

Inspection of a good school: Chorlton High School

Nell Lane, Chorlton-Cum-Hardy, Manchester, Greater Manchester M21 7SL

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

Outcome

Chorlton High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Chorlton High School is a highly inclusive learning community, where everyone is accepted. All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from an effective curriculum. Staff have high expectations of pupils, who achieve well.

Pupils enjoy coming to school because it is a caring and supportive environment where they flourish. Pupils typically attend regularly, behave well and feel happy and safe in school. Pupils, parents and carers believe that bullying is rare and that it is dealt with effectively.

The school serves a complex and diverse community. For some pupils and their families, the school has been a 'safety net' during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing help and support when needed.

Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral care and guidance. There is a 'ThInc' room for pupils who need support with aspects of their well-being. The school has received many national accolades for its work on mental health and well-being.

Enrichment opportunities are plentiful. Pupils can choose to be young engineers or take part in arts and craft activities. They perform in musicals, dance shows and in the community choir. Pupils can also become part of the gay-straight alliance. Whatever they choose to do, pupils have a strong voice in this school.

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

The academic and personal development curriculums are ambitious for all pupils. Teachers choose engaging activities to deliver the well-planned curriculum. The curriculum is enriched through theatre, debates and educational visits. For example, some pupils felt very strongly that they wanted to share their views on the 'Free Palestine' campaign. Leaders invited a charity in to work with pupils to facilitate an informed debate.

Pupils who find reading difficult are well supported to catch up. There is a vast and inviting library, where pupils take quiet time to immerse themselves in a novel of their choice. Teachers take care to develop pupils' subject-specific vocabulary. An interesting and diverse range of literature is explored not just in English, but across a range of subjects.

Teachers use assessment systems effectively to inform curriculum planning and adaptations. Pupils have regular, manageable assessments so that teachers can readily see how well pupils have understood new learning. In lessons, pupils are typically asked to recall and revisit their learning, which helps them remember subject knowledge in the long term.

In key stage 4, a considerable number of pupils follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. Pupils progress well through the curriculums in key stage 4. The key stage 3 curriculum has undergone significant, positive change. From September 2021, pupils have studied subjects such as history, modern foreign languages and geography in much more depth. This has increased the amount of knowledge that pupils learn in these subjects. However, while pupils benefit from a rich curriculum of well-ordered topics in most subjects, this is not the case in a minority of subjects in Year 9. Even so, most pupils achieve well in key stage 3.

Pupils with SEND are well catered for because leaders are quick to identify and support them. They benefit from a curriculum that is suitably delivered to meet their individual needs. In the nurture class, pupils benefit from personalised support which helps them enjoy and achieve more. Inspectors visited this group, who were learning Spanish. Pupils showed good recall and understanding, and clearly enjoyed their learning.

The school is well led and managed. It benefits from being part of the Prospere Learning Trust. One of the key reasons why the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection is leaders' investment in staff. There is a generous offer of ongoing professional development and subject-specific training. Leaders and teachers collaborate across the Prospere Learning Trust to bring about purposeful, evidence-based change. Staff feel that good attention is paid to their well-being and they work collaboratively to manage their workload effectively.

Leaders put pupils' welfare at the heart of their work. Leaders benefit from strong support and appropriate challenge from members of the governing body. Governors have a good understanding of the school and are proud of the improvements they have made. They put diversity at the heart of their work and very much value pupils' thoughts and opinions.

Many parents are effusive in their praise for the school. They are particularly appreciative of the support that pupils with SEND receive and the way that they are kept informed of their child's progress.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Local and national safeguarding issues are woven through the school's 'Respect' curriculum so that pupils have a good awareness and understanding of key issues that may affect them. Leaders understand the dangers that pupils may face in the community. They work extensively with a range of agencies to safeguard pupils.

There are effective systems in place to safeguard pupils at alternative provision. Pupils' attendance is closely monitored. Much care is taken to reintegrate pupils who have not felt able to return to full-time education following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. Teachers and other adults in school are well trained to spot the signs of abuse and neglect. Records of child protection concerns show that there is a strong culture of reporting concerns about pupils in a timely manner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not refined their curriculum plans to ensure that they are fully planned and sequenced effectively for pupils in Year 9. As a result, some pupils in Year 9 do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum intent, particularly the rationale and sequencing of the curriculum, is clear in these remaining few subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2011.

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	139148
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10199936
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1530
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rebecca Howard
Headteacher	Zoe Morris
Website	www.chorltonhigh.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 July 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has joined the Prospere Learning Trust.
- Currently, there are six pupils attending registered alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

- 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 headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, the chief executive of the Prospere Learning Trust, the chair of the trust board and two representatives of the local authority. Inspectors also held meetings with groups of pupils and a range of other staff who work in school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, mathematics and history. They scrutinised pupils' work from these subjects, visited lessons and spoke with pupils and teachers. Inspectors also examined curriculum plans and met with leaders in each subject.

- Inspectors looked at curriculum plans and spoke with leaders about some other subjects, including computing, design and technology and geography.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence around safeguarding. First, they checked that leaders have appropriate vetting checks for adults who work in school. They scrutinised records of the actions that leaders have taken to protect pupils at risk. Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils to understand whether they felt safe in school, and to understand whom they would go to if they needed help. Inspectors also looked at the systems in place for keeping pupils safe in alternative provision.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and visited the 'ThInc' room.
- Inspectors considered the 163 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. These included free-text responses from parents. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

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