

Inspection of Chester International School

Queens Park Campus, Queens Park Road, Handbridge, Chester, Cheshire CH4 7AE

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2022

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) and governors have developed a welcoming and nurturing environment. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. Pupils are valued as individuals and are happy here. They settle into the school quickly when they arrive in Year 10. Pupils quickly become part of the school community. Pupils and students achieve well.

Staff foster positive relationships with pupils. Pupils behave well. They are polite and well mannered. Pupils and students accept each other's differences. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to teachers' instructions and work hard. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe. They reported that, if bullying should happen, staff will deal with incidents swiftly and effectively.

Pupils and students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, drama and musical performances. This helps them to develop their talents and interests. Pupils and students spoke enthusiastically about planned trips to places of interest in the United Kingdom and overseas. They enjoy volunteering in the local community.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very positive about the improvements that they can see in their children's progress and behaviour.

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

Leaders and staff share aspirations for all pupils and students to succeed academically and personally. Leaders have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum with an international dimension. Pupils and students follow courses that are tailored to their specific needs and interests. Leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge pupils should learn. Teachers ensure that pupils build their knowledge in a logical order. Teachers use assessment strategies successfully to check that pupils have learned the curriculum, and to address any misconceptions that may arise. Pupils and students enjoy their learning, and achieve well in a range of subjects.

Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. They work effectively to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge when they arrive in Year 10. That said, on occasions, some teachers in some subjects do not choose the most appropriate activities to deliver the knowledge that they want pupils and students to learn. Consequently, some pupils and students do not remember what they have learned previously.

Leaders have identified that some pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge. This hinders their access to the curriculum. Staff are beginning to provide extra support to help weaker readers catch up. However, leaders' plans to improve reading are still in the early stages of development.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in a timely way. Teachers use the information that they receive to adapt lessons and provide additional support for these pupils. This helps pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum as well as their peers.

Staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils are respectful to each other and their teachers. Pupils' movement around the school is calm and well supervised by staff. Pupils socialise well at lunchtimes. Students in the sixth form behave very well, and are excellent role models for younger pupils in the school.

Some pupils had fallen into a pattern of poor attendance at their previous schools. Improving their attendance, and the attendance of some other pupils, has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders work closely with families to encourage pupils to come to school. There are signs that attendance is improving for some, but a small number of pupils are still absent from school too often.

Leaders place pupils' personal development at the heart of the school's work. They prioritise support for pupils' mental health and well-being. This helps pupils who have had disrupted education in the past to re-engage with education. Pupils and students learn about equality and consent in relationships. External speakers enhance pupils' knowledge about global issues, such as democracy and sustainability. Pupils and students participate in a wide range of enrichment activities based on the themes of creativity, activity and service. This helps them to develop their confidence and independence.

Leaders provide helpful careers education and guidance for pupils and students. They benefit from work experience placements. Students appreciate the support that they receive for university applications. Almost all students progress to education, employment or training.

Staff are very proud to work at the school. Most staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Governors are highly committed to the ethos of the school. They hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work. Governors support leaders well and work closely with them to ensure that all decisions are in the best interests of pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Designated safeguarding leaders provide effective training and advice for staff. Staff are aware of the signs of abuse. They know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety. Leaders work closely with external agencies, including health, social care and the police, to support and protect pupils. Pupils and students are taught about risks such as sexual harassment, and why it is wrong. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, sometimes teachers do not choose the most appropriate activities to deliver the knowledge they want pupils to learn. Consequently, some pupils and students are not achieving as well as they could in these areas of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers continue to receive training to deliver these curriculums effectively. This will help pupils and students to know more and remember more.
- Leaders' plans to develop pupils' reading knowledge are not fully developed. Some pupils have gaps in their reading ability. This means that these pupils are not able to access the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that they provide the support that pupils need to read with fluency and understanding.
- A small number of pupils still miss too much school. They miss valuable learning time, which negatively impacts on their achievement. Leaders should ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

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	144742
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10212109
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	77
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Euan Imrie
Principal	Katrina Brown
Website	www.chesterinternational.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Chester International School opened in September 2017. It is part of The Learning Trust. The school is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the IB middle years programme in addition to GCSE subjects. Students in the sixth form follow either the IB careers-related programme or the IB diploma programme.
- The current principal of the school was appointed in September 2019.
- All pupils join the studio school at the start of key stage 4, after completing their key stage 3 education at other local schools. Some students join the sixth form from international schools.
- The school uses two alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the principal, other senior leaders, subject coordinators, staff, the CEO of The Learning Trust, members of the local governing body and trustees, including the chair.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils and students about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' and students' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and students to check how effective safeguarding is in the school. Inspectors held telephone calls with representatives of alternative providers.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in art and design, English, mathematics and science. Inspectors met with staff, visited lessons, looked at pupils' and students' work and spoke with them about their learning.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' curriculum plans, and pupils' and students' work, in a range of subjects. Inspectors spoke with subject coordinators in some of these subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to the pupil, parent and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jean Tarry

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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