

Inspection of Chatham & Clarendon Grammar School

Chatham Street, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 7PS

Inspection dates: 5 and 7 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Debra Liddicoat. This school is part of Chatham and Clarendon Grammar School as a single-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the headteacher, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Waker.

What is it like to attend this school?

Trustees and leaders have failed to meet a number of their statutory duties around safeguarding, monitoring the impact of separating pupils by sex and consulting parents about changes in the curriculum for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). The school's poor recruitment practices have put pupils at risk of harm.

Pupils are not given the opportunity or choice to be educated with members of the opposite sex. Pupils who are separated into single-sex classes and tutor groups miss out on learning from pupils of the other sex. This is a detriment to both boys and girls. Pupils separated into single-sex classes are sometimes taught the curriculum in different ways depending on their sex. This degree of separation and unfavourable treatment also affects whom they socialise with outside of lessons. While most pupils are happy at school, some pupils are unhappy with the opportunities they feel they miss out on due to the practices of separating pupils by sex. Some pupils reported to inspectors that they become anxious when they enter mixed classes in some lessons in the upper school. The operation of such a policy without a statutory exemption amounts to unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sex as set out in section 85(2) of the Equality Act 2010.

There are high expectations for what pupils can achieve and, for the most part, these expectations are realised. Pupils behave very well around the school and in lessons. Disruption to learning is very rare. Pupils also treat each other kindly, and there is generally a respectful relationship between pupils and staff. Most pupils attend school regularly. However, some groups of pupils attend significantly less well. This includes disadvantaged pupils. In the sixth form, at the time of the inspection, it was not possible to know which sixth-form students were on each site at any given time. This put them at risk.

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

As a single-academy trust, the school has failed to understand a number of its statutory duties and has therefore not fulfilled them because of a lack of wider oversight. For example, leaders, including trustees, have not understood their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate against pupils due to their sex. The consequences and implications of the decision to separate pupils by sex have not been well considered. There has been no analysis of whether the practice amounts to less favourable treatment or disadvantage of pupils. There was very little monitoring of its potential wider impact, beyond financial considerations. Leaders and trustees were not complying with the Department for Education's (DfE) non-statutory guidance on gender separation in mixed schools which was published in June 2018.

Leaders and trustees, through their words, actions or influence, directly and/or indirectly undermine or fail to promote equality of opportunity in the school. The practice of separating pupils due to their sex is detrimental to pupils' education.

Leaders were not aware of some of the differences in the delivery of the curriculum for girls and boys. This included topics studied in the history curriculum or text choices in English. In another example, pupils told inspectors that girls must perform in an annual dance competition and boys do not have to.

This lack of understanding of statutory duties extends to other areas of leadership of the school. For example, there has been insufficient oversight of safeguarding around the recruitment of staff. This has created a culture that puts pupils at risk. Trustees have also not consulted parents about recent changes to the curriculum in RSHE.

Despite the differences caused by separation by sex, the school has created a suitably ambitious curriculum for pupils that covers a breadth of academic subjects. This leads to pupils achieving highly from their strong starting points, including in English, mathematics, science and the humanities. Students in the sixth form are able to choose from a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications. The school has considered what pupils should learn and when they are best placed to learn it. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and through specific interventions. This includes support to help catch up if they have fallen behind in their ability to read. However, at times, there is too long a gap between pupils being tested and their needs being identified. This means there is sometimes a delay in support being provided.

Teachers are highly knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach, and they use this knowledge to communicate well with pupils. However, at times, the way that lessons are taught means that too much time is lost to activities that do not support learning, for example pupils copying definitions or simply transferring information from one place to another.

Attendance is good for most pupils; however, there are groups of pupils, for example Year 10 girls, who do not attend school regularly enough. The school has not recognised that it is often the most vulnerable pupils who have poor attendance. As a result, not enough action has been taken to support these pupils to attend school more frequently. This has a negative impact on some of the most vulnerable pupils. Arrangements for monitoring attendance in the sixth form are weak, with leaders showing inspectors two vastly contrasting sets of figures. Furthermore, it was not possible to know which sixth formers are on each school site at any time.

Pupils are taught about people from different cultures and religions and are given opportunities to discuss this. There have been recent changes to the school's personal, social, health and economic education. There have not yet been consultations with parents on how these changes affect what is taught in terms of RSHE. While the new curriculum for these topics shows that pupils are likely to be well prepared for adulthood, students in the sixth form miss aspects of this part of their education as they are not always required to attend tutor times when this is being taught.

The school provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their interests further through a well-thought-through package of clubs and other extra-curricular activities. Most pupils take full advantage of these. For example, there is a healthy uptake to the Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The school has taken steps to make sure that these activities are inclusive and, in most cases, are accessible to all. There is also a very robust programme of careers education that extends into the sixth form.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There are particular weaknesses in how the school manages safer recruitment. The school does not know whether necessary checks have taken place when staff have joined the school. Despite the school being aware of these problems for a number of years, steps have not been taken to address them. The school has not fully appreciated the importance of these records in keeping pupils safe. There has also been insufficient oversight of safeguarding by leaders in the trust. The school was unable to put right the issues inspectors identified during the inspection, and leaders responsible for safer recruitment showed a particular lack of urgency and understanding. Trustees and senior leaders did not understand the requirements for safer recruitment as set out in the DfE's statutory guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Therefore, they were unable to check that those responsible were complying with those requirements.

Although staff receive training in how to identify pupils at risk of harm and how to log their concerns, there are insufficient systems in place to check if that training has had an impact. There is insufficient action to make staff aware of specific safeguarding concerns in the local area or a recognition that these concerns could affect pupils at this school. Pupils are put at risk because there is a not an understanding from the school that 'it could happen here'. For example, leaders had not considered the risks to sixth-form students of not keeping accurate records of who was on each site at any time.

When individual pupils are identified as being at risk of harm, leaders take prompt action to secure them the help that they need. Here, records are well kept. The school has also ensured that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including how to keep themselves safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is weak oversight of safeguarding through safer recruitment procedures. The single central record is not compliant, and has not been for some years. There are gaps in the checks that should have been carried out when recruiting staff. This puts pupils at risk. The school needs to make sure that:
 - these gaps are resolved immediately
 - staff with responsibility to compile and maintain this document have the appropriate knowledge, understanding and training
 - a process is in place to ensure that safer recruitment takes place according to statutory guidelines, as set out in the DfE's document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
 - there is routine monitoring by trustees and senior leaders to ensure that all statutory requirements and the single central record of recruitment checks are complete.
- The culture of safeguarding is not strong enough. There is not an appreciation that 'it could happen here'. This puts pupils at risk. The school needs to ensure that training is ongoing and is adapted to reflect local safeguarding concerns. The impact of this training should be checked routinely.
- The school is not aware of its statutory duties. This means that it does not know if it is acting legally, for example in respect of the Equality Act 2010. The school needs to ensure that its practice of separating pupils due to their sex is done so in manner which is in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. At present, the practice of separating by sex amounts to unlawful discrimination. Where necessary, the school needs to seek advice and needs to know where to go for support.
- The school has not consulted parents about changes to the curriculum in RSHE. It should do so without delay.
- Some groups of pupils do not attend school often enough and the school has not identified this or put in place specific strategies to address it. This affects the progress that these pupils make through the planned curriculum. In the sixth form, this may also put students at risk, as it is not clear who is on which site at any time. The school needs to put in place more effective monitoring of attendance figures, including in the sixth form, and use this to address barriers to pupil attendance.
- The teachers' activity choices in lessons are inconsistent. In some lessons, time is not well used, and pupils complete activities that are unlikely to lead to learning. This prevents pupils from making as much progress as they could. The school needs to make sure that teachers have a clear understanding of not just the content knowledge for the lesson but how that knowledge can be best taught and then learned.

- Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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	136382
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296352
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
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	1,428
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	498
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Waker
Headteacher	Debra Liddicoat
Website	www.ccgrammarschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a single-academy trust.
- The school operates a practice of separation by sex. Pupils are taught in single-sex classes in all subjects for key stage 3 and in single-sex classes for core subjects in key stage 4. There is no option in key stage 3 or in core subjects in key stage 4 to be educated with pupils of the opposite sex. In key stages 3 and 4 there is also separation by sex in tutor groups. The practice amounts to unlawful discrimination of pupils on the grounds of their sex. Pupils experience unfavourable treatment and the following detriments. First, it causes a detriment because boys are not able to learn alongside girls and girls are not allowed to learn alongside boys. Secondly, there are differences in elements of the curriculum taught to pupils based on their sex. Thirdly, pupils express unhappiness at elements of the unfairness that they feel they experience because of these practices.

- The school's rationale for the practice has until now been that it provides a unique selling point that allows it to compete with other schools. There was no written separation policy in place at the start of the inspection. A policy was written during the inspection which gave a rationale that the practice supported both boys' and girls' outcomes. For separation of the type and extent at the school to be lawful it must fall within the positive action exemption in section 158 of the Equality Act 2010. The school was unable to demonstrate that separation by sex was because positive action was required to overcome a specific disadvantage or disproportionately low participation experienced by pupils sharing a protected characteristic. The school could not demonstrate that the separation is proportionate and there was no other less discriminatory measure that could achieve this aim. The practice of separation is not kept under periodic review. The positive action exemption does not apply to the separation policy.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered 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.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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.
- This inspection started as an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. It was deemed a graded inspection under that same Act. Inspectors left the site after the first day of inspection (Tuesday 5 March 2024) and returned with a larger team to conduct the graded inspection on Thursday 7 March 2024.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and other leaders. The lead inspector also met with trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, geography, history, technology and business studies. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also

discussed elements of curriculum delivery in other subjects, including physical education and English.

- 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 a range of staff and considered their views through the confidential online staff survey.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally around the school, in lessons and at breaktime. Inspectors took account of the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Enser, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector (5 and 7 March)
Nicky Archer	Ofsted Inspector (5 March)
Tash Hurtado	Ofsted Inspector (5 March)
Maria Roberts	His Majesty's Inspector (7 March)
Jo Brinkley	His Majesty's Inspector (7 March)
Chris Parker	His Majesty's Inspector (7 March)
James Stuart	His Majesty's Inspector (7 March)
Jason Philipasz	Ofsted Inspector (7 March)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024