

Chiltern Hills Academy

Chartridge Lane, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 2RG

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, leadership team and the governing body are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their plans and actions have improved current pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special education needs and/or disabilities. Pupils from these two vulnerable groups now attend more regularly.
- Newly appointed subject leaders have improved the quality of teaching in their areas by raising expectations and sharing good practice. This is particularly notable in mathematics.
- The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has taken effective action to improve the literacy and numeracy of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in key stage 3.
- Senior leaders are supporting subject leaders in how they use information to track and monitor progress. However, not all subject leaders make good enough use of the information they collect, and as a result, some pupils do not receive the support they need to improve their work.
- Pupils know how to stay safe, and the school's safeguarding procedures are highly effective.
- Teachers' planning is effective. However, some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils receive the help they need to improve their writing. However, more could be done to help pupils develop their writing in literacy-based subjects.
- Staff, pupils and parents fully support the headteacher's vision and would recommend this school to other parents.
- Pupils have embraced the school's values and ethos. As a result, they behave well in lessons and the school is calm and orderly.
- Sixth-form students achieve well and reach the standards expected for their age. Students follow a suitable 16 to 19 programme. They are good role models for younger pupils and they assist in many of the extra-curricular clubs.
- From low starting points, most pupils achieve well and reach the standards expected for their age. However, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities could achieve better at key stage 4.
- The Diocese of Oxford, and Buckinghamshire County Council, the school sponsors, provide effective support to the school. They have led training for the English department and have helped leaders to develop systems for checking the impact of their work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching further so that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils and give them challenging work to do
 - all teachers help pupils to improve their writing
 - disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with national averages.
- Sharpen middle leaders' use of assessment information so they consistently use this information to identify and support pupils who are at risk of falling behind.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders know their school well. Their self-evaluation is accurate, and in the last year they have quickened the pace of change to take effective action when needed. For example, leaders have employed a primary specialist to support pupils with very low attainment on entry.
- Leaders have tackled underperformance in most subjects. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved. Consequently, they are making rapid progress, particularly in English and science.
- Teachers are held rigorously to account for the progress their pupils make. Leaders, including governors, monitor the progress towards school targets, helping them to identify what further actions need to be taken, and where funding can best be directed.
- Leaders have embedded a culture and ethos where all embrace the school's seven values and pupils aim to live up to the school motto, 'Create, aspire and excel'. As a result, there are very few instances of poor behaviour. Pupils are typically self-controlled and move around the school building calmly.
- Leaders have adjusted the curriculum at key stage 3 and key stage 4 so it now meets pupils' needs well. Literacy levels have improved across key stage 3 as a result of leaders' focus on improving reading. The current key stage 4 curriculum now includes a range of pathways. As a result, more pupils are on track to achieve their targets, are enjoying their learning and attend more regularly.
- Subject leaders in mathematics and history have developed the curriculum within their subjects and raised their expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Pupils clearly enjoy being challenged across both disciplines and willingly devote extra time to researching topics in these two subjects independently. As a result, work produced by current pupils in both subjects is often stronger than in other subjects.
- Leaders have developed a range of support programmes for key stage 3 pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy. The SENCo has used catch-up funding to help some pupils improve their reading, spelling, writing and basic numeracy skills. As a result, Year 7 and Year 8 pupils involved in literacy support programmes have improved their reading and spelling ages significantly. Pupils involved in the numeracy programme have a better understanding of their multiplication tables and number bonds.
- Leaders have benefited from the support received from the Diocese of Oxford and Buckinghamshire County Council through the Bucks Learning Trust. The diocesan school improvement advisers and Bucks Learning Trust are helping English leaders to further strengthen the curriculum and teaching within their subject. As a result, pupils are now more engaged and are taking a more active part in their English lessons.

- Pupils at key stage 3 are offered a range of enrichment opportunities as part of their curriculum offer. Some pupils take an active role in sport, drama productions and creative arts. These activities are often supported by sixth-form students and key stage 4 pupils who are developing their leadership skills.
- Leaders have identified the barriers to learning for pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders responsible for each of these groups have created an impressive range of support and intervention. These have been shared with staff and, as a result, pupils' well-being, attendance and attitudes to learning have improved.
- Leaders were disappointed with the outcomes in last year's key stage 4 results and have tackled weaknesses in the leadership of English, science and languages. They have also acted swiftly to improve teaching within these areas. As a result, subject leaders have improved how they use school information and are challenging their teams to improve pupils' outcomes. However, some subject leaders, for example in mathematics, use data more effectively than others and a more consistent approach is required so that all pupils remain on track to achieve their targets.
- Leaders have developed a new approach to target-setting this academic year. This is helping leaders monitor pupils' progress across a range of subjects and year groups. Subject- and year team leaders have yet to embed their understanding of how best to use this information to enable them to identify and support pupils to improve outcomes.
- Leaders regularly review the use of pupil premium funding and the effectiveness of support programmes for disadvantaged pupils. This is clearly improving the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics. Leaders do not yet share all of this information with governors. As a result, governors are not able to monitor fully the impact of the use of the pupil premium grant.
- Leaders have struggled historically to recruit subject specialists in English, mathematics and science. However, leaders now work closely with a local teaching alliance and this partnership is helping to attract suitable candidates.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They review the school priorities and progress made by leaders, and challenge leaders on any discrepancies.
- Governors are extremely supportive of the school leadership team and work collaboratively to evaluate and identify areas for improvement. They work with school leaders to ensure that funds can be allocated to support future developments.
- Governors are clear about their role and responsibilities with respect to safeguarding. They have all received up-to-date training. The governor responsible for safeguarding routinely checks on the robustness of school procedures and processes.
- Governors monitor attendance rigorously. They have rightly identified the attendance of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities as a key priority. The attendance of these vulnerable groups is improving.

- The school's sponsors, the Diocese of Oxford, and Buckinghamshire County Council, monitor the school's progress well by checking both standards and budgets.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders and managers responsible for safeguarding carry out their roles well and keep pupils safe. Clear and appropriate measures are in place to ensure that leaders check the suitability of staff, and careful records are kept. Leaders are trained in safer recruitment. All staff receive regular updates with respect to safeguarding, and as a result, know what to do should they have any particular concerns about a pupil. The school involves outside agencies where necessary to facilitate timely and effective support for vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Pupils feel very safe, and the vast majority of parents believe that their child is safe at school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and recognise potential dangers.
- A small number of pupils follow vocational courses at the local pupil referral unit. School leaders visit pupils regularly to check on their progress, attendance and welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. As a result, pupils achieve well in mathematics, humanities and most other subjects.
- Teaching is especially effective in history. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, help them understand what needs to be improved and develop their extended writing skills. As a result, outcomes are improving.
- Teaching in mathematics is very effective. Teachers deliver a curriculum that builds on the new key stage 2 programmes of study to stretch and challenge pupils in key stage 3. Leaders have identified gaps in some key stage 4 pupils' knowledge and understanding and have created support programmes for these pupils. As a result, pupils understand what they need to focus on in order to improve further.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read well, and reading is celebrated. Year 7 pupils who read to an inspector demonstrated a good understanding of the books they were reading. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 with low reading ages or comprehension skills follow suitable support programmes run by the SENCo. After-school workshops are also available, where key stage 4 pupils and sixth-form students work with small groups to help further improve key stage 3 pupils' literacy skills. This is helping to improve pupils' reading, spelling and comprehension significantly.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. The SENCo is working with outside agencies on site to support any individual pupils and address their particular needs. As a result, attendance has improved for current pupils and the progress of this group of pupils is similar to that of others in their classes.

- A small group of pupils follow an alternative vocational course part time at the pupil referral unit. Here pupils learn about motor mechanics. Pupils who have studied this course previously have gone on to study related subjects.
- The school's values of 'respect, compassion, self-discipline, love, honesty, hope and forgiveness' are inherent in both pupils and staff. As a result, pupils understand the need for tolerance, democracy and justice in modern British society.
- Through assemblies and religious education lessons, pupils develop their understanding of different religions, races and cultures, which prepares them well for life after school.
- Pupils follow lessons in life skills to improve their resilience alongside their personal, and social development. This is helping pupils to recognise their strengths, raising their aspirations by informing them of possible next steps and challenging them to excel in all aspects of life. As a result, pupils are better informed and are choosing courses appropriate for their chosen career.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and a clear understanding of the curriculum. Most teachers plan effectively to ensure that pupils, including the most able, are stretched and challenged. However, a few teachers' expectations are too low and their teaching does not provide suitable challenge for pupils. They also sometimes accept badly written and poor-quality work. This is affecting pupils' ability to deepen their knowledge and understanding in these subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress in English and science in line with that of others in their classes. Teachers are aware of pupils' barriers to success. However, they do not use this knowledge to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress in these subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All pupils follow a taught programme called 'Life skills', which helps pupils to develop their own personal development. This includes how to stay healthy, understand an individual's rights and responsibilities in British society, and investigate possible career choices.
- Pupils are happy at school and like being part of the school community. Key stage 3 pupils are appreciative of the extra-curricular and enrichment options available to them. They recognise that these are only possible because so many key stage 4 pupils and sixth-form students give up their time to help run them.
- Pupils feel well supported by the pastoral team. Through assemblies and tutor programmes, pupils are taught how to stay safe online. They know about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and are taught how to recognise other potential dangers. They know whom to report any concerns to should these arise.
- Teachers and pastoral leaders have created a very friendly community where the majority of pupils are respectful of each other's views and opinions.

- Pupils at all key stages have embraced the school's values of 'respect, compassion, self-discipline, love, honesty, hope and forgiveness'. One pupil told an inspector, 'This school helps you to make the grade, as well as make you a better person. You learn how the world works so you can leave and capture it!'.
- Pupils are respectful of one another and celebrate differences. Stereotyping is challenged by both staff and pupils to create an inclusive school.
- In religious education lessons, pupils reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural diversity. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The vast majority of pupils are positive about their school experiences. They wear their uniforms with pride and are rarely late for lessons.
- The majority of parents who responded to the parent survey were confident that their child is well looked after at school and safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's behaviour policy is effective. Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school site. They listen politely to others and encourage one another to do well. There are few incidents of poor behaviour in the classroom. Any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with swiftly by school leaders. As a result, there is a positive culture for learning.
- Pupils attend school regularly, and attendance is in line with national averages. School leaders monitor pupils' attendance carefully and follow up any pupil who is missing from school. An attendance officer works effectively with parents and the school to improve the attendance of a small group of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who do not come to school regularly. This is helping these vulnerable pupils attend school more often and reducing persistent absenteeism.
- Leaders monitor the attendance and welfare of pupils who attend the pupil referral unit to ensure that they are safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published outcomes show that pupils achieved particularly well in GCSE art, photography, mathematics, history and geography. In 2016, pupils, including the most able, made better progress than national averages in mathematics and humanities. Outcomes in English, science and modern foreign languages are less strong, but are improving due to better teaching.
- Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average. In 2016, a small number of pupils who have very complex issues affected outcomes. However, in 2016, from these low starting points, the vast majority of pupils made progress in line with national averages. Where weaknesses exist, leaders take swift action to bring about improvements.

- The key stage 3 primary catch-up lessons, peer-reading scheme and after-school literacy support are helping to develop pupils' reading, comprehension and writing. Pupils read fluently and have good comprehension skills, appropriate for their age.
- Years 7 and 8 numeracy catch-up is developing pupils' number bonds, multiplication and simple algebra. This is improving pupils' ability to grasp new topics more quickly in class.
- Pupils in Year 7 follow a more challenging curriculum because of the changes in key stage 2. This was evident in a mathematics lesson, where pupils were extending their ability to multiply and divide by decimals.
- The well-taught curriculum at key stage 3 is making a positive difference so that pupils are starting key stage 4 with higher standards than their peers did previously.
- Leaders have implemented different literacy programmes to support pupils' development at all ages. Many of these programmes are run by older pupils at the school. As a result, pupils who speak English as an additional language have improved their reading and comprehension skills and are able to take a more active part in lessons.
- Current pupils clearly enjoy learning about science, and their outcomes are improving as a result of stronger teaching. Girls historically make more progress than boys, but these differences are diminishing for current cohorts.
- As a result of senior leaders' monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress, the vast majority of pupils at key stage 4, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are on track to meet their subject targets.
- The teaching of English is improving pupils' language, writing and communication skills. However, writing is often stronger in history because pupils are offered more opportunities for extended pieces of writing and teachers help pupils to improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- In 2016, students made progress that was in line with or better than national averages in most subjects. Students currently in the sixth form are making stronger progress due to the sixth-form leader's sharper focus on the effectiveness of feedback and any particular interventions.
- The majority of teaching includes high levels of challenge to stretch students' knowledge and understanding. This was particularly evident in a Year 12 business studies lesson.
- The 16 to 19 programmes of study are good. Students are offered a range of A-level and vocational subjects. Students use their non-contact time to contribute to the school community, running extra-curricular clubs and helping to developing key stage 3 pupils' literacy and numeracy.
- Students who need to resit their GCSE English and/or mathematics examinations follow appropriate study programmes. As a result, the majority of students make progress and improve their grades in English and/or mathematics.

- There is a comprehensive careers programme which helps students decide on university, apprenticeships or the world of work. Students recognise that the workplace is changing and leaders are sharing with students how best to prepare for this in the future.
- Students know how to stay safe and how to protect themselves online. They follow a comprehensive personal and social development programme that helps them to stay positive and healthy, to manage their finances and to look at the bigger picture in Britain and across the world.

School details

Unique reference number	137280
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10024846

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	794
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	103
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Andrew Brown
Headteacher	Kevin Patrick
Telephone number	01494782066
Website	www.chilternhillsacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@chacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Chiltern Hills Academy became a sponsored academy on 1 September 2011. The school's sponsors are the Diocese of Oxford, and Buckinghamshire County Council.

- The school is smaller than the average-sized comprehensive school. The school is growing, and applications are rising across all year groups including the sixth form.
- There are more girls than boys on roll.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan and/or statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and just over 20% are from Asian backgrounds.
- A few pupils attend the local pupil referral unit to study motor mechanics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 39 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups; 20 of these lessons were visited jointly with the school’s leadership team.
- Inspectors visited nine tutor groups and observed two assemblies.
- Inspectors met with pupils from all year groups in meetings, in lessons and informally around the school. They also listened to a group of Year 7 pupils read.
- Inspectors look at samples of pupils’ written work across a range of abilities, subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. They also met with the chair and other representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered the school’s policies, including those for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, pupil premium and special educational needs. They reviewed the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plan. They also looked at records relating to current pupils’ progress and attendance, as well as behaviour and exclusion logs.
- Inspectors reviewed 108 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and 75 responses from parents on Ofsted’s free-text service. They also took account of the responses from staff and pupils to the online questionnaire.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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