literacy skills are taught very successfully from the time students join the school, and rapid gains are made. Teachers provide opportunities to write imaginatively and much writing is highly creative. For example, a Year 7 class tasked with an assessed piece on their imaginary world produced writing which was a delight to read, such as 'the wood lay in the soft palm of my hand', and 'the air was thickly padded with icing sugar'.
- Reading is taught most effectively and much use is made of different types of text across the curriculum to inform, stimulate discussion, challenge opinions and enthuse students. Students who are given extra support for their reading make excellent progress and speak highly of the extra help received.
- The teaching of mathematics is strong and teachers provide opportunities for students to practise numeracy skills across many subjects. They insist students record their findings accurately using a range of methods and create charts with precision in mathematics and other subjects such as science, technology and geography.
- Teachers ensure students use their highly effective information and communication technology (ICT) skills to research, record and evaluate their findings in many subjects.
- Teachers' exceptional subject knowledge is evident and is used to the advantage of all students. Imaginative use of resources develops high-level thinking skills and deepens students' understanding. For example, a creative compilation of music in an English lesson provided a highly effective stimulus for students to identify the pros and cons of war.
- The very small number of students who attend part-time provision benefit from effective teaching which is monitored carefully by the school.

The achievement of students is outstanding

- Students enter the school with attainment that is well above average. They make excellent progress and by the end of Year 11 their attainment is high and this has been maintained since the school converted to an academy in 2011.
- The percentage of students gaining five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, was 78% in 2013 and has been consistently well above the national average. This is supported by 81% obtaining GCSE A* to C grades in English, 89% in mathematics and 82% in science. According to unvalidated data, this high level of attainment improved even further in 2014.
- The results of national tests show that the proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics and in English is very high compared with national averages; the proportion of students exceeding expected progress in mathematics is also very high compared with the national average and in English, it is above average.
- The most able students make excellent progress and consistently achieve the highest grades. The proportion who do this is well above average. They excel because teachers have high expectations of them and they are constantly challenged and supported to achieve their best throughout their time in the school.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make the same excellent progress as that of their peers because teachers have high expectations of them, they are supported very well in lessons and are given effective individual support. The provision for students with special educational needs is effective in meeting their needs.
- Disadvantaged students (who are supported by the pupil premium) achieve very well from their starting points. Funding is used well to support them in overcoming barriers to learning. In 2013, the gap between their attainment and that of non-disadvantaged students in school in both English and mathematics was just over one GCSE grade. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students in the school and non-disadvantaged students nationally was half a GCSE grade in English and less than half a grade in mathematics. Unvalidated data in 2014 showed the gap in attainment between these two groups in the school reduced to two-thirds of a grade in English and just under one GCSE grade in mathematics.
- The very small number of students who attend part-time alternative provision achieve very well.
- Students have very strong oracy skills and are confident when speaking in a variety of settings, using specialist vocabulary appropriately and explaining their ideas, knowledge and understanding convincingly.

Reading is encouraged across the school, and high reading skills are a real strength. Students keenly and regularly read for pleasure as well as to gain knowledge. Numeracy skills are strong and are practised confidently and effectively across the curriculum. Students use high levels of ICT skills routinely to help them to learn.

- Early entry for mathematics and English GCSEs is used very well by the school and to the great advantage of the students, and the school involves both students and their parents in the process.

The sixth form provision

is good

- There are many outstanding aspects of the sixth form, including the behaviour and safety of students, the curriculum, personal development, care, careers guidance and the destinations of students. The high retention rates, as well as attainment in many subjects are also strong. However, the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good and not yet outstanding because achievement, the quality of teaching and leadership and management are good.
- The progress students make is good: it is improving and is stronger in Year 13. The attainment of students is consistently above average and is high in a range of subjects including art, English language, religious studies and psychology. Examination results in English, religious studies and art were all well above average.
- The most able students achieve well. The percentage of students gaining A* to B grades at A level was high at 57.6%.
- The proportion of students in the sixth form who are disadvantaged is smaller than that in Years 7 to 11 but is increasing. The progress that disadvantaged students make is similar to that of non-disadvantaged students.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good over time and its impact is outstanding in some subjects. The leadership of the sixth form is good. However, the frequency of monitoring of progress by some teachers limits their ability to adapt their teaching to fill gaps in students' understanding.
- Leadership is effective in many aspects especially in ensuring a rich curriculum and students' safety. However, subject and senior leaders do not always identify soon enough when some subjects begin to perform below the high level of others, so improvements in relation to this are slow to have an impact on progress.
- Students relish the wealth of opportunity they have to develop leadership and personal skills, such as becoming student governors, supporting younger students with their learning, and successfully participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.
- Their conduct and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are outstanding role models for younger students and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a considerable strength.
- Students value the breadth of the curriculum offered and students join the academy to benefit from subjects such as politics and sociology.
- Students attribute much of their success to the care and guidance they receive throughout their time in the sixth form. They receive excellent advice on how to move on to their next steps in education, whether this is to University, College or apprenticeship schemes. They are highly aspirational and many progress to the country's best universities.

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	136645
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	448919

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,290
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S Leake
Headteacher	A Lamberton
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2010
Telephone number	01244 335843
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Email address	info@christletonhigh.co.uk

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