

Inspection of a good school: Chiltern Hills Academy

Chartridge Lane, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 2RG

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 September 2022

Outcome

Chiltern Hills Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Overall, pupils are positive about the school. Leaders are determined that all pupils can 'live life in all its fullness'. The school is going through a period of change, and many pupils and staff share the excitement this brings.

The curriculum is broad and pupils like the range of subjects on offer. Aspirations are high for everyone, both academically and personally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) generally receive effective support.

High expectations for pupils' behaviour mean that lessons are positive and purposeful, and that behaviour is calm around school. Pupils appreciate that these high expectations help them to learn better. They are polite and friendly. Overwhelmingly, pupils have positive relationships with each other and staff. They feel safe in school. Pupils are confident that if bullying happens, staff will deal with it effectively when they report it. Staff know pupils well and care about them as individuals.

The school is reinstating its extra-curricular programme that was curtailed because of building work and the COVID-19 pandemic. Many pupils take advantage of the clubs and trips now offered. There are opportunities to play sports and perform, as well as activities to develop leadership skills and prepare pupils for their next steps and the world of work.

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

Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils at the school, and the curriculum is at the heart of this ambition. Leaders have high aspirations for pupils to achieve the best possible qualifications. However, they are aware that currently too few pupils take modern languages, and this limits the number gaining the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Subject leaders share this ambition and have considered what pupils should learn and the order in which things are taught.

Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Generally, they present information clearly and check what pupils remember and understand. Consistent routines and expectations create a positive learning environment. Most teachers pose thoughtful questions which enable pupils to develop answers using what they have learned before and in different contexts. This means that most pupils participate confidently in lessons. However, some teachers do not use assessment as well as they could to ensure that all pupils are challenged and supported.

Leaders are committed to inclusion. Staff know the needs of pupils with SEND and receive training and guidance on how to support them. Leaders also provide a range of interventions through the 'Hub', including opportunities for younger pupils to work with sixth-form students. Reading interventions for pupils who need support are effective and reading for pleasure is celebrated throughout the school. Leaders are continuing to embed reading strategies across the breadth of the curriculum.

Staff care deeply about pupils' welfare, as well as their academic achievements. The pastoral teams foster positive links between the school, pupils and families. This work plays an important role in supporting positive and respectful relationships. Pastoral and inclusion leaders work closely together and with staff more widely to ensure that pupils are supported. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have reasserted the school's routines and rules. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very consistently. In lessons and around the school, most pupils behave well and relationships are positive. Pupils work with positive attitudes and are proud of their work. Many sixth-form students model high standards of behaviour.

Leaders have adapted aspects of their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme to prioritise support for pupils' mental health. They have also worked closely with external bodies, for example to provide sessions about county lines and harmful sexual behaviour. Leaders accept that the current PSHE programme is not yet sequenced well enough. They are now reviewing the programme so that each year group covers the most important content for their age.

Careers education is a strength. This is enhanced through strong partnerships with businesses and other education providers. For example, pupils in Years 8, 10 and 12 can take part in work placements or work experience. Pupils can access an online platform for additional information, and subjects across the curriculum make links to the world of work. Leaders adapt provision for pupils with SEND so that they are well prepared for their next steps.

Governors have a very ambitious vision for the next phase in the school's development. Leaders ensure that staff receive high-quality training relevant to their roles. Staff appreciate leaders' consideration of workload and feel very well supported at work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive safeguarding training. This means that staff are clear about leaders' expectations and their responsibilities. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about pupils or adults. Parents say that their children feel safe at school. Pupils feel confident that any concerns raised will be dealt with.

The safeguarding team is experienced and has built positive external partnerships. This helps them to respond effectively to incidents in or outside school. Leaders are relentless in their efforts to get the right support for pupils and families. Records are thorough.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all teachers use assessment information well enough to adapt their teaching to fully meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress they should. Leaders must provide training for staff to strengthen expertise in this aspect of their practice.
- The current PSHE programme is not sequenced well. As a result, pupils are not secure in their knowledge and understanding of all the elements of the curriculum. Leaders must develop and implement a coherently and ambitiously sequenced PSHE curriculum, with clearly identified content for each age group. They must also ensure that the curriculum is delivered consistently and effectively for all pupils.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

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.

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	137280
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10211477
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1057
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	137
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mr Andrew Brown
Principal	Ms Samantha Chapman
Website	www.chilternhillsacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a single-academy trust and is sponsored by the Church of England, Oxfordshire Diocese.
- The principal took up her post in September 2022.
- 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.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, members of the board of trustees and the local governing board, senior leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, history and performing arts. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including governor minutes, policies, and records for behaviour management, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also reviewed documents related to the alternative provision used by the school.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andy Platt

Ofsted Inspector

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