

Inspection of Chesham Grammar School

White Hill, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 1BA

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 March 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Annmarie McNaney. This school is part of the Red Kite Schools trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Annmarie McNaney, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Linda Cannon Clegg.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school ensures that all pupils flourish academically and personally. Its culture is exceptionally happy and welcoming. Pupils enjoy coming here and parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school.

Staff are highly ambitious for all pupils, regardless of their background or special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Talented and caring staff share a strong belief that every pupil has the potential to achieve at the highest level. They work diligently to provide a rich curriculum and high-quality learning experience for everyone. As a result, pupils develop as enthusiastic and curious learners and achieve impressive results in public examinations.

At the heart of the school's culture are strong and positive relationships. These are nurtured through the school's highly effective 'vertical tutoring' approach. Younger pupils appreciate the support and advice shared with them by older ones in their tutor groups. The vast array of extra-curricular activities on offer also brings pupils together to make lasting and varied memories. Pupils naturally demonstrate a deep respect for staff and for each other and behaviour is excellent. Furthermore, sixth-form students are remarkable role models for other pupils. They know they are custodians of the school's values and take their leadership responsibilities very seriously.

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

The school's curriculum provides breadth and depth. Its ambitions exceed the scope of national and examination expectations. Teachers present ideas and concepts clearly and ensure that pupils can place their learning in a wider context. Staff provide thoughtful and appropriately demanding opportunities for pupils to practise what they have learned. They make regular checks on what pupils know and understand, addressing any misconceptions before moving on to new content. Teachers also provide very clear and helpful feedback. This enables pupils to extend and deepen their understanding.

Staff know pupils extremely well. Developing them as skilled learners is a priority. This is taught and supported explicitly from Year 7 onwards. The school identifies pupils with SEND and understands how to help them precisely. Staff use this information to make thoughtful adaptations which aid these pupils' learning but also develops their independence. All pupils, in all key stages, are immensely proud of their work and achievements. They are confident participants in their lessons from the very start. By the sixth form, they approach academic discussions with maturity and confidence.

Ensuring all pupils are confident readers at the highest level is a priority. It is the norm for pupils to read demanding texts linked to the curriculum. This reinforces how subject and academic language is used in context for pupils. Staff equally encourage and model reading for pleasure. They provide pupils with access to diverse and interesting texts. Where pupils are not yet fluent academic readers, the school provides highly effective support to help them catch up.

The school's approach to character education is impressive. It permeates the curriculum, pastoral work and the house system. Pupils demonstrate their excellent character in their resilience when faced with challenges, their support for each other and their participation in wider school life. In addition to clubs and trips, pupils in all years seize the raft of opportunities to take on responsibilities in school. Staff ensure they are open to all pupils. Sixth-form students embrace their many leadership roles enthusiastically. Their contributions and service are valued highly by staff and fellow pupils alike. Pupils' character and commitment to the school are also evident in their very regular attendance. Where pupils need help in meeting these expectations, the school puts in place highly personalised and effective pastoral support.

Through the school's life skills lessons, pupils explore how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including online. They learn how to make and nurture positive relationships, and the importance of respecting and celebrating difference. They are exceptionally well prepared to take their place as positive citizens of modern Britain. The careers programme is equally strong. Pupils benefit from the school's partnership with a wide range of representatives from the world of work, apprenticeships and education. Many alumni return also to share their experiences. Consequently, pupils understand the many choices available. They are extremely positive and aspirational about their future.

Staff are extremely humble about the school's impressive standards. However, they are not complacent and actively seek to learn from, and share with, other schools. Trustees embrace the school's vision and support its quietly determined approach to improvement. They provide rigorous oversight, including of safeguarding. Staff are immensely proud to work at this school. They feel valued and supported. Staff, parents and pupils typically describe the school as a 'wonderful community'.

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	137091
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10341681
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	1326
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	407
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Linda Cannon Clegg
CEO of the trust	Annmarie McNaney
Headteacher	Annmarie McNaney
Website	www.cheshamgrammar.org
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 March 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is the only school in the Red Kite Schools trust.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- 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 inspector(s) 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 of 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 met with the headteacher and other senior staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the board of trustees.
- The lead inspector also reviewed school improvement partner evaluations.
- To evaluate the quality of education, inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work, and spoke to some teachers.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and also considered pupils' opinions expressed through the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtime.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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' interest first.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and also considered the opinions expressed through Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Kearsley	Ofsted Inspector
Gemma Williamson	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Hemmingsley	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Culling	His Majesty's Inspector

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