

Inspection of a good school: Cheney School

Cheney Lane, Headington, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX3 7QH

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 September 2023

Outcome

Cheney School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Rob Pavey. This school is part of River Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul James, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kirsten Robinson.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is proud of its diverse community. Its vision is aspirational for all pupils, both academically and in terms of their personal development. It has successfully created a vibrant and inclusive culture. At the heart of this are the positive and respectful relationships between pupils and staff and high standards of behaviour in lessons and around the site. Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They particularly like its caring and supportive ethos, but also that staff aim high for their pupils.

The school has put in place a broad and ambitious curriculum in all key stages. Overall, pupils are keen to learn, and most are successful. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Furthermore, almost all make positive transitions to the next phase of their education or training. For a small number of pupils, the school has bespoke curriculum programmes to support their learning.

School and trust leaders have established clear and consistent routines and systems to support the school's high expectations for behaviour. Pupils and staff appreciate the improvements in behaviour over recent years. Pupils feel listened to and trust staff to deal with any concerns effectively. They feel happy and safe at school.

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

Curriculum teams have strong, collective subject knowledge. They have carefully considered what to teach and when from Year 7 to Year 13. They also ensure that content is relevant and goes beyond preparing pupils for examinations alone. For example, the curriculum helps pupils make connections to the wider world effectively through themes such as sustainability, diversity and empire. Nevertheless, staff are not

complacent. They are constantly refining their curriculum thinking.

The school is committed to breaking down barriers to achievement where these exist. It provides teachers with helpful information about how to meet individual pupils' needs. Staff use this knowledge to adjust what is being taught and how. This means that mostly, pupils can enjoy learning the same curriculum together. Unfortunately, some pupils' persistent absence means that they do not benefit from the school's rich curriculum or the bespoke programmes the school has put in place. This impacts these pupils' achievement both academically and in their personal development. The school has taken action to support these pupils. However, their attendance is not yet good enough.

Consistent lesson routines ensure that classrooms are calm and positive. They also help pupils to develop positive learning habits as well as independence. Teachers present new content clearly. Mostly, they select appropriate resources and activities for their classes. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding, and most make appropriate adjustments before moving on or introducing more complex tasks. Pupils value and use the feedback they receive from teachers. Most pupils produce work to an appropriate standard, including pupils with SEND. The quality of work in the sixth form is particularly high. However, there are some inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is delivered. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

The school places a high priority on reading. Pupils who need additional help catch up well because staff identify gaps and target support precisely. Most pupils read increasingly widely and confidently. Through the work of dedicated library staff, many pupils who were previously reluctant readers are now enthusiastic about books, including a number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The school has a rich personal development programme and provides strong careers education. Both are carefully thought through from Year 7 to the end of the sixth form. Personal development is sensitively and effectively delivered, including to pupils with SEND. Consequently, pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including when online. They show a real interest in modern society and enjoy exploring issues linked to equality and different cultures or backgrounds. Sixth-form students are excellent role models for these discussions. Pupils also participate in the wide range of clubs and leadership activities that are run inclusively. The careers programme benefits from strong links with local employers and training providers. It prepares all pupils very well for future study and employment. Older pupils particularly appreciate opportunities for work experience. Where required, the school provides targeted support for pupils to access all aspects of careers education.

The school has benefited from the trust's support while retaining its distinctiveness. Trustees and local governors fulfil their statutory duties rigorously, including those relating to safeguarding. Trust and school leaders have created a positive and supportive workplace. Staff appreciate this and are very proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The attendance of some pupils, including some from disadvantaged backgrounds, is not yet high enough. This means that they miss out on the education and wider development offered by the school. The school has a strategy to reduce absence and it should continue its work with pupils and families.
- In a few areas, the curriculum is not delivered as leaders intend. This means that some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. The school needs to ensure that all staff have the knowledge they need to help all pupils remember what they have learned and apply it effectively.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2015.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139146
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10288032
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	1,708
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	276
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kirsten Robinson
CEO of the trust	Paul James
Headteacher	Rob Pavey
Website	www.cheneyschool.org
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of River Learning Trust.
- The school currently uses two registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with trust and school leaders, members of staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust board and of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, languages and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work from all key stages. Inspectors also looked at key stage 4 lessons in a range of subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views. They considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also took account of responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Burridge

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