

Inspection of Chiltern Academy

Gipsy Lane, Luton LU1 3GF

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Chiltern Academy is an inclusive and respectful place in which to learn. Pupils are proud to be part of the school. Pupils are safe. Bullying is not tolerated. When bullying does happen, staff deal with it quickly. Pupils focus on their learning. Lessons are typically settled and purposeful.

Pupils respond to leaders' high aspirations for what they can achieve. Pupils understand the school's vision of 'Inspiring Minds, Building Futures'. Pupils learn about topics that link to cultures within the school community. For example, the history curriculum teaches pupils about the end of the British Empire in the subcontinent. This helps them to make important links and to understand and deepen their learning.

Pupils benefit from the wide variety of extra-curricular activities that take place before school, at lunchtimes and after school. Opportunities range from sport to music, chess, gardening, digital arts and astronomy. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have access to this broad offer, alongside specific activities to develop their engagement and confidence. This includes the table cricket club. A large number of pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. There is something on offer for everyone.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with SEND. In key stage 4, pupils have a wide choice of subjects to choose from, such as engineering, psychology and creative iMedia. Leaders are proud of their specialism in engineering and of the high take-up, particularly by girls, to study this.

Subject leaders have set out clearly the important knowledge that pupils need to understand and when they should learn it. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects that they teach. This includes the high number of early career teachers employed in the school.

Most teachers routinely check that all pupils understand and remember important knowledge. However, this is not consistent across the school. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge, and their misconceptions, are not routinely addressed. Therefore, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Reading is prioritised. Pupils engage in reading activities across the curriculum and in form times. Pupils largely enjoy, and develop a love of, reading. Leaders quickly identify pupils who struggle to learn to read. If pupils fall behind, they are given the right support to ensure they catch up with their peers.

Leaders and staff accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils' additional needs are supported through individual learning plans, which detail the support pupils require to help them access the same curriculum as their peers.

Teachers use these plans effectively to adapt their teaching so that pupils with SEND make sufficient progress.

Leaders set high expectations for behaviour across the school. Learning in classrooms is rarely disrupted. Pupils demonstrate a maturity in their attitude towards their learning, and participate in lessons well.

Pupils benefit from a programme of highly effective personal development. As a result, pupils become confident, resilient individuals. They develop high aspirations for themselves.

Pupils' awareness of tolerance, respect and diversity is developed very well through the well-planned and sequenced personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, as well as topics covered in assemblies and form time. Form groups plan and deliver assemblies to promote aspects linked to wider development, for example sexuality and religion. Pupils from this multicultural community celebrate their differences during cultural days, where they attend school in clothing that represents what is important to them and their culture. On cultural days, pupil leaders help to develop the canteen menu to make sure that it includes and celebrates foods from the school's diverse community.

Pupils embrace the opportunities provided to take on leadership responsibilities. They develop an understanding of democracy through the elections for leadership roles in the school. Pupils experience high-quality careers information. This means they are well prepared to make choices about their next steps.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They are positive about the efforts made by leaders to manage their workload and well-being. There is a strong focus on professional development. Staff value the Wednesday morning subject-specific training and 'Feedback Fridays' sessions, when they share and improve their practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are aware of the potential risks that pupils may face. Leaders have robust systems to report safeguarding concerns. Staff use these systems well and report issues systematically. Leaders monitor and respond to concerns quickly. Where appropriate, leaders work with external agencies to support pupils who need additional help.

Pupils develop a secure understanding of risks that young people may face within their locality and nationally. They learn about these risks through the curriculum, in assemblies, in form times and through visitors to school. Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness of harmful sexual behaviours in the school. Pupils know how to stay safe when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not routinely check how well pupils have remembered and understood what they need to know. This means that pupils' gaps and misconceptions are not routinely identified. Some pupils do not have the firm foundations on which to build their knowledge. Leaders must ensure that there is a consistent approach to check and quickly identify and address the gaps in pupils' learning.

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	145872
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10254999
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,168
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Pryor
Headteacher	Ian Douglas
Website	www.chiltern-academy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Chiltern Academy is a new school, which opened in September 2018. It is part of the Chiltern Learning Trust.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll has increased every year since opening. This academic year is the first year where the school has educated all year groups between Years 7 and 11.
- The school uses eight registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, engineering, French and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, looked at pupils' work, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and considered the school's policies. They scrutinised the school's single central record and looked at how records relating to safeguarding were recorded and maintained.
- The lead inspector met with three representatives from the trust and three members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the curriculum, SEND provision, behaviour and attendance, careers information and guidance, PSHE, pastoral support and reading.
- The inspection team met with pupil groups to talk about behaviour, bullying and their wider development.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone to six alternative providers used by the school.
- The lead inspector considered the 145 responses and 81 free-text responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector also reviewed the 83 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 284 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Wayne Jarvis, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Daniel	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Hogan	Ofsted Inspector
Dave Gibson	His Majesty's Inspector

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