

# Inspection of William de Ferrers School

Trinity Square, South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 5JU

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Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The executive headteacher of this school is James Donaldson. This school is a member of the Chelmsford Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul Banks, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Roger Blundell.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy attending William de Ferrers School. They take advantage of a range of clubs, visits, and opportunities. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, sports clubs and learning the ukelele. These opportunities develop pupils' confidence and character.

The school offers all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), a broad curriculum. Where teaching is strong, pupils are highly engaged and learn well. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good across school. As a result, many pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils have responded positively to the school's new behaviour policy. Most pupils now behave very well. Pupils treat each other, and adults, with courtesy and kindness. If pupils need support to improve their conduct, they receive it. Pupils learn about how people may be different from themselves. They understand the importance of respecting these differences.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know how to seek help if they feel unsafe. Pupils learn about topics such as the safe use of social media, county lines and healthy relationships. Effective careers advice and guidance helps pupils, including students in the sixth form, to make informed choices about their next steps.

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

The curriculum identifies the important knowledge that pupils need to know to be successful. The school clearly breaks down what teachers should teach and the order it should to be taught in. 'Do now' tasks at the start of lessons help pupils to recall what they have learned previously. Most teachers use their subject knowledge to explain new concepts in a clear and engaging way.

Teachers question pupils to identify what they do not know. They use this to adapt the curriculum so that all pupils, including those with SEND, can access the curriculum and produce good-quality work. However, this is not consistent across school. In some lessons, activity choices are not always appropriate. Pupils are not always provided with opportunities to work independently and at an appropriate pace. Staff do not always effectively check how well pupils have learned new content. As a result, pupils do not gain the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding they need to achieve well.

The school provides effective support for pupils with SEND. The Acorn Centre is a welcoming, inclusive place for pupils. However, support for pupils' reading is not yet effective. The school does not regularly check how well pupils can read. Those pupils who require support do not always access texts at an appropriate stage for them. Although the school is aware of this issue and has plans to improve, some pupils do not currently get the support they need to improve their fluency and accuracy. This makes it difficult for them to access the curriculum.

Students in the sixth form follow a mixture of vocational and academic qualifications. They enjoy studying here. Students are well prepared for their next steps. They learn about topics such as personal finance. Students learn how to study independently and receive effective advice on careers, higher education, and apprenticeships.

The new leadership team has made rapid improvements to the standard of behaviour in school. Staff have consistent and clear expectations. Pupils know what they can and cannot do. If staff need support with more challenging behaviour, they receive this. Pupils are usually engaged in lessons, although, when teaching is less effective, some pupils do not participate fully. The school works closely with families to ensure that pupils come to school regularly. Consequently, pupils attend well.

The school's well-structured personal development curriculum ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about democracy and how to be a good citizen. The school provides many opportunities for pupils in all key stages to encounter employers and learn about the world of work. For example, all pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 complete work experience placements.

The school has undergone many changes in recent months, joining a multi-academy trust, and appointing several new staff. They have managed these changes well, and have gained the confidence of parents, staff, and pupils in the future direction of the school. Leaders are clear about the strengths and areas for development of the school, and how to move the school forward. Staff feel supported with their well-being. They are committed to improving the life chances of pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school has not ensured that the quality of teaching is of a high enough standard. In some lessons, activity choices do not ensure that all pupils gain the knowledge and understanding they need to achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff receive the necessary training to enable them to provide consistently high-quality learning experiences, which build on pupils' skills and knowledge.
- The school's identification of pupils' reading ability is not effective. Support for pupils who require help with reading is not delivered well enough. These pupils do not always improve their fluency and accuracy when reading. Consequently, they find it hard to access the curriculum fully. The school should ensure that it rigorously checks how well pupils can read and that well-trained staff deliver effective support to enable weaker readers to catch up with their peers.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136605
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323703
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1259
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	142
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Roger Blundell
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Paul Banks
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	James Donaldson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wdf.school">www.wdf.school</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- William de Ferrers School joined the Chelmsford Learning Partnership trust in April 2024.
- The executive headteacher joined the school in September 2024.
- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative provisions for pupils.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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, science, history, modern foreign languages and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited a range of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders, including the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, trustees, and members of the local governing body.
- An inspector met with early career teachers and staff involved in their induction.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in 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.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector considered the 154 responses and 114 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. He also considered the 97 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 64 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

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