

Inspection of Charles Darwin School

Jail Lane, Biggin Hill, Westerham, Kent TN16 3AU

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 June 2023

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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have created an inclusive school. The school's values of 'aspire, endeavour and achieve' are at the core of the school's work. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to succeed and reach their potential. The arts play an essential role in the life of this school. A high proportion of pupils take arts subjects at GCSE and A level, particularly music. The school orchestra is accomplished, and many pupils get involved in school productions.

The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form provides an extensive range of academic and vocational courses catering for the needs of all pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by local trips to Orpington Literacy Festival and overseas trips, including to Poland. Students in the sixth form benefit from an individualised approach and achieve well.

Pupils behave well. They are polite and respectful. Pupils are safe in school and are comfortable reporting any concerns to staff. Where occasional bullying occurs, this is swiftly dealt with by leaders. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to take up leadership responsibilities, such as representing their peers on the student council.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum where topics are well sequenced, and the learning of key knowledge and skills is well organised. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to pursue academic or vocational courses, including physical education. They are committed to strengthening the learning and enjoyment of modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9, and consequently, an increasing number of pupils are studying languages at GCSE. Students in the sixth form can select from a wide range of courses and achieve well.

Teachers are committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use their subject knowledge well, adapting and delivering activities that aid all pupils' learning. For example, in history, teachers adapt their questioning carefully in order to deepen pupils' understanding.

Teachers build strong relationships with pupils. They get to know pupils' capabilities. For example, in mathematics, teachers use their knowledge of pupils' individual starting points to identify precisely which strategies will help pupils to understand more complex calculation methods. However, occasionally, some pupils do not understand or recall prior learning, missing connections between what was previously learned and their current learning.

Leaders are prioritising those pupils at an early stage of learning to read. They have established checks on pupils' reading abilities and targeted support to help pupils to catch up quickly. Some of these strategies involve pupils supporting each other, for example sixth-form students support younger pupils by acting as buddy readers.

Leaders and governors were disappointed with the GCSE results in 2022 and have taken decisive action to make sustainable improvements. As a result of these actions, pupils are able to know and understand more. Also, teachers have received training, support and advice which helps them to identify the needs of pupils with SEND more accurately. They are then able to adapt their approach to meet the needs of these pupils more precisely.

The school's 'curriculum for behaviour' is raising expectations. Routines have been strengthened. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite and behave well, They understand the school's rules. This means that learning is not disrupted. When pupils do display poor behaviour, leaders use sanctions appropriately.

Pupils generally enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is improving. Leaders are taking effective action to tackle individual cases where pupils have high rates of absence. Sixth-form leaders have created a culture of learning where students attend well and become mature, responsible individuals.

Leaders have designed the personal development programme to respond to the school's context, for example in covering the dangers of social media. The programme helps pupils to reflect on and consider people from different faiths and cultures. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and to be aware of dangers, including the use of drugs and road safety.

Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to understand the broader world of work. Appropriate advice and guidance are provided to pupils. The school has partnered with local organisations such as Biggin Hill Airport and some universities. Leaders have identified the further development of careers education as a priority.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders have considered the workload of staff and have taken effective steps to improve staff well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are suitably trained and recognise the safeguarding risks that pupils may face. They report and record any concerns appropriately. Leaders are diligent in following up and dealing with safeguarding concerns promptly. They work closely with families and external agencies to ensure pupils and their families get the help they need quickly.

Leaders ensure that pupils are made aware of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are taught about a wide range of risks, including those linked to social media, toxic and healthy relationships and sexual harassment. Pupils are confident to report concerns to staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes teachers do not use assessment strategies sufficiently to understand what pupils know and remember from previous learning. This leads to pupils having gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders should make sure that teachers are able to use assessment confidently and that they provide frequent opportunities to help pupils embed knowledge in their long-term memory.

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	136545
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10287213
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1,258
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Woolfenden
Headteacher	Aston Smith
Website	www.cdarwin.com
Date of previous inspection	30 Jan 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up their post in January 2022.
- Leaders do not currently place any pupils in alternative provision.
- 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 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 met with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers and other members of the school leadership team.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited samples of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to some pupils reading.
- Inspectors talked to leaders about the curriculum in other subject areas and visited lessons in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' school evaluation, the school development plan, records for behaviour and attendance and information about pupils' personal development.
- In checking the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. He reviewed various documentation, including the school's policy, records of support provided for pupils and the checks undertaken when recruiting staff. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the arrangements for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector met with members of the trust and the governing body.
- Inspectors met formally with pupils across all year groups and informally around the school site. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The inspection team considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and to the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ray Lau, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Aruna Sharma	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Gale	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Newby	Ofsted Inspector
John Blaney	Ofsted Inspector
Amanda Torpey	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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