

Inspection of a good school: Chancellor's School

Pine Grove, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL9 7BN

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

Outcome

Chancellor's School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is David Croston. This school is part of Danes Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Josephine Valentine, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Day.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and students are happy to be at Chancellor's. They are kept safe and know that everybody has someone they can turn to if there is a problem or if they themselves are in trouble. Behaviour around the school site is good. Most pupils take responsibility for their own actions with minimum guidance from staff. They are respectful, articulate, and mature in attitude. Sixth-form students act as good role models.

Pupils have particularly good understanding of equality, equity, and diversity. They talk about the expectation to show kindness towards each other. All this helps build positive working relationships within the school community which, in turn, enable good learning to take place.

Staff expect pupils to arrive at lessons ready to learn, do their best, and achieve well. These expectations result in good GCSE and A-Level examination results. In addition, the school offer an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. These include sports, choirs and instrumental ensembles, musical theatre and drama productions, and visits to art galleries. There really is something for everyone. These activities offer good opportunities for leadership, particularly for sixth-form students.

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

The curriculum is ambitious and well planned. In Years 7 to 9, this reflects the breadth of subjects set out in the national curriculum. A wide range of courses is offered in the Arts, languages and humanities including at GCSE and in the sixth form. Teachers have good command of their subjects. Content is taught to pupils in a logical order. All this helps them build the skills needed to be successful in their examinations. In addition to subject-

specific knowledge, pupils also gain a balanced view of wider themes affecting society. This gives them a good understanding of the world and a broad cultural appreciation.

The school sets out clear expectations for teaching and learning. This includes insisting on high-quality written work and an emphasis on developing pupils' speaking skills. Staff are trained thoroughly in the application of these strategies. Spoken communication is modelled well by teachers' clear explanation and questioning. However, in some subjects, time spent talking and writing reduces opportunities to develop the practical skills that are crucial to learning.

The school's new approach to assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not used consistently. In some subjects, there is too much focus on how pupils will be assessed in GCSE examinations. This sometimes detracts from the objectives of the national curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Regular checks are made to test pupils' prior knowledge, typically at the start of lessons. In many subjects, this works well and helps teachers adjust teaching to correct errors. However, in some areas, misconceptions are missed and teaching moves on too quickly.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately identified. They access the same curriculum as their peers. Learning support assistants give effective support to individual pupils in lessons. SEND provision has undergone numerous changes in recent years. The school has correctly identified where more work is needed. This includes the organisation of records and the consistent use of SEND information by teaching staff to make subject-specific adaptations according to pupils' needs.

While most pupils read very well, including for pleasure, strategies to support the small number who struggle are not as effective. Plans to bring about improvements are also in place.

Pupils attend regularly, and their behaviour in lessons is good. Clear expectations mean that classrooms are purposeful places. Teaching and learning can therefore take place without serious interruption. Well-organised, attractive classrooms set the standard for well-presented work. This helps pupils when they revisit and revise their learning. The school's system of reward and sanction is understood and accepted by the great majority. Most, too, respond well to the school's well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic education. This includes in the sixth form. Here, a compulsory timetabled programme builds on learning from earlier years in an age-appropriate way.

Staff are committed to their roles, expect to work hard, and are professional in all aspects of their work. This professionalism is mirrored particularly in the attitudes and presentation of sixth-form students. Staff also appreciate the lengths that senior leaders go to ensure that their workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The organisation of record keeping for pupils with SEND is not as efficient as it could be. This means that it is harder for leaders and managers to pull together information as quickly as they might. Additionally, staff do not use information about SEND pupils consistently to adapt teaching according to need. The trust should review the school's systems for record keeping around pupils with SEND, and leaders should ensure that teaching staff make consistent and effective use of SEND information when planning their lessons.
- The school's new system for assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not fully developed and some inconsistencies remain. The trust should continue to review the use of assessment in key stage 3. This should include ensuring that whole-school strategies are used appropriately and effectively in different subjects, and that assessment methods are fully reflective of the national curriculum for Years 7 to 9.

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 predecessor school, Chancellor's School, to be good in September 2014.

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	147246
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10288574
Type of school	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	1218
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Day
CEO of trust	Josephine Valentine
Headteacher	David Croston
Website	www.chancellors.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2018

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has become part of Danes Educational Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The sixth form operates as a consortium with another local school, Mount Grace School.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern languages, geography, and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum and visited classrooms in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. They also met with the chief executive officer and director of education for the trust, the chair of the trust, the chair of the local governing body and with a parent governor.
- 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 met with groups of staff, and with pupils and students from across the school. They took account of 85 responses to Ofsted's inspection survey for school staff, 189 responses to Ofsted's inspection survey for pupils and students, and 182 responses to Ofsted's survey of parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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