

Inspection of Colchester Royal Grammar School

Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3ND

Inspection dates: 11–13 May 2021

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Colchester Royal Grammar School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged its predecessor school to be outstanding, before its conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

A significant number of pupils feel uncomfortable or unsafe in school and report being the subject of insulting and damaging comments regarding their gender, appearance, race or sexual orientation.

Pupils are too often reluctant to pass their concerns on to staff. Systems for dealing with safeguarding matters do not work properly. Consequently, leaders are largely unaware of the difficulties some pupils face.

Leaders provide a wide range of clubs and activities for pupils. Some pupil-led societies actively promote a culture of mutual respect and understanding. However, leaders do not do enough to support these activities by ensuring that pupils are taught how to respect and interact appropriately with people who are different to them.

Leaders want and expect pupils to achieve academic success. Teachers inspire pupils' interest in the academic subjects they teach. Pupils excel and many go on to study at a very high level after leaving the sixth form.

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

Leaders have failed to recognise or address a pervading culture in the school which does not promote equality and respect. Leaders have not considered carefully how girls in the sixth form will be integrated into the school and what challenges they might face. This is the first point at which girls are admitted to the school. The school does not prepare boys well enough for this.

Leaders have not ensured that boys understand how to interact appropriately with girls. Consequently, some boys are rude about girls, judge them by their appearance and make inappropriate remarks. Parts of the school have become a hostile environment for some pupils.

While many pupils enjoy being at the school, many also feel people are treated badly because of their protected characteristics, such as their gender, race or sexual orientation. Discriminatory remarks are too common among some pupils. Leaders do not do enough to prevent or combat this.

Many pupils, of both sexes, dislike and disapprove of the negative culture. However, they often do not report their concerns or experiences. There are several reasons for this. Pupils lack confidence in the skills of adults to deal with their concerns well. Pupils are worried that they might be picked on by other pupils as a result. Some pupils feel the problem should be tackled as a cultural issue, not as individual incidents of poor behaviour. Not all pupils know who to report concerns to.

Leaders have started to work on making sure that everyone is treated with respect. However, this has not driven the change which is needed.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is weak. Leaders have not planned the curriculum well. Staff are not trained well enough to teach the subject. Leaders do not do enough to check on the quality of what is taught, or how well pupils have learned. This leaves some pupils insufficiently prepared for aspects of life in modern Britain.

Most of the academic education pupils receive is of a very high standard. Leaders make sure pupils have access to a broad and exciting curriculum. During key stage 3, pupils learn well beyond the requirements of the national curriculum studying, for example Latin and Classical Greek. This rich curriculum leads to a high proportion of pupils undertaking the qualifications which make up the English Baccalaureate at GCSE. Pupils move on to ambitious programmes of study in the sixth form.

Teachers go beyond exam board specifications in their teaching. They are highly knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects. Mathematics, for example is promoted as a beautiful discipline at the heart of all things. Teaching is underpinned by well-considered plans, which set out when pupils will learn what. Teachers make sure pupils understand the concepts they will need to progress. As a result, pupils' understanding advances to a high level. Pupils work with interest and enthusiasm. They achieve extremely well in external examinations at the end of key stages 4 and 5.

Teachers adapt how they teach to provide the support identified in the education plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, leaders do not identify some pupils' special educational needs early enough. This delays the provision of the support which would benefit these pupils.

Leaders make sure pupils have access to a wide range of societies and clubs. They help sixth form students to develop leadership skills by allowing students to create and run societies, and to act as subject mentors. Leaders provide effective careers guidance and support to pupils in older year groups. This helps pupils move onto apprenticeships and university courses.

Governors' systems for monitoring pupils' behaviour and well-being have not worked well. Governors were unaware of the significant weaknesses in these aspects of provision. Governors have recently become aware of some concerns about safeguarding systems and are in the process of addressing these. However, during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, governors have not ensured sufficient checks have taken place. The single central record of pre-employment checks was inaccurate when checked by inspectors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Some pupils do not feel safe in school because of a culture which allows them to be victimised for being themselves. Too many pupils would not share their concerns with an adult in school.

When issues are reported to adults, they are not recorded properly. The system for staff to report concerns is not rigorous. Incidents are only added to safeguarding records if a member of the safeguarding team determines that they should be. This makes it too easy to miss patterns which might indicate a pupil is at risk of harm.

Records lack sufficient detail. They do not include the dates on which things take place. There is a separate system for recording concerns in the sixth form. This contains matters which should be considered safeguarding concerns but are not progressed as such. Some of those responsible for safeguarding are unprepared to undertake their role.

The single central record of pre-employment vetting checks is not completed or checked well enough. As a result, inspectors found that information was missing.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not prepare pupils well enough for life in modern Britain. Some pupils do not know how to behave around others. Some pupils treat others badly because of their protected characteristics. Leaders need to ensure all pupils learn how to interact well with people different from themselves and value each other equally.
- Pupils are too reluctant to report behaviours which upset or worry them. Leaders do not know the extent to which a negative culture has become prevalent among some pupils. Leaders need to make sure pupils feel confident in passing on their concerns to adults in school.
- Leaders have not established effective systems for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns. Leaders do not have the information they need to keep pupils safe. Leaders need to improve their approach to reporting and recording concerns.
- Leaders do not do enough to make sure pre-employment checks are recorded appropriately. Information is not always recorded where it needs to be. Leaders should establish processes to make sure the single central record of pre-employment checks is consistently accurate.

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 are the school and you are 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	137814
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10193100
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
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	1012
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	398
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Janet Perry
Headteacher	John Russell
Website	http://www.crgs.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school selects pupils for admission to Year 7 based on their position within the selection procedure organised by the Consortium of Selective Schools in Essex.
- Colchester Royal Grammar School converted to become an academy school in January 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- Since the school became an academy, a different headteacher has taken charge. The board of trustees is known as the governing body, and trustees are also known as directors or governors.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- We met with the headteacher, other school leaders and other staff. We spoke with representatives of the governing body and the local authority, as well as reviewing minutes of governing body meetings. We considered leaders' surveys of pupils' views and Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- As part of our work to inspect safeguarding we reviewed safeguarding records, the school's safeguarding policy, the single central record of pre-employment checks and the local authority's audit of the school's safeguarding work. We spoke with leaders of safeguarding and with pupils.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE, French and classics. We spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils as well as visiting lessons and reviewing pupils' work. We also spoke with subject leaders and visited lessons in other subjects.
- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether safeguarding continued to be effective and to check leaders' work on keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kim Hall	Her Majesty's Inspector
Damian Loneragan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jason Howard	Her Majesty's Inspector

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