

Inspection of Dr Challoner's Grammar School

Chesham Road, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP6 5HA

Inspection dates: 5–6 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at Dr Challoner's Grammar School. They enjoy a first-class, bespoke curriculum and an exceptional range of enrichment experiences. The values of aspiration, kindness and resilience underpin school life. As a result, pupils become intellectually curious, compassionate and responsible in equal measure. Pupils are proud of their school. They eagerly take part in the wealth of extra-curricular opportunities available.

There is a broad range of academic subjects on offer. Pupils and sixth-formers value the expertise and subject knowledge of their teachers. Demanding lessons stimulate, motivate and engage pupils. They delight in this challenge and achieve exceptionally well. Pupils' leadership potential is developed particularly well during their time at the school. Rich learning opportunities cultivate work-related skills and a deep understanding of responsible citizenship.

Behaviour and the level of respect shown throughout the school are exemplary. Any bullying or teasing is extremely rare. Pupils approach all aspects of school life with high levels of maturity. They take a pride in supporting the wider community and charitable causes. There are secure and trusting relationships between staff and pupils. These ensure that pupils feel safe and very well supported.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher, governing body and senior leadership team are inspirational. Together, they have created a united vision and shared ethos across the school. They foster a culture of teamwork, loyalty and aspiration. Their genuine promotion of staff and pupil well-being is their key priority. There is a shared pride in the continual refinement and improvement of the school. Leaders offer comprehensive training and encourage staff to engage in research projects. Staff feel exceptionally well supported and hold the headteacher and senior leaders in very high regard. As one teacher stated, 'We love our jobs here.'

Subject leaders and teachers have expert subject knowledge. They judiciously use this and research to hone their planning and ensure that pupils excel. Teachers design sequences of lessons to build on prior learning and stimulate discussion and debate. As a result, pupils not only aspire to examination success, they develop deep insights into their subjects. For example, in science and mathematics pupils refine and improve their own answers, then are routinely challenged to evaluate these against different models and explanations. Across the curriculum, teachers use assessment well to interpret pupils' needs. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make very strong progress.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects in key stage 3. In key stage 4 all pupils study the three sciences, a modern foreign language, history and/or geography. They also opt to study other subjects. The school has particular strengths in electronics and physical education and has recently invested in improved art and music provision.

Nationally published results show that pupils' progress is well above average, and compares very favourably with that found in similar schools by the end of Year 11.

The school offers a dazzling array of extra-curricular opportunities. These inspire a diverse range of interests and skills. Pupils enthuse about the range of sporting clubs, dramatic and musical productions, trips, visiting speakers and foreign exchanges that are available. They know that they are lucky to have such dedicated staff. Some pupils and students proudly run extra-curricular clubs themselves. Older pupils improve their own leadership skills by offering clubs that others would enjoy. These excellent attitudes are sustained in lessons.

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is expertly planned. The curriculum develops pupils' understanding of social and cultural issues very well. PSHE topics are integrated with other subjects, enabling pupils to connect their learning. Pupils develop an erudite understanding of British values such as tolerance and the rule of law. As one new member of staff recalled, 'I am blown away by the support offered for the pupils here. However, within the school there is no elitism, equality is so important.'

The recent expansion of the sixth form to admit girls has been hugely successful. The quality of education in the sixth form is exceptional, enabling all students to thrive. Sixth-formers play a full role in school life, with many having significant leadership responsibilities. In addition, many students actively support the local community. Students are supported well to manage their own time and work independently. Careers education is an important part of the curriculum. Students are well informed about different career pathways and future study options. Over four fifths of sixth-formers gain access to their first choice of the top universities either in the UK or abroad.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders ensure that they have up-to-date expertise in all aspects of safeguarding. They have recently updated recording systems and ensure that a comprehensive package of training is available for all staff. Leaders use their knowledge appropriately to assess levels of risk and decide on appropriate next steps. They work well with external agencies and act determinedly when any pupils require extra help.

The safeguarding team are knowledgeable about the issues that pupils face in the community. Staff modify the curriculum to ensure that what they know about local and national risks becomes included. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe outside of school and online.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	136419
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10111437
Type of school	Secondary grammar
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,355
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Shaun Kennedy
Headteacher	David Atkinson
Website	www.challoners.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dr Challoner's Grammar School converted to become an academy school on 1 January 2011. When its predecessor school, known by the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2007, it was judged to be outstanding.
- Members of the governing body are also members of the board of trustees.
- There have been several changes of staff and governors, including a new headteacher and a new chair of the governing body, since the previous inspection.
- In recent years the school has expanded its sixth-form provision and now admits girls to the sixth form.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- Inspectors held a series of meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. A variety of meetings were conducted with other leaders, including those responsible for sixth form, careers information and guidance, the wider curriculum, attendance and pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body including the chair.
- Inspectors held informal conversations with pupils and sixth-formers during breaktime. They also met with a range of staff, including newly qualified teachers and support staff. Inspectors held meetings with three different groups of pupils.
- We did deep dives into these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art, history and physical education. As part of this within each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and met with teaching staff to discuss the school's approach to curriculum delivery. Inspectors also held separate meetings with leaders of four other subjects to discuss their curriculum plans.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered the 359 responses that parents made to the online survey, Parent View. They also considered views represented in an email from a parent.

Inspection team

Matthew Newberry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patrick Harty	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Roche	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Rodin	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Richards	Ofsted Inspector

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