

Inspection of The Hertfordshire & Essex High School and Science College

Warwick Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5NJ

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Cathy Tooze. This school is part of Herts & Essex Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, co-chaired by Yasmin Gregory and Timothy Hammonds.

Ofsted has not previously inspected The Hertfordshire & Essex High School and Science College under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged The Hertfordshire & Essex High School and Science College to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's motto of 'Excellence for All' runs through all aspects of this exceptional school. The school has the highest ambitions for what pupils can achieve. It provides the help and guidance pupils need to achieve them.

Pupils consistently rise to meet the high expectations that the school sets for them. As a result, pupils excel both academically and in wider school life. Pupils benefit from the calm and purposeful atmosphere that they experience both in and out of lessons. This orderly environment enables all pupils to thrive. Pupils look out for each other and welcome new pupils and visitors with kindness.

Pupils value the rich and extensive range of activities available to them. This includes a range of subject clubs and a comprehensive list of music and sports opportunities. Pupils regularly go on trips and visits.

The school encourages pupils to be the best they can be. Pupils develop their leadership opportunities across all year groups. These are linked to the school's values of resilience, respect, compassion, creativity, independence and initiative. Through this, many pupils help to make the school better and improve the experience for all.

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

The school has an ambitious and well-constructed curriculum across all key stages. Leaders continually review and adapt the curriculum to ensure it offers the best opportunities for pupils, including in the sixth form. Recent enhancements include the introduction of new qualifications and vocational pathways. These help pupils to pursue aspirations they might not have considered before.

Teachers have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach. Teachers make use of regular assessment. They use what they learn from this to adapt their teaching. This helps to close learning gaps and to address pupils' misconceptions. This helps pupils to achieve highly. This is reflected in the examination results that pupils achieve.

Reading is a whole-school priority. Pupils have regular opportunities to read and to study challenging texts across the curriculum. The school library is a hive of activity. Pupils take a leading role in selecting books and helping to run this important part of the school. Pupils who struggle to read are identified early. They are given the specific help they need to read well. This increases their confidence and enjoyment of reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their studies. Their needs are identified early and continually reviewed. Pupils with SEND benefit from high-quality

teaching. Where pupils have a specific need, the school provides effective support and provision. Pupils with SEND achieve highly.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They demonstrate highly positive conduct. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are exceptional. They show high levels of resilience when faced with challenging tasks. Pupils are kind and caring to each other. They work together to make the school a warm and welcoming place through their day-to-day interactions and through more formal roles, such as peer mentoring.

Pupils attend school regularly. The school challenges pupils' absence at the earliest opportunity. Tailored support is offered to a very small number of pupils who do not attend as well as they could. This helps to improve their attendance.

There is a rich and wide programme for pupils' personal development. It is well planned and closely integrated with the curriculum. For example, what pupils learn about online safety is planned and taught across all areas of the curriculum, ensuring that pupils build on what they already know. This joined-up approach ensures that important knowledge is continually reinforced. This is complemented by a strong 'co-curriculum offer', including clubs and other opportunities that enable pupils to pursue new interests and develop wider cultural understanding.

The school provides high-quality careers information and guidance. There is a comprehensive and varied whole-school offer. This includes work experience and regular opportunities to engage with employers, colleges and universities. This is supported by more bespoke approaches for those who wish to pursue specific pathways. Teachers regularly link what pupils learn in their lessons to careers and higher education pathways.

Trustees and governors have a bold and ambitious vision for the school. They have the knowledge and information they need to provide effective support and challenge to the school. Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders continually look for ways to improve staff's workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	140786
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10242369
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,483
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	505
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chairs of trust	Yasmin Gregory and Timothy Hammonds
Headteacher	Cathy Tooze
Website	www.hertsandessex.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Herts & Essex Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- 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

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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. Inspectors also met with teachers at the early stages of their career to discuss the support they receive.
- The lead inspector met with trustees and members of the local governing body. This included the chairs of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, science, modern foreign languages and design and technology. 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 in some other subjects.
- 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.

Inspection team

Marc White, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jason Carey	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector

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