

Cheshunt School

College Road, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire EN8 9LY

Inspection dates	10–11 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across the school. Despite the best efforts of leaders, there has been considerable difficulty in recruiting suitably skilled teachers in certain subjects.
- Leaders are improving the school, but it is not yet good.
- Leaders have taken effective actions to improve teaching in science and modern foreign languages. These actions have not had sufficient time to impact on pupil outcomes.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability do not make the progress of which they are capable. Until recently their individual learning needs have not been met well enough to maximise the progress these pupils can make.
- More-able pupils do not make consistently good progress across the curriculum. Teachers in some subjects do not set work that is challenging enough for them.
- The gaps in attainment and achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally, in mathematics, remain too wide.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and other leaders have successfully established a strong ethos and have secured improvements across the school.
- The governing body provides high-quality strategic leadership and carries out its duties very well.
- The sixth form is good. Learners make good progress because of the good quality of teaching across many subjects.
- School leaders ensure that pupils' personal development and welfare are well provided for. Pupils appreciate the fact that careful attention is paid to those who need the most support.
- Pupils behave well in almost all cases. They are increasingly proud of their school and show respect to each other and towards adults in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - making sure that all teachers plan learning that is well matched to the abilities of all groups of pupils, in particular the more able, disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs or disability
 - ensuring the strongest teaching practice is effectively shared with all staff, in particular those who are new to the school or those who need further support in developing their teaching.
- Improve leadership and management by taking further action to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are at least good.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The highly respected and determined headteacher, ably supported by all other leaders, has successfully created a powerful school ethos based upon these values: 'Supportive. Inclusive. Effective'. As a result, pupils, many of whom arrive at the school with attainment below that of their peers nationally, develop the confidence to improve their learning skills. In the words of one pupil, 'we are one big community', a sentiment echoed by other pupils over the course of the inspection.
- Leaders, including governors, know their school well. They are reflective and take every opportunity to review the effectiveness of what they do. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of what needs to improve.
- The headteacher and his senior team have an accurate understanding of the areas of strength and weakness in teaching across the school. They have high expectations of their teachers and take robust action where practice is not strong enough. The headteacher is uncompromising in his view that he will recruit only teachers who are good enough to accelerate pupils' progress. Despite tireless efforts, he has been unsuccessful in recruiting to some key teaching posts. This has led to variations in the quality of teaching practice, which frustrates pupils and parents and has led to the affected pupils making inconsistent progress.
- Middle leaders are very effective in their work. They form part of the 'one leadership' team, working alongside senior leaders and governors. Middle leaders have demonstrated their ability to make appropriate changes that have a positive impact upon pupils' progress. For example, working together and using their careful analysis of examination performance, middle leaders have successfully amended the curriculum so that it provides pupils with a wider range of writing opportunities. As a result, pupils are increasingly confident in their written work.
- Teachers welcome the high-quality training opportunities they are provided with. They reflect on their own effectiveness and willingly offer support to their peers. This has led to an improvement in teaching practice, which was evident in many lessons observed. For example, teaching in physical education provided strong evidence of the impact of recent training on developing pupils' analytical skills.
- The curriculum, which has breadth and balance, provides opportunities for most pupils to make strong progress. Leaders review the curriculum regularly and, through the introduction of subjects such as psychology at Key Stage 4, ensure that pupils have access to subjects that interest and enthuse them. The curriculum is also adapted to meet the specific needs of each cohort of pupils. For example, pupils in Year 7 who need extra support to improve their literacy receive additional English lessons and make significant improvements to their reading ability as a result. The curriculum is enriched by visits in Britain and abroad as well as by a wide range of clubs, such as those in film, knitting and gymnastics.
- School leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for throughout the curriculum. For example, assemblies cover themes such as equality, while pupils learn about multicultural cuisine in technology lessons. The very large majority of pupils are considerate and reflective. Pupils have opportunities to take part in school decision-making processes such as through the influential school 'student executive'. They understand the importance of democracy and freedom of speech. For example, pupils maturely explained their recent work to explore the views of their peers on the rewards system in school. Opportunities such as these are ensuring that pupils are developing the skills needed to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders work effectively to ensure that pupils joining the school have a smooth transition. Sports and modern foreign languages teachers work with primary schools on a weekly basis. Teachers and leaders in other subjects pay regular visits to primary schools to ensure that incoming pupils are well prepared for their start at Cheshunt School.
- School leaders make appropriate use of external support to improve the quality of provision. For example, training by a national leader of education has improved the effectiveness of middle leaders. The local authority has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It provides relevant services to the school, which are helping to increase the rate of improvement.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding is increasingly effective. For example, the attendance and behaviour of these pupils have improved as a result of the appropriate support put in place. These pupils are making good progress in English. However, leaders are aware that the progress that they make in other areas of the curriculum is inconsistent and are taking action to address this issue.

- The recently appointed leaders in science and special educational needs are swiftly making the necessary changes to the provision in their respective areas of responsibility. These changes are already having an impact on the quality of teaching, but are too recent to have had a significant impact on the progress of pupils across all years.
- School leaders have successfully worked to create an environment in which pupils feel safe. School surveys indicate that the overwhelming majority of parents feel that their children are safe and well cared for at the school. However, a minority of parents do not agree that this is the case and do not feel well informed about the robust actions that the school takes to ensure that pupils are safe.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The knowledgeable Chair of the Governing Body leads the governing body very effectively. As a result, governors provide clear strategic direction for the school and demonstrate a clear commitment to the school vision.
 - Governors consider all aspects of the school’s performance through their chosen ‘one committee’ structure. As a result, governors have a detailed knowledge of the quality of education provided by the school. They make sure that they understand the external validation of the information that is presented by senior leaders, so they hold school leaders fully to account.
 - Evidence seen on inspection indicates that governors monitor outcomes, teaching and behaviour closely, providing robust challenge to leaders, including middle leaders.
 - Governors are diligent in ensuring that the management of teachers’ performance is carried out in line with the school’s policy and procedures.
 - Governors’ astute and careful management of finances has ensured that the school is able to improve, despite a reduction in income caused by the falling numbers in school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records are carefully maintained, as is the single central record. Staff training is comprehensive and covers the relevant aspects of safeguarding. As a result, staff are clear as to what to look for and the actions they need to take if they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is much improved but is variable within some subjects. Often this is where there have been frequent changes in teachers. This variability means that Key Stage 4 pupils are not making the accelerated progress needed to make up for the legacy of interrupted teaching in the past. This is why teaching, learning and assessment require improvement.
- Teachers do not consistently use information about what pupils know and can achieve to plan learning that is appropriately challenging. As a consequence, the progress that pupils make is inconsistent. For example, in one science lesson, some pupils rapidly completed a task that was not well matched to their abilities. They then sat talking as they waited for others to complete their work. By contrast, the teacher’s skilful planning in another science lesson challenged and interested all pupils, who were able to deepen their understanding of chemical reactions as a result.
- Teachers’ expectations of the presentation of the work that pupils are able to produce are not of the same high standard across curriculum areas. As a result, pupils’ work can lack detailed care and attention and this goes unchallenged by the teacher. Where expectations are high, pupils show what they can achieve, for example in physical education and English.
- Aspects of teachers’ questioning are highly effective and extend pupils’ thinking. The teacher’s well-crafted questioning in a Year 11 business studies lesson provoked a mature discussion on the impact of globalisation. Similarly, pupils in a Year 8 English lesson gained a better understanding of narrative writing techniques as a result of the careful questioning by the teacher. This strong practice is not used with enough regularity across the school. For example, inspectors saw too many instances where teachers accepted the initial response of pupils and did not skilfully deepen their thinking and understanding.
- Many teachers follow the school’s policy on providing feedback on pupils’ work. Inspectors saw examples of subject-specific feedback which helped pupils to improve their learning. However, in some subjects, teachers’ comments are too vague to be helpful to pupils in developing technical aspects of their work. Often where this was the case, pupils do not attempt to improve their work and this slows their progress.
- There are areas of excellent teaching practice across the school. Where this is the case, teachers’ creative development of learning activities enthuses and challenges pupils. For example, pupils in a Year 11

physical education lesson worked extremely well together when sharing their ideas on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle while the teacher's skilful prompting helped them to further develop their analytical skills. The teacher's careful planning and skilful questioning in a Year 7 mathematics lesson enabled pupils to develop their mastery of geometry.

- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed in the classroom. They confidently move from pupil to pupil offering encouragement and giving them the confidence to attempt tasks that they find difficult. For example, the gentle encouragement of a teaching assistant enabled a Year 7 pupil to successfully complete work on fractions.
- Teachers' effective strategies to develop pupils' writing are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided for them to write at length. For example, pupils in a Year 11 science lesson wrote carefully crafted analyses of the properties of different rocks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders work very effectively to ensure that pupils are well cared for. Pupils' emotional well-being is supported through sensitive and skilled support. As one parent commented: 'I am impressed with the investment in the individual child'. Pupils who have English as an additional language were full of praise for the skilled teaching that helped them to develop their writing and speaking skills. This wide range of support is helping pupils to develop into more confident and resilient learners.
- Many pupils seek opportunities to further their knowledge outside of the classroom. The Learning Support Centre is a hive of activity at lunchtime, where pupils make use of the well-trained counsellor, or work happily together in one of the learning pods.
- Pupils are provided with plentiful opportunities to deepen their understanding of leading a healthy lifestyle. From Year 7 upwards, the physical education curriculum covers broader health issues such as the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle. Activities such as free running and gymnastics ignite pupils' enthusiasm for sport. As a result, high numbers of pupils take part in the wide range of additional sporting activities on offer.
- Pupils know how to keep safe. The very large majority informed inspectors that this is a safe school. School surveys, in which a significant minority of parents took part, indicate that most parents agree. Pupils maturely discussed the strategies that they use to keep safe when using the internet.
- Leaders are developing a community in which good behaviour and academic success are openly acknowledged and prized. In a whole-school assembly, inspectors saw pupils of all ages enthusiastically celebrating the successes of their peers who had won a street art competition.
- School leaders are effective in developing a shared sense of belonging at the school. For example, pupils who are part of the school 'student executive' informed inspectors that they valued their roles in the Cheshunt School community and were proud of their achievements in improving the rewards systems.
- Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to prepare for the next stage of their education through a well-planned programme, which includes learning for life lessons, visits to universities and a 'career inspiration' project. All Key Stage 4 pupils have the opportunity to undertake work experience which provides an effective introduction to the world of work. As a result, high proportions of pupils progress to the next stage of education, employment or training.
- Pupils know what bullying is. Almost all pupils informed inspectors that bullying was an unusual occurrence at the school. School records confirmed that this is the case. A small number of parents expressed concerns about how the very few incidents of bullying are dealt with at school. Very many pupils informed inspectors that they have faith that were bullying to occur then adults would deal with it effectively. Inspection evidence indicates that where incidents do occur, the school reacts swiftly and to good effect.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils generally move around the school site in a calm and considerate way. They understand the different 'zones' that exist. Lunchtime in the canteen is a sociable and good-humoured event. Pupils greet visitors cheerfully and are inquisitive in their discussions. Behaviour in the well-supervised outside areas is typified by positive relationships and amiable discussion.

- Pupils are punctual to lessons. Very many lessons are characterised by positive relationships. The large majority of pupils are keen to learn and respond very well to teachers' instructions. Pupils are adapting to the 'no hands up' approach in classrooms, although on occasion a small number can be overenthusiastic in their responses.
- Pupils and teachers informed inspectors that behaviour has improved since the time of the last inspection. Adults work tirelessly, and to good effect, to improve the behaviours of the small minority of pupils who have previously had a history of poorer behaviour in other education settings. While these pupils can drift 'off task' in lessons where learning is not well matched to their needs, this is well managed by almost all teachers.
- Attendance has improved rapidly since the last inspection and in 2015 was in line with national averages. This is due to the robust action taken by school leaders. The attendance of pupils who join the school mid year, often with a history of poor attendance in previous education settings, is rising. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen sharply and is below national averages.
- A small number of pupils, some of whom have joined the school since the start of the academic year, do not behave as well as the school expects. The school has effective systems in place to address this. Evidence seen indicates that the longer pupils are at Cheshunt School the better their behaviour becomes.
- Leaders have worked with considerable success to reduce the number of pupils who are excluded. They have done so without compromising the robust anti-defiance protocols that exist in school. As a consequence, exclusions have fallen significantly.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils arrive at the school with attainment that is below that of their peers, and in some cases significantly so. While outcomes are improving, some pupils are not making enough progress from their individual starting points across a range of subjects. This is why outcomes continue to require improvement.
- Overall outcomes improved in 2015. They were excellent in English, where pupils made significantly better progress than their peers nationally. Evidence seen on inspection indicates that this level of achievement in English is being maintained. This is due to the effective teaching that pupils receive in this subject.
- In 2015, outcomes in mathematics improved. However, pupils did not make the progress of which they are fully capable. This was particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils, who lagged a long way behind their peers nationally. Current pupils' progress is improving strongly as the quality of teaching has improved. However, school assessment information and other inspection evidence indicate that, while the progress of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics is improving, gaps with other pupils nationally remain too wide. In other subjects, disadvantaged pupils make inconsistent progress. For example, while it is good in English, it is weaker in modern foreign languages.
- Pupils did not achieve well enough in science in 2015. The progress of pupils currently on roll indicates there have been improvements, but that it remains inconsistent within the subject. This reflects the improving but inconsistent quality of teaching overall in the subject. Key Stage 3 pupils are making better progress, as a result of the appropriate and effective changes introduced by the highly effective head of science.
- Pupils' progress is improving across a range of subjects, but is not yet good. For example, pupils achieved exceptionally well in physical education in 2015. This continues to be the case, whereas outcomes in modern foreign languages are weaker and school assessment information indicates that current pupils in Key Stage 4 are not achieving as well as they should be in this subject.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make variable progress. In some cases they make very strong progress from their individual starting points due to the highly effective support that they receive. However, evidence seen on inspection indicates that some pupils with special educational needs make slower progress as work is not appropriately matched to their specific needs.
- More-able pupils are making improved progress in several subject areas such as English. However, this progress is not consistently good in science, mathematics and modern foreign languages, where the learning does not challenge them sufficiently to enable them to achieve the higher grades.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Learners in this small sixth form, many of whom begin with lower starting points than their peers nationally, are making good progress. This is particularly the case for girls in the sixth form. The progress made by learners on vocational courses is particularly strong.
- The small number of learners who enter the sixth form without a C grade in GCSE English or mathematics receive appropriate support to help them to improve their grades. A high proportion of learners who resat their GCSE exams improved their grade. In mathematics, each learner achieved a C grade.
- Learners receive effective information, advice and guidance from visiting speakers and interviews with an independent adviser. This helps them to make informed choices about the next stage of their learning. As a result, almost every learner progresses to education, training or employment.
- Learners are being well prepared for the world of work. A carefully created programme includes talks from adults from across a range of professions. Learners have the opportunity to take part in work-related learning that relates to their course or chosen career path, for example in the fields of zoology, engineering, health and education.
- The sixth form is well led. Leaders, including subject leaders, carefully monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the sixth form. Where practice is not as strong, leaders intervene swiftly and to good effect. They work effectively to ensure learners make an effective contribution to the whole school community. For example, learners develop their leadership and communication skills by acting as reading mentors to their younger peers.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the 16 to 19 study programmes is good. Teachers have high expectations of what learners can achieve and use their strong subject knowledge to carefully plan learning that interests and challenges learners. For example, learners in a Year 12 photography lesson worked with clear enthusiasm on a task that enabled them to put into practice the techniques that they had been taught. The effective planning of learning along with the exceptionally positive relationships in a Year 12 sport lesson helped learners make rapid progress in their understanding of physiotherapy.
- Learners informed inspectors that they found the precise feedback provided by their teachers on their work to be extremely useful in helping them to make further progress. Inspection evidence confirmed this to be the case. For example, learners in a Year 13 psychology lesson were able to use the detailed and helpful feedback provided by their teacher to make better progress.
- Learners behave very well and are well cared for. Leaders have developed a well-structured health and well-being programme. All learners take part in physical education lessons, have access to citizenship education and benefit from talks about the ranges of risks that exist in the modern world. As a result, learners are well placed to make informed decisions about their personal health and safety. Learners explained to inspectors that they would like more support to catch up with their learning when they have been absent.
- The range of subjects on offer in the sixth form is smaller than some learners would like. School leaders provide robust independent advice and guidance for Year 11 to ensure that they are placed on the correct courses, be it at Cheshunt School or elsewhere. However, several learners, who are very loyal to the school having spent their previous five years there, chose courses that may not have been their first choice so that they could remain at the school.

School details

Unique reference number	117596
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10017782

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	370
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Morton
Headteacher	Andy Stainton
Telephone number	01992 624375
Website	www.cheshunt.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@cheshunt.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2014

Information about this school

- Cheshunt School is considerably smaller than the average-size secondary school. The number on roll has declined since the last inspection.
- The sixth form is due to close in the summer of 2017, when the learners currently in Year 12 have completed their studies.
- A significant proportion of pupils join the school after the start of the school year.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (government funding to support disadvantaged pupils and looked after children) is above average.
- Currently the school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum level expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 45 lessons. Several of these observations were carried out with school leaders. They also visited seven tutor sessions, one assembly and the Learning Support Centre.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers and support staff, and groups of pupils and learners. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority and a consultant supporting the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including school policies, safeguarding documents, school self-evaluation, pupil progress information, attendance data and a wide range of pupils' and learners' work.
- Inspectors considered the views of 31 parents who responded on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as those of the considerably larger numbers who had completed school surveys. Inspectors also took account of the views of 44 staff who completed the staff survey.
- When the school was last inspected in January 2014, it was judged to require improvement. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors conducted a monitoring visit in May 2014 to evaluate the school's progress.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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