

The Chauncy School

Park Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0DP

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Over a long period, the highly respected headteacher, with the support of other leaders, has transformed the reputation of the school so that it has become a school of choice within the community.
- The climate for learning in the school is extremely positive. Excellent and caring staff bring out the best in pupils. The pupils thrive in a secure and calm environment.
- Staff, pupils and parents are exceptionally positive about all aspects of the school. The pastoral care of pupils is excellent.
- Teaching is consistently strong. The school makes a valuable contribution to training the next generation of teachers.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is demonstrated through high-quality art, drama, music and sport, as well as pupils' positive interactions with one another.
- Pupils of all abilities make very strong progress and achieve very high results across a wide range of subjects.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a very strong focus on literacy. Leaders have maintained a strong focus on artistic subjects, reflecting the school's strapline as 'Ware's academy for visual arts, mathematics and computing'.
- The sixth form provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils with different needs and abilities. Students make above-average progress in academic and, especially, vocational subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is admirable. The school is an exceptionally happy and harmonious place where pupils and staff alike clearly enjoy spending their days.
- Pupils get on really well in an inclusive community. They have great interaction with the local community. Concepts such as democracy and the rule of law are taught in school, but not well enough for pupils to show inspectors that they understand them. While leaders clearly think it important, inspectors were unconvinced that pupils are sufficiently well equipped with the knowledge and skills to challenge extremism.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on current work to promote fundamental British values to ensure that pupils have the knowledge and skills to understand and challenge extremism.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- All staff and very nearly all parents responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, believe that the school is led and managed well. Their agreement around this is exceptional. Leaders at all levels are passionate about pupils gaining an excellent and broad education.
- After a long journey of steady improvement, the culture of the school is one where both pupils and staff have high aspirations and enjoy coming to school. Staff are proud to work at the school. Leadership at all levels is excellent. Senior leaders, including the headteacher, are recognised for their expertise and are able to contribute to improving the wider education system by supporting other schools.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils experience a broad and well-rounded education. As a parent stated: 'Extra-curricular activities and school trips are well organised and the sports coaching and facilities are very good and, importantly, very inclusive.' Leaders are rightly proud of the school's work in the arts. A range of arts courses are very popular and pupils produce high-quality work. Dance and music offer additional opportunities for pupils' creativity. The modern languages of French, German and Spanish are successfully promoted. Leaders' belief in the importance of languages is demonstrated by the maintenance of small groups choosing German.
- Resources are deployed very well to give pupils equal opportunities to succeed. For example, additional funding is used highly effectively to help pupils who are behind in their literacy or mathematics when they transfer to Year 7. Likewise, leaders' careful consideration of the school's use of pupil premium funding ensures that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers.
- Staff training is central to the school's success. Appraisal identifies training needs. The quality of teaching and learning is closely monitored through checking each teacher's progress information, performance management observations, book scrutiny and learning walks. Lesson observations pinpoint areas of strength and areas for development. This has improved the effectiveness of observations in encouraging teachers to accept feedback and improve.
- Extremely unusually, no member of staff completing the Ofsted survey disagreed with the statement that 'leaders and managers take workload into account when developing and implementing policies and procedures so as to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on staff'. In fact, the majority strongly agreed. One teacher explained that leaders train staff with the focus 'always on how to reduce your workload' when it came to implementing school policies and procedures.
- Leaders know the school, their staff and their pupils extremely well. Relationships are highly productive. Leaders have an acute understanding of the school's strengths and areas where the school is relatively less successful. They use this understanding to work out how best to address any lack of success. An example of leaders' ambition for all their pupils is the wall in a leader's office containing pictures of pupils, showing the vast majority achieving at least as well as their targets. Leaders use this information to focus on the much smaller group of pupils who are achieving below their targets. This group

includes pupils who are currently on track for 'A' grades, but who the school believes should be getting 'A*'.

- The school is outward-facing. Over many years, leaders have established excellent links with local primary schools and, as a result, Year 7 pupils settle in very quickly. The community day remains an annual highlight. The school works with over 1200 primary schoolchildren either at Chauncy or in their own school, with Chauncy pupils teaching primary pupils information technology, English, arts and crafts, pottery, mathematics, music and over 50 other activities. Pupils picked up litter around the town and cleared gardens. There were visits from St John Ambulance, Hertfordshire Fire Service and Hertfordshire Police to deliver community safety demonstrations for Year 7 pupils. Pupils put on a strawberry tea for 25 pensioners and packed shopping bags in supermarkets, raising over £800 for Hertfordshire Air Ambulance.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective. The special educational needs funding is spent wisely. Case studies demonstrate the impact of support for these pupils and progress information confirms that support is very effective. There is a clear plan for further improvement, and past success gives confidence to leaders to improve even further in this area.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. Just three out of the 158 responses to Parent View expressed any reservations. Very nearly all parents responding to Parent View would recommend the school. Typical of their comments was:

‘I have two sons who are very different and they are both doing extremely well at Chauncy. The staff are enthusiastic and kind and the students benefit from all the amazing opportunities on offer. I cannot praise this school enough and am looking forward to my daughter starting in September.’
- Leaders have been imaginative in addressing recruitment difficulties. They have recruited potential teachers from the local and parental community and worked with the local university to train many of the staff themselves.
- Senior leaders form a highly effective team. Their skills complement one another well. The headteacher motivates staff brilliantly. While acting robustly where necessary to ensure that pupils’ needs and education come first, he knows his staff as individuals and is personally invested in their success. As a result, they are exceptionally loyal. His interaction with pupils is equally positive. One pupil told inspectors: ‘The headteacher is competitive, funny, friendly and we see him every day when other headteachers are locked in their rooms.’
- Pupils exude values such as tolerance and respect in all that they do. Leaders are seeking greater opportunities to deepen pupils’ understanding of concepts such as democracy and the rule of law to prepare them even better for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors fulfil their role extremely well and have been instrumental in the school’s improvement.
- Governors bring a range of skills and high-level experience from a range of non-educational backgrounds, which helps leaders with many issues, such as building design and cost saving.

- Governors regularly visit the school and hold leaders to account for the quality of education, pupil welfare and safeguarding, playing an appropriate role in overseeing performance management and ensuring that teachers' pay is linked to performance.
- Governors know well the school's strengths and priorities for improvement, and provide effective challenge and support through regular meetings and probing questioning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All statutory requirements are met. Records are thorough and regularly checked.
- Staff are trained well in all aspects of keeping pupils safe, including training on the 'Prevent' duty, the government's anti-extremism strategy.
- The school's 'behaviour watch' system keeps parents informed about pupils' behaviour and whereabouts.
- Pupils feel safe. They have had lessons and assemblies about e-safety. Their parents and staff are unanimous that pupils are safe and well looked after.
- Pupils have difficulty linking their positive attitudes of tolerance and respect for one another to knowledge and understanding of concepts such as democracy and the rule of law. Leaders acknowledge that they could be more explicit in preparing pupils for life in multicultural Britain and equipping pupils with the knowledge and understanding to protect them from extremism they may encounter outside the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Lessons typically feature high expectations of what pupils can do. Relationships between pupils and staff are universally effective. Pupils told inspectors that the best thing about the school is that 'teachers always help us'. This reflects that a lot of time and support are given to pupils, both inside and outside timetabled lessons.
- Pupils are familiar with well-established routines, so lessons are very calm and learning can proceed uninterrupted. Transitions between activities are quick. Pupils are sharply focused and highly engaged.
- Teachers use frequent and varied opportunities to check how well pupils are learning. This information is used to keep parents well informed about their child's progress. A parent explained to inspectors: 'My child responds well to the bronze, silver and gold awards. They like aiming for gold awards and seeing the head to get their award.' In a science lesson, the excitement of a Year 7 pupil receiving her first 'grade A' feedback was a joy to behold.
- Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject content and how best to teach it. This gives them the confidence to respond to pupils' perceptive questions and comments, for example when a pupil in a religious education lesson suggested that God was 'a bit of a devil and a bit of an angel'. High-quality questioning by teachers really challenges pupils and expands their thinking.
- Activities are well planned to meet the different needs and abilities of pupils. They also ensure that learning is fun.

- Teachers often seize opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example exploring the moral issues around the diamond industry in a geography lesson or pupils improvising a performance based on the treatment of political prisoners in a dance lesson.
- The additional support offered to pupils is exceptionally strong, for example small-group work on phonics. There is additional support for English and mathematics through the '8.15 club' prior to school in the morning, which is very well attended. Teaching assistants make a highly effective contribution in lessons. Parents are very enthusiastic about the school's provision. For example, a parent told inspectors:

'My daughter is always excited about going into school. She takes advantage of the numerous clubs and extra-curricular activities available and the school has even agreed to start a book club at her request. Nothing is too much trouble for the staff and they genuinely seem to want to get the best out of each and every child, taking into account strengths and weaknesses.'
- The passion of staff adds to the effectiveness of teaching. For example, a Year 8 English lesson about the Titanic led to persuasive arguments about who was to blame. This was driven forward by the teacher's energy and enthusiasm.
- The building blocks for GCSE success are set in place in key stage 3. Teachers are adept at instilling in pupils the required knowledge and skills early on so that progress in Years 10 and 11 is accelerated.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are mature and self-assured young people. There is a real commitment to developing the self-esteem of all pupils. For example, a parent told inspectors that pupils like her child would not be 'reading and have the confidence they do have if they did not have the dyslexic classes and socio-communication work the school puts in'. Parents also told inspectors that they 'like their anti-bullying day and last year the school ran a day called 'It's okay to be different' all about LBGT and how it is okay to be different to those around you'.
- Pupils benefit from comprehensive careers provision. Starting in Year 8 with an effective real-world simulation helping pupils to understand their needs and wants and the pay that different jobs will provide, pupils have their aspirations raised. There is a systematic approach to building careers understanding in each year, including work experience and individual careers interviews. Local employers support 'mock interviews', building pupils' ability to interact with adults.
- Pupils take pride in their work and this is demonstrated in the presentation of their books.
- All aspects of pupil welfare are given a high priority. Pupils are encouraged to stay healthy. Food in the canteen is nutritious and the physical education department provides many opportunities for sport and exercise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Almost all parents and all staff agree that pupils are well behaved. One spoke of how pupils' behaviour enhances the school's reputation in the community:

'Previous to my daughter joining this year, I had come across a group of teachers and students on the train returning from a school trip and found them to be the politest bunch of children. Their interactions with the teachers were fantastic and I knew I'd made a good choice in selecting this school for my daughter.'
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning help lessons to proceed quickly and effectively.
- Pupils attend regularly because they enjoy being at school. Attendance is above average. The attendance of some disadvantaged pupils is hampered by transport problems. The school has worked effectively with families to improve pupils' attendance.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils, staff and parents are confident that it would be effectively and quickly sorted should it occur.
- Pupils get on really well together in lessons, in and around the school at break and lunch and in the canteen. The start and end of the school day and changes of lessons are very orderly. Lessons begin on time.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils arrive in Year 7 with attainment that is a little below average. By the end of Year 11, pupils make progress that is well above the national average and attain above-average results across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen steadily and is now well above the national average.
- All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils (including those who are disadvantaged) and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make progress that is above that of pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- Differences in outcomes between subjects have been reduced since 2016 through leaders' actions to analyse weaknesses and work with staff to improve provision.
- The reasons for the outstanding outcomes are summed up by a parent:

'My daughter did her GCSEs in June this year. The support she had from the school was outstanding. Teachers put on evening sessions for revision several months beforehand and even ran classes over the Easter holidays. They supported her at an individual level and she did really well even in subjects she struggled with.'

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Students achieve exceptionally well in the sixth form because the strengths found in the 11–16 element of the school are reflected in the sixth form. Students make above-average progress overall and extremely strong progress in vocational courses. Disadvantaged learners do as well as other students. The very small number of students

joining the sixth form without GCSE passes at grade C or above in mathematics or English make good progress in retaking these subjects.

- Excellent personal support and monitoring complement high-quality teaching. Students take pride in their work and build on the excellent study and learning habits developed earlier in school. Teachers use time effectively so that students acquire information in advance of lessons, enabling them to develop the skills of analysis and evaluation in lessons.
- The preparation for A-level choices is effective and generally ensures that the school staff, together with careers counselling, help students to choose the best pathways for them. The first four-weekly assessments give students the opportunity to reconsider their choices. Retention is high.
- A wide range of academic and general vocational courses are available, offering students great variety. Some of these subjects have small numbers but, as the popularity of subjects varies from year to year, leaders keep them running. There is some collaboration with other sixth forms to allow students to experience an even greater range of courses, but the take-up is currently low. Where students take this option, there is effective communication between the sixth forms to check progress regularly.
- Students benefit from a range of enrichment activities to broaden their curriculum and prepare them for life in modern Britain. There is work shadowing in Year 12 and the work-related learning requirements of the study programmes are met well. Students have high aspirations for apprenticeships and university courses.
- The 'extended project qualification' is used by students as an opportunity to research and understand a topic in depth. Inspectors were very impressed by discussions with Year 13 students about their projects covering issues as diverse as scientific investigations into 'Why do we dream?', 'The four colour problem: theorem or conjecture?', 'Where would survival be easiest, after becoming stranded in the Amazon rainforest or the Sahara desert?' and 'Are natural methods for treating myopia more effective than medical procedures?' to the philosophical issues of 'Can zoos be justified?' and 'Should we have laws in society?' These projects equipped students well for their next steps in education.
- The sixth form makes a very positive contribution to the school. Sixth formers undertake leadership roles and are effective role models to younger pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	137090
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031629

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 converter
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	1,041
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	214
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Bob Watson
Headteacher	Dennis O'Sullivan
Telephone number	01920 411 200
Website	www.chauncyschool.com
Email address	stephen.walton@chauncy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 January 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.
- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made short visits to a range of lessons on the first day and 46 more extended observations of pupils' learning in lessons on the second day. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed the pupils in class and at informal times, such as during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with governors, senior staff, pastoral leaders, middle leaders and pupils from all year groups, including the sixth form.
- Inspectors analysed 85 survey responses completed by members of staff and spoke to staff about the school during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered 185 parent responses to Parent View, the online survey provided by Ofsted, together with 132 free-text responses from parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, the school improvement plan, information relating to the quality of teaching, information about pupils' progress, the school's policies and procedures and the arrangements for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gwyneth Gibson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Phillip Barr	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Mirams	Ofsted Inspector
John Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Copping	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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