

Inspection of Chalk Hill

Cats Lane, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2SF

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

The head of school is Nicki Jennings. This school is part of SENDAT multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lawrence Chapman, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Snowdon. There is also an executive headteacher, Graham Alcock, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attend Chalk Hill frequently. They are happy to be part of this community. This is a place where pupils feel safe and looked after. The school helps pupils, who have often missed parts of their previous education, settle quickly into school life.

Staff are skilled in helping pupils with tricky issues. They quickly get to know pupils' prior learning, experiences and behaviours. This helps staff to put in place an effective range of support and therapies. Many pupils improve their behaviour and attitudes towards school. Consequently, pupils have positive relationships with each other and the staff that care for them. Many pupils return successfully to their previous school or to different settings.

Pupils experience a range of trips and visits. These include, for example, various overnight stays. They also keep active through swimming and football. This helps pupils to build their confidence and resilience. The house teams promote collaboration and cohesion within the school community.

Despite many positives to Chalk Hill, the school's work to improve the curriculum has only recently started. Some areas of the curriculum are better than others. The less-developed subjects do not fully support pupils to learn as well as they might.

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

The trust and the school continue to improve Chalk Hill. Since taking over, and against the backdrop of the pandemic, leaders have made many positive changes. These include improvements to how the school supports pupils' behaviour and attendance. The school's plans to improve the curriculum are robust but have only just begun. It is too early to see the impact of this work.

The curriculum covers the same subjects pupils would learn in other schools. The most effective parts of the curriculum are well thought out and sequenced. In these instances, staff quickly determine pupils' knowledge. Many pupils have substantial gaps in what they know prior to moving into the school. Staff support pupils to build their knowledge and confidence, considering pupils' varying needs. Most staff know pupils' behavioural and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. This information is collected accurately when pupils start the school.

Several curriculum areas, however, are in a state of change. The school is currently improving them. Some curriculum areas do not yet outline what leaders want pupils to know clearly enough. This impacts the checks on learning that happen in class. It is harder for teachers to spot what pupils know and have remembered. This means that, sometimes, staff do not adapt their lesson activities well enough to meet pupils' needs. There are occasions where staff do not have the subject knowledge to know what works well for these pupils. In these cases, pupils do not make the progress they could.

The school supports pupils well with their reading knowledge. Pupils who find reading a challenge are given appropriate support and guidance to help them to catch up. Pupils enjoy reading both in class and at home.

The school's approach to supporting pupils with their behaviour and attendance is successful. Adults expect pupils to behave well. They give pupils the tools and therapies to help them with this. Adults quickly identify any additional needs pupils may have. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves during their time at Chalk Hill. This is echoed through the school's work to improve pupils' attendance. Most pupils attend school more frequently than they did in their previous school or setting.

Pupils encounter a range of topics in the school's curriculum that supports them with their development and helps build their resilience. Pupils learn about e-safety, careers, managing friendships and how others are different from themselves. Adults look after pupils' mental health and well-being effectively. The school gives pupils the necessary 'step up' to return to their schools and be at less risk of permanent exclusion.

Trustees support the school's improvement journey effectively by challenging leaders and holding them to account. They know the further work needed to improve the curriculum, as much of it has already begun. Staff are positive about the professional development opportunities that the school makes available for them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some curriculum documents are still being refined and improved. They do not always outline the most important, sequenced knowledge the school wants pupils to be able to know and do. This means it is difficult to build knowledge from pupils' various starting points. The school should ensure that all curriculum areas outline and sequence the most important knowledge for pupils to learn.
- Assessment within some subject areas is not always linked to the knowledge taught or is too broad, testing composite ideas rather than small pieces of knowledge. This means it is tricky to determine what pupils know as they move through a subject area. The school should ensure that all curriculum areas have assessment that matches the knowledge taught.
- There are occasions where staff do not use what they know about pupils to design lessons and experiences that build pupils' knowledge. This means pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff have the necessary expertise to adapt lessons to pupils' varying starting points.

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	147594
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10313019
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsored
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Male
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Snowdon
CEO	Lawrence Chapman
Headteacher	Graham Alcock (Executive Headteacher) Nicki Jennings (Head of School)
Website	www.sendat.academy/chalkhill/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Chalk Hill converted to become an academy in November 2019. When its predecessor school, Hampden House PRU, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- Many pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC) plan.
- Many pupils join the school at different points in their school life. A proportion of the pupils are placed in the school for short-term placements and are at risk of permanent exclusion.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- Due to the nature of the specialist curriculum, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following areas: English (including reading), mathematics, science and personal, social, health and economic education. In each area, inspectors met with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at evidence of pupils' work.
- Inspectors heard pupils read to known adults.
- The lead inspector also reviewed curriculum documentation, visited lessons and spoke to leaders about food and nutrition.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's behaviour systems, attendance information and records of behaviour incidents.
- Inspectors chose case studies of pupils. As part of this, inspectors scrutinised EHC plans, commissioning information and individual learning plans for several pupils across different classes.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the trust including the chief executive officer, the chair of the trust and a local academy board member.
- The lead inspector held telephone calls with the local authority and other external agencies that work with the school.
- 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.
- The lead inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. He also spoke to several parents on the telephone.
- The lead inspector considered 14 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff and five responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector

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