

Inspection of Chiltern Way Academy

Church Lane, Wendover, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP22 6NL

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a very special school where pupils are happy to attend and it is safe to be yourself. Each individual pupil's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well understood. Expectations are extremely high. Leaders are single-mindedly determined to provide every pupil with the skills, knowledge and character needed to get a job when they leave school. Despite being miles apart, the approach to learning and behaviour across the three school sites is highly consistent and remarkably successful.

Pupils are helped and supported to manage and regulate their behaviour exceptionally well. Staff skilfully and readily help pupils to get back into the 'green zone' when they are having a tough time. Poor behaviour is not allowed to distract the learning of others. Due to their specific needs, some pupils do not understand the differences between bullying and unkind behaviour. However, bullying is rare and incidents are managed very well.

The subjects taught, therapeutic interventions, and extra opportunities offered, including during the extended day, are chosen really carefully to prepare pupils to be successful in the future. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their praise for the school. More than one parent said the school 'has been life changing' for their child.

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

Leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum that is wholly appropriate for the school's pupils. The ambition running through the heart of Chiltern Way is to prepare pupils to successfully be employed when they leave school. This ambition starts in the primary phase, with classes named after different industries. In recent years every pupil that left school at the end of Year 11 or sixth form progressed to meaningful employment, further education or training. Well-planned careers education, work experience and work with external providers contribute to this great success.

In the primary years pupils enjoy learning about topics such as 'frozen world' that enable them to develop their skills and knowledge in all subjects. Reading and writing are prioritised. Phonics is taught well to those at the earliest stages of learning to read, with books closely matched to the sounds they know. A love of reading is quickly developed, for example with some pupils keenly reading non-fiction to develop their scientific knowledge.

In the secondary phase the curriculum is solidly focused on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and preparing pupils for the world of work through four vocational pathways. These include land studies such as bushcraft; outdoor education; hospitality, including food technology; and 'Worx' that combines motor mechanics and construction. The small sixth form is growing and offers opportunities that meet pupils' needs in a way that may not be possible in

mainstream further education settings. As well as vocational courses, students take academic pathways such as AS-level English. While not every subject is taught discretely, key knowledge in subjects such as history and geography is covered well in English, for example, to help pupils understand and enjoy the well-chosen texts they read.

Teachers know their pupils extremely well and have excellent subject knowledge. By following a consistent lesson structure that chunks blocks of time, pupils are able to focus throughout a lesson, knowing what is coming now and next. This all helps pupils to learn and progress very successfully.

Many pupils attend this school because they can find it very difficult to behave. Clear expectations with rewards and reflection times and a highly supportive behaviour team help pupils to get back on track quickly when they are struggling. Pupils know what is expected of them. For more serious matters the use of suspensions is reducing because they are used effectively by leaders to improve behaviour. Regrettably, the school has had to use expulsions, where leaders believed there was no other option, to keep other pupils and staff safe. Trustees ensured that these expulsions were in line with statutory guidance and are ensuring leaders are working to reduce them.

As one parent rightly explains, pupils at Chiltern Way grow 'in every way: academically, emotionally and socially', making 'the impossible possible'. Pupils develop strong morals and throw off their anxiety to develop socially too. From the canteen at breakfast and lunch to the football pitch and gym and beyond, pupils look up to the adults that model excellent behaviour and healthy lifestyles to them. Pupils enjoy a wide range of cultural experiences but also enjoy giving back to the community, for example making repairs in the churchyard. Most notably, all pupils embark on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, with three pupils even achieving the prestigious gold award during the pandemic.

Trustees give the school great strategic direction. Trustees and leaders were adamant the school should continue to serve its pupils during the pandemic, when high levels of attendance by pupils were rightly celebrated. Trustees' focus is now on widening and deepening the sixth-form provision to give even more students excellent education and training opportunities.

Staff, including those recruited from Canada as part of the school's innovative programme, really value the strong and varied training and professional development they receive. They believe their workload is fair and are unanimous in their view that leaders support them to manage behaviour consistently well throughout the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders expertly identify the individual pupils that are at risk of harm due to their SEND, behaviour traits, or other external factors. They understand the additional risks which pupils attending this school may face due to their individual needs.

Leaders do all that they can to help keep pupils safe from harm. Leaders work collegiately with other professionals and provide extensive and valued support for parents.

The management of routine safeguarding processes such as safer recruitment and risk assessment is strong. However, it is when managing the most complex cases that leaders come into their own as fierce advocates for the pupils they support.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	142695
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10200882
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	196
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Mortimer
Principal	Ian McCaul (Principal), Gary Regan (Director of schools)
Website	www.chilternway.org
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection the school has opened a third site, Bierton Hill, Aylesbury (HP20 1EE), for primary aged pupils. Secondary pupils are educated at the Wendover Campus (HP22 6NL), or the Prestwood Campus (HP16 0QQ).
- The school caters for pupils aged between four and 19 with social, emotional and mental health needs and/or autism spectrum disorder. The youngest pupils currently on roll are in Year 2. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

- Chiltern Way Academy is part of Chiltern Way Academy Trust, which consists of this school and the Chiltern Way Academy, Wokingham.
- The principal is also the chief executive officer of the academy trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal, director of schools, heads of campuses and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also met three trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, food technology and personal, social and health education (PSHE). For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also talked to leaders and pupils and looked at documentation relating to other areas of the curriculum including careers education.
- To inspect safeguarding, discussions were held with leaders responsible for safeguarding and behaviour. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised and informal conversations took place with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered 103 responses to the confidential staff survey and 77 responses to Ofsted Parent View, our online questionnaire, including 62 free-text comments.

Inspection team

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