

Inspection of a good school: Christopher Whitehead Language College

Bromwich Road, St John's, Worcester, Worcestershire WR2 4AF

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 May 2023

Outcome

Christopher Whitehead Language College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Christopher Whitehead Language College is an inclusive, tolerant and welcoming school. Leaders have high expectations. They place a strong focus on academic achievement and pupils' character development. Pupils enjoy learning a well-thought-out curriculum that includes high-quality information about careers. This curriculum gives them the knowledge and skills they need to embark on their futures successfully.

Adults and pupils develop strong, positive and trusting relationships. This helps pupils to feel safe. Bullying is uncommon. If it does happen, pupils know who to speak to, and most are confident that adults will sort it out quickly.

Classrooms are purposeful and disruption to learning is rare. Pupils say that they can get on with their work. Sixth-form students are positive role models for younger pupils. They take their studies seriously and achieve high academic standards.

The school is at the heart of the community. The headteacher pays serious attention to ensuring pupils have meaningful opportunities to be active and respectful citizens. These opportunities go beyond the expected. They include raising money for local charities, preparing and serving meals for people experiencing homelessness and visits to local care homes. In addition, pupils appreciate and make good use of the impressive range of extra-curricular clubs available to them daily.

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

In recent years, leaders have taken effective steps to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study a broad range of subjects in depth in years 7 to 9. As a result of these actions, ever increasing numbers of pupils are well prepared to achieve highly in the subjects that form part of the English Baccalaureate. In the sixth form, a wide range of courses and qualifications are available to students that match their aspirations. Students greatly appreciate this.

Subject leaders ensure that pupils learn content in a logical order. For example, in mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils know and can recall the properties of shapes before teaching pupils more complex concepts involving shapes and algebra. This step-by-step approach is a feature of many subjects and helps pupils to succeed. In a few subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers know the precise knowledge that pupils must remember. This means that teachers sometimes move pupils on to new content before they are ready. Consequently, for some pupils, gaps in knowledge emerge, making it harder for them to learn new things.

Teachers, including those in the sixth form, have strong subject knowledge. They explain new ideas to pupils clearly and accurately. In addition, teachers create positive learning environments. They are encouraging and approachable, so pupils feel safe contributing in lessons and asking for help.

The school provides good support and care for pupils with SEND. Leaders quickly identify pupils who may have additional needs. This includes the identification of pupils with specific reading difficulties. Leaders provide teachers with helpful information about how best to support pupils with SEND. Consequently, most pupils achieve well.

Leaders promote reading well. The school library is well stocked, bright and inviting. Pupils make good use of it during lunch, breaks, and after school. Every day pupils read silently during guidance time. Pupils take this seriously. In addition, leaders strongly emphasise celebrating and rewarding pupils' achievements in reading. These approaches are working well and are helping develop pupils' love of reading. Leaders have identified a small but growing number of pupils who are not fluent readers when they join the school. Leaders have taken initial steps to ensure these pupils get the help they need to catch up quickly.

Pupils appreciate the tidy and welcoming environment. They take pride in their school and play their part in ensuring it is free from litter. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The whole school community understand these expectations. In lessons, pupils know what adults expect of them and they respond accordingly. At social times, the atmosphere is typically calm and orderly.

The personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. Leaders carefully consider how the school's 'Values and Ethics' curriculum gives pupils the information they need at the right time. This curriculum includes useful and age-appropriate content about healthy relationships and careers. Students in the sixth form benefit from coherently planned activities. This includes a series of fortnightly 'Impetus' lectures given by external speakers on a range of topics that spark students' interest and curiosity.

Those responsible for governance make a significant and positive contribution. They routinely gather the views of parents, pupils and staff and consider a range of other information about the school. Consequently, they know the school well. They use this knowledge to hold leaders to account effectively and drive further improvements.

Leaders work hard to promote staff well-being. Staff morale is high. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders create a strong safeguarding culture, where adults take pupils' welfare seriously. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a child. They pass on any concerns quickly. Leaders have established strong links with various external partners and developed a range of in-house support. This means that if pupils need help, they get it swiftly.

Leaders know the local risks to pupils. They ensure pupils get the information they need to help them keep safe. For example, pupils learn about various important and relevant topics. These include learning about county lines and how to stay safe around water.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers know exactly what pupils need to remember in order to succeed in subsequent learning. This lack of precision means that teachers sometimes move pupils on to work before they are ready to do so. This slows some pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that, in all subjects, teachers are clear about the specific content pupils need to know and remember and that teachers check that pupils have secured this important knowledge before moving pupils on to more complex work.

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 May 2018.

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	136890
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10269453
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1484
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	192
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Evans
Headteacher	Neil Morris
Website	http://www.christopherwhitehead.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 May 2018 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- 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 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They met with representatives of governance, including the chair of the trust board.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in French, English, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with some pupils about their learning.
- Through discussions with leaders, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also looked at documents related to safeguarding, including records of pre-employment checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of different classes and at different times of the day. They talked to pupils informally about bullying, behaviour and extra-curricular opportunities. They also observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding arrangements and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Christopher Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Parr

Ofsted Inspector

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