

Inspection of Chelmsford County High School for Girls

Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1RW

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

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 Stephen Lawlor. This school is part of Chelmsford County High School for Girls single academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for the running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Miles.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Chelmsford County High School for Girls under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Chelmsford County High School for Girls to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school nurtures pupils' talents brilliantly. Like the former pupils that inspire them, the girls at Chelmsford County High School for Girls are true pioneers. Explorers, innovators and creative thinkers, the pupils push the boundaries of what they can achieve at their age. From designing eco-friendly wrapping paper to creating mini vehicles which send medical supplies into war zones, the pupils turn their imaginative ideas into reality.

This school is not just about academia. Staff go above and beyond to extend pupils' interests. The school makes full use of its links with employers and universities. Thus, pupils experience an array of exciting clubs and opportunities. This includes an annual dance show with over 200 participants and 40 music ensembles.

Pupils are thriving in this challenging and caring environment. They respond eagerly to staff's high expectations. Behaviour is exemplary. Sixth-form students are strong role models. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their leadership roles, such as house and sports captains. They drive numerous initiatives in the school and are actively involved in mental health provision.

The many house events help pupils forge close bonds of friendships across year groups. Pupils have high levels of respect for one another. The tight-knit community values and celebrates difference.

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

The school has a suitably challenging curriculum for the selective ability of the pupils. This includes studying the range of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. The breadth of the offer for scientific, technological and mathematical study (STEM) is impressive. This is not to the detriment of the creative subjects: many pupils opt to study the arts. Pupils and students in the sixth form achieve the highest outcomes in their national examinations. This is due to the high-quality curriculum and expert delivery.

The curriculum is carefully designed to extend and deepen pupils' thinking. There is an emphasis upon helping pupils make connections in their learning. Curriculum planning is meticulous in addressing any gaps in pupils' knowledge. This is so pupils move on to complex material with secure understanding.

Research-informed teachers have an infectious enthusiasm for their subjects. They have strong subject knowledge. Through their skilful questioning, they expertly guide pupils to extend and deepen their answers. They judiciously choose learning activities to help pupils connect ideas and learning from across the curriculum. Teachers check carefully pupils' understanding and cognitive load. This ensures that pupils are not put off trying difficult subject matter. Teachers encourage them gently to 'have a go'. Quite often, pupils themselves will push levels of difficulty higher, as they are curious and want to find out more. Notably, pupils' discussions in lessons

are engaging and intellectually stimulating. This is because their understanding of the taught curriculum is exceptionally strong.

Pupils are avid readers. The school has its own institute to promote scholarly enrichment. Pupils confidently read and debate academic papers and essays, and scientific and technical journals. They consider political bias in the news. Pupils also get stuck into a good book. The library buzzes with activity. Pupils appreciate the library's wide range of rich and diverse fiction.

Staff carefully consider pupils' emotional welfare and how this influences their behaviour and learning. For example, form tutors check in on pupils at the start of the day to see if teachers need to alter their approach. This is particularly useful for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use pupils' support plans effectively and flexibly. They use additional information from professionals as and when required. As a result, pupils are highly motivated and engaged in lessons. They feel comfortable to contribute. Staff receive regular training and are well supported by the SEND team.

Sixth-form students epitomise the school's strong work on its core values of civility and compassion. They are kind, caring and friendly to their younger peers. Many run extracurricular clubs and are generous with their time, mentoring younger pupils. Sixth formers, like their younger peers, benefit from a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. This includes appropriate input on financial security, independent living and healthy relationships. Careers education is well structured and prepares pupils and students fully for their next steps. Many participate in meaningful employer engagement activities, including that of work experience.

The trust board is dynamic in its approach to school improvement. Trustees carefully check the impact of their decisions and financial planning. Providing the best education possible while keeping an eye on staff and pupils' well-being is at the heart of their work. As many parents said, 'it's a phenomenal school'.

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	136412
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10211894
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,185
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	315
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Miles
Headteacher	Stephen Lawlor
Website	www.cchs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- 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.
- The school is a founding member of the International Coalition of Girls' Schools UK. They share educational practice internationally with other schools.

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.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the trust and trustees.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject and pastoral leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education. 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 considered the curriculum in some other subjects, including PSHE. They explored how the school delivers design technology across the curriculum as well as the breadth of the STEM offer.
- 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 responses to Ofsted’s pupil and staff surveys. They considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector
Sharon Pritchard	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Barr	Ofsted Inspector
Rob James	Ofsted Inspector

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