

Inspection of a good school: Cheshire Studio School

Bexton Road, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0EA

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2023

Outcome

Cheshire Studio School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff have appropriate expectations for pupils and students in the sixth form at Cheshire Studio School. From their varied starting points, pupils benefit from an education that is carefully designed to meet their needs and aspirations.

Staff understand the individual circumstances of pupils. Pupils benefit from a range of well-matched opportunities and experiences to nurture their engagement in education. For example, pupils appreciate and enjoy the practical, work-related or sports-focussed opportunities that they receive.

Staff model the behaviours and traits that they expect pupils to demonstrate. This helps pupils to learn how to form and sustain positive relationships. Pupils are mostly calm and polite in their daily lives. They treat other pupils and staff with respect. Positive behaviour is the norm. Pupils know where to turn if they experience unpleasant behaviours such as bullying. When these happen, staff promptly and effectively tackle these behaviours.

Pupils feel well looked after by staff. They trust staff to care for and help them if they need it. They feel happy and safe in school. Most pupils enjoy attending school.

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

Governors, leaders and staff understand that pupils and students in the sixth form at Cheshire Studio School need a carefully designed set of experiences to strengthen and sustain their engagement with education. They are committed to providing pupils with the unique education they need. They demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to ensure that pupils from all starting points strive for appropriately aspirational achievements.

Leaders ensure that pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from an appropriate range of academic and vocational opportunities. Pupils appreciate this

curriculum, which meets their needs and interests. Most pupils are well prepared for suitably aspirational next steps in education, employment or training.

Experienced and well-trained staff think carefully about the order in which they deliver subject curriculums. They carefully identify the knowledge that pupils should learn.

Staff have strong subject knowledge. In lessons, they recap, introduce and explain important curriculum content well. They select activities that support pupils to gain and confidently use a growing body of knowledge. Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to engage positively in lessons.

Where relevant, pupils benefit from well-placed opportunities to learn about practical aspects of the subjects that they are studying. Furthermore, pupils also understand how their subject applies to the world of work, where appropriate.

Staff check and identify with rigour what pupils know and can do. They provide clear and well-focussed guidance to help pupils acquire and use new knowledge.

Published information about the recent progress and attainment of pupils at Cheshire Studio School does not provide a meaningful insight into the impact of the education that they receive. This is because many of these measures do not show the progress that pupils make from their low starting points during years 10 and 11. Nor do they accurately portray the attainment of the small cohorts of students in the sixth form.

In the main, pupils and students in the sixth form make secure gains in what they know and remember across the subjects they study. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For the most part, they are well prepared for, and go on to, suitably ambitious next steps in their education, employment or training.

Staff identify and understand the needs of pupils with SEND, including students in the sixth form. Teachers make effective use of relevant information to provide appropriate support for these pupils in lessons. Leaders ensure that pupils who need it get additional support for their wider personal and social needs.

Leaders carefully identify specific gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Suitably trained staff provide targeted support to help pupils strengthen their knowledge of word recognition, fluency and comprehension. As a result, these pupils make positive gains in their reading knowledge.

Pupils' attendance is uneven. Staff make appropriate use of systems to identify barriers affecting pupils' attendance. Increasingly, they use this information to tailor the support that many of these pupils receive. Consequently, the attendance of many pupils is improving. Despite this, the attendance of some pupils is still not as good as it should be.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities that leaders give them to explore and discuss important aspects of their personal development. They also benefit from well-planned opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills that will help them secure and retain employment.

Pupils learn well from these. This is because staff carefully consider pupils' needs and interests across the range of opportunities that they provide.

Pupils have access to a suitably broad range of opportunities to develop their wider talents and interests. Some pupils are keen to take advantage of these opportunities. However, many pupils do not participate in these opportunities as much as they should.

Staff appreciate the professional development that leaders arrange for them. This is carefully matched to staff needs. Staff feel that leaders consider their workload and well-being proactively. They speak highly of the changes that leaders make to support them in their roles. Furthermore, they value leaders' thoughtful consideration of their personal circumstances.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff have a secure understanding of the risks that pupils might experience in their lives. They ensure that pupils benefit from regular opportunities to learn about, explore and discuss how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders ensure that staff feel confident to spot concerns about pupils' safety. Staff are appropriately vigilant. They record and share concerns about pupils' welfare effectively.

Leaders carefully consider staff's concerns. They work closely with pupils and their families to support their specific needs. Leaders skilfully draw on an extensive range of expertise from other partners. These partners provide well-matched additional support for pupils who need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The attendance of some pupils and students in the sixth form is not as good as it should be. This means that some pupils miss out on parts of the education and personal development that they need to be well prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training. Leaders should continue their recent drive to fully understand the barriers affecting the attendance of these pupils. They should ensure that these pupils are better supported to attend school as often as they should.
- Some pupils and students in the sixth form do not take enough advantage of opportunities to nurture and develop their talents and interests. Consequently, these pupils do not benefit from these experiences as much as others. Leaders should ensure that these opportunities are better matched to pupils' needs and interests, so that more pupils participate and engage in the life of the school beyond the taught curriculum.

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 March 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	140813
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10212509
Type of school	Other secondary
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	120
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	66
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Wootton
Headteacher	James Whittaker
Website	knutsfordacademy.org.uk/studio-school
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cheshire Studio School changed its name from The Studio at Knutsford Academy when it joined The Learning Alliance multi-academy trust in September 2020.
- Cheshire Studio School provides academic and vocational education for pupils and students aged 14 to 19.
- Leaders and staff at Cheshire Studio School are drawn from the workforce of the onsite linked provision, Knutsford Academy.
- Pupils and students at Cheshire Studio School experience much of their education, personal development and social time alongside the pupils and students of Knutsford Academy.
- The school makes use of one registered and one unregistered alternative provider to provide part-time education for a small number of pupils.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislations, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 10 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 headteacher and other leaders. They met with representatives of the academy trust, local governing body and Cheshire East local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, social sciences and art and design. 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 reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of the pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and carers who contacted them during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Pennington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Eleanor Overland

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023