

Inspection of Chartfield School

45 Minster Road, Westgate-on-Sea, Kent CT8 8DA

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and staff value the nurturing, family feel that Chartfield School provides. Children settle happily into the school's nursery, where they are very well supported to develop the social skills and learning behaviours they will need to thrive at school.

Pupils enjoy learning in small, mixed-aged classes. They appreciate the inclusive environment that staff and leaders create. Pupils are supported to develop strong and healthy friendships. They told inspectors that the 'opposite of bullying' happens at their school. Pupils are polite and consistently demonstrate good manners. Parents are unanimously positive about the school, and many say that their children's confidence has been transformed by the care and support they receive.

Pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum. They benefit from specialist teaching in a number of subjects, such as Latin and French. However, in other subjects, including early reading, not all teachers have the expertise they need to ensure that all pupils get the right support from the start.

All pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular learning and activities. Each week, pupils swim, practice yoga and mindfulness and take part in dance and drama sessions. Pupils enjoy the physical education (PE) the school provides, and the opportunities to take part in local events and competitions, such as cross-country. In addition, there are a broad range of clubs on offer, including classics club.

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

Over the last academic year, the school has experienced turbulence in senior leadership. This turbulence impacted staffing stability and the overall quality of education. The directors of the proprietor body have taken effective action to resolve this turbulence. This has included a director taking on the role of headteacher.

Leadership and staffing are now stable and secure. However, the school recognises that the quality of education requires improvement. This work is in process and leaders have a clear vision of the education they want to provide to pupils. The school have not yet developed an overarching curriculum policy that sets out this vision, as required by the independent school standards (the standards). As a result, the curriculum in a small number of subjects, including personal, social and health education (PSHE), is not clearly sequenced.

While pupils are provided with relationships education, the school is not clear about exactly what it wants pupils to learn at what stage. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of parts of the PSHE curriculum, including online safety, is variable. The school has not developed a relationships education policy or consulted with parents as required by the standards.

In many subjects, including early reading and mathematics, leaders have written or adopted a clear and well-sequenced curriculum. Some subjects, such as language and physical education, are taught by specialist teachers who are expert in the subjects they teach. However, where the curriculum is not taught by specialist teachers, there is more variability.

A high proportion of teachers are relatively new to the school, and lack subject-specific expertise, including in the teaching of early reading and mathematics. Where teachers have less subject knowledge, they explain things less clearly and do not always plan learning activities that support pupils to achieve the intended learning. Some pupils have fallen behind in their reading. While all pupils read daily with an adult, some adults are not trained in the teaching of early reading. Additionally, the books that younger children read do not always match the sounds they have learned precisely enough.

Staff support children successfully, right from the start of Nursery, to develop a love of reading. Children in Nursery visit the local library regularly to choose books, which they take home to enjoy with their families. All pupils, including those who have fallen behind in learning to read, can talk about their favourite books and stories.

Historically, the school has had a low proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, this is changing. The headteacher and school staff promote an inclusive ethos and welcome children who might find larger class sizes a challenge. Staff in Nursery work closely with families when children join the school to identify if a child might have SEND. Staff work closely with external experts to ensure that the right support is in place for pupils with SEND.

Pupils across the school behave very well. They are polite and well mannered. Leaders ensure that staff consistently model those positive behaviours that they would expect from pupils. Routines are well embedded, right from the start of Nursery. Pupils are kind and accepting of their peers.

Those responsible for the leadership and management of the school have a clear vision for the school. They place children's welfare at the heart of their decision-making. It is testimony to their dedication that despite the challenges the school has faced, parents, staff and pupils all view the school very positively. However, the standards for leadership and management are unmet because leaders have not ensured that all standards that relate to the quality of education are consistently met. Staff appointments this year have increased the capacity within the school to make the necessary improvements, and leaders now have a clear plan in place to ensure that the standards are consistently met.

The directors of the proprietor body recognise that the school's governance arrangements would be further strengthened by a governing board, particularly as the main director is currently the headteacher. The directors have recruited a chair of governors and are in the process of recruiting additional governing board members. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Not all staff are expert in the teaching of early reading. As a result, teaching and support for those who have fallen behind are not as effective as they should be. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are trained to teach reading expertly.
- The curriculum in a small number of subjects lacks cohesion. Learning has not been sequenced carefully enough, and staff are not always clear about the knowledge that is most important for pupils to remember. As a result, what pupils learn and remember in these subjects is variable. Leaders need to review the curriculum in these subjects and ensure that sequences of learning build towards clear end points.
- Leaders, and those responsible for governance, do not have clear systems in place to ensure that the school consistently meets the standards. Leaders, and those responsible for governance, need to ensure that there are clear systems in place to assure ongoing compliance with the standards.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	118977
DfE registration number	886/6035
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10290770
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Proprietor	Chartfield School Ltd
Chair	Mary Neale
Headteacher	Sarah Neale
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,300 to £3,900
Telephone number	01843 831 716
Website	www.chartfieldschool.org.uk
Email address	sneale@chartfieldschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 to 5 March 2020

Information about this school

- Chartfield School is an independent school that caters for pupils from the age of three to 11 years.
- Since the previous standard inspection, there have been two changes of headteacher. At present, a director of Chartfield School Ltd is the school's headteacher. She plans to continue in this role for the foreseeable future.
- At the time of this inspection, the directors were in the process of establishing a governing board.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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, who is also a director of the proprietor body, and with teachers, including the school's special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, PSHE and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils reading. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the quality of education provided in other subjects.
- Inspectors carried out other activities to check that the school meets the independent school standards. These included a check of the school premises and wider work to comply with health and safety laws (including fire safety). Inspectors considered the school's approach to risk management. Inspectors also checked the relevant policies and the school website.
- Inspectors judged the effectiveness of safeguarding by meeting with leaders, discussing records of concern and subsequent actions, and speaking with pupils and staff about this aspect of the school's work. Inspectors confirmed that the

right checks are being made to ensure that all staff and members of the proprietor body are suitable for the posts they occupy.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Hogarth

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2A(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b),
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
 - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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