

Inspection of a good school: The Chalk Hills Academy

Leagrave High St, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 0NE

Inspection dates:

31 October and 1 November 2023

Outcome

The Chalk Hills Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Raza Ali. This school is part of The Shared 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, Cathy Barr, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Sheridan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and happy at The Chalk Hills Academy. Teachers have high expectations for their behaviour and learning. Pupils value the fact that there are plenty of adults who will listen to them.

Pupils behave well, both in lessons and around the school. They know and follow clear expectations and are typically respectful. Pupils have a strong understanding of other cultures and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils study an ambitious curriculum. Their teachers follow similar routines in lessons, such as 'I do, we do, and you do'. Pupils said that this helps them to understand and remember new learning. Students in the sixth form can study a wide range of mostly academic qualifications. Pupils, including sixth-form students, are extremely well prepared for future study or employment.

Pupils benefit from a range of inspiring wider personal development opportunities. In addition to the many sports activities, pupils take part in diversity book club and food and nutrition club. All Year 7 pupils visit Phasels Wood Activity Centre. They also all have swimming lessons. There are great opportunities for pupils with SEND to take part in golf workshops, curling and boccia.

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

The school has developed a well-constructed, broad and ambitious curriculum. Teachers identify with precision the knowledge pupils need to learn. This knowledge builds on prior learning. The number of pupils who go on to be entered for the English Baccalaureate is increasing. More pupils are now required to study French or Spanish in Year 10.

Leaders ensure that staff have access to a high-quality programme of training and development. Consequently, teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum well. Teachers plan for progression effectively. They assess and check what pupils know through questioning and 'live marking'. However, some teachers do not adapt their teaching precisely enough to fully meet the needs of all pupils. When this happens, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Teachers ensure that pupils can recall and build on important knowledge. There is a consistent structure to lessons across the school. Lessons start with an activity. This typically revisits knowledge so that pupils can remember it. Teachers then introduce new knowledge. Pupils carry out practice activities to make sure they understand. Teachers then check what pupils have learned. This informs teachers' planning of pupils' next steps in their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs accurately identified. Strategies to meet pupils' needs are in place to support teachers to help pupils with SEND access the curriculum successfully. Most teachers make appropriate adaptations that follow these strategies. However, a minority of teachers do not do this well enough. Where this is the case, pupils with SEND do not access the full curriculum as well as they might.

The school has identified pupils who need to get better at reading in Years 7 and 8. Pupils who need help with reading receive support, such as paired reading with sixth-form students. This helps them to become better readers, ensuring pupils are able to access the rest of the curriculum. However, some pupils continue to find reading difficult. This means that they do not access the full curriculum as successfully as they could.

The curriculum is enhanced with a well-established range of clubs, trips and visits. Pupils can visit France, Italy and Spain. These opportunities widen and complement pupils' learning experiences. There are strong relationships with universities, colleges and employers. These links are used well to provide pupils with high-quality careers advice and guidance. This includes work experience for both Year 10 and Year 12 students.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Staff implement the school behaviour policy consistently well. Low-level disruption of lessons is rare. Adults' work to improve the behaviour of pupils at risk of permanent exclusion is highly effective. The school's work to improve attendance is also effective. Attendance is a high priority for the school and is improving. Fewer pupils are missing important learning due to poor attendance.

Pupils learn about tolerance and accepting difference through a well-designed programme of personal, social and health education. They learn how to be healthy and how to identify risk. Pupils said they value the diversity of their school. They enjoy culture day, world food days and celebrating festivals of different religions.

Leaders engage well with staff, who appreciate the consideration given to their workload and well-being. Teachers in the early stages of their teaching careers are particularly well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although the needs of pupils with SEND are accurately identified, teachers do not always make useful adaptations to learning for pupils with SEND consistently well. Consequently, a minority of pupils with SEND do not access the curriculum as well as they might. The school needs to ensure that staff receive further training so that they successfully make the adaptations to learning that pupils with SEND need.
- Although leaders identify pupils in Years 7 and 8 who need support with reading, they have not ensured that support continues for pupils in all year groups. Pupils who cannot read fluently do not access the curriculum as well as they might. The school should ensure that these pupils are identified and the right support is put in place to allow them to access the curriculum as successfully as they might.

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 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' 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	135337
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10295025
Type of school	Secondary
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	1,623
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Sheridan
Principal	Raza Ali
Website	http://chalkhills.thesharedlearningtrust.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 May and 16 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Shared Learning Trust.
- The principal took up his post in January 2021.
- The school currently uses seven alternative providers. Five of these providers are unregistered.
- The school operates a sixth-form consortium with The Stockwood Park Academy.
- 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

- 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, languages and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject 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 met with school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, the chief executive officer for the trust, three members of the board of trustees, including the chair, and a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 considered the 97 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 55 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 67 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sue Pryor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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