

Chichester Free School

Hunston Road, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 1NP

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2019

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
Early years provision	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

- Leaders have sustained their high aspirations and moral intent as the school has grown. They have not allowed the challenge of moving to a new site to detract from their core purpose. Consequently, standards in the school remain high and are improving over time.
- Overall, pupils make good progress because they experience suitably strong teaching. Where pockets of less effective practice exist, leaders take suitable action that is leading to improvement.
- Teaching and learning are most successful in core subjects, specifically English and mathematics. High expectations and careful planning support pupils in striving for success and in learning well over time. The quality of provision in the primary and secondary phases is more variable across foundation subjects.
- Pupils experience a suitably broad curriculum. An extensive programme of activities, clubs and visits complements pupils' in-class learning positively. As a result, they enjoy learning that prepares them well for the future.
- Pupils' welfare needs are met by the school's clearly established culture. Vulnerable pupils are looked after well, particularly in the primary phase of the school. A small number of secondary-aged pupils need careful support to help them to manage their own behaviour.
- Governors fulfil their role successfully. Their work is more strategic than in the past. They now challenge leaders effectively about the impact of the school's work on the quality of pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- Children in early years are settled and happy. They play well together, which helps them to learn well. Leaders have clear plans to develop aspects of provision that are currently less well established, such as precise use of inside and outside learning spaces.
- The new sixth-form is evolving well. Students are successful because teaching challenges them to deepen their thinking. Leaders view strengths and improvement priorities accurately. Work experience and activities to support students' attitudes and confidence are in the early stages of being introduced.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that current school improvement work leads to:
 - pupils experiencing as consistently effective teaching across the wider curriculum, both in primary and secondary phases, as they currently do in their core subjects
 - pupils making equally strong progress throughout their time at the school, particularly the most able primary-aged pupils and those currently in Year 7
 - improvements in behaviour for a small minority of pupils in the secondary phase.
- Develop the precision of planning and use of resources, including staff, in early years, so that opportunities for learning are maximised.
- Sustain the current quality of provision in the sixth form as it expands, so that academic standards are maintained and the wider aspects of the 16 to 19 study programme become established.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has changed notably since the last inspection. The primary phase has expanded to include two classes in each year group. The secondary phase now includes pupils in key stage 4. All year groups, except Year 11, have grown to consist of four tutor groups. The sixth form opened in September 2018, at the same time that the school moved to the permanent site that it currently occupies. Through all of these changes, standards have been maintained.
- The interim principal joined the school in January 2018. Supported capably by her team of senior leaders, she has continued the work started by the previous principal. All staff share a commitment to the school's clear ethos of 'nurture, challenge, inspire', which guides their work successfully. The confidence of parents and carers in the school's work is evident in the increasing numbers of pupils joining the school over time.
- Leaders promote a culture of ongoing school improvement successfully. They identify strengths in provision accurately and have sensible plans to develop areas that are currently less well established or effective. Leaders hold staff to account through useful checks on the quality of their work, putting helpful training in place that supports their ongoing improvement. They are suitably reflective about the delays in moving to the current school site and how this has prevented some aspects of the school from developing as rapidly as leaders would have liked.
- Across the school, the curriculum is based on carefully thought out aims that support leaders' high aspirations for what pupils can and should achieve. In the primary phase, pupils experience a suitably broad range of subjects that complement their English and mathematics work successfully. Some foundation subjects, such as art, are currently better developed than others, showing clear progression over time. In the secondary phase, the breadth of the curriculum is maintained, built around a high-quality core of subjects. As a result, the proportion of pupils who sustain a language and humanities subject through to the end of Year 11 is increasing over time.
- Now that both phases of the school are on the same site, leaders are utilising opportunities to improve the cohesion between primary and secondary provision. Useful investment of time is supporting subject leaders and specialists in developing curriculum planning across the two phases. This supports pupils' progression of skills and knowledge as they move through the school. Consequently, the quality of learning across both the primary and secondary parts of the school is beginning to deepen, but remains a work in progress. Opportunities to study computer science are currently limited but starting to develop.
- Pupils value and enjoy the range of clubs and extra-curricular activities they are able to access. Leaders ensure that pupils' circumstances do not prevent them from engaging with opportunities to enrich their learning beyond what they experience in the classroom. Pupils speak highly of the diverse range of activities in which they have the chance to participate. As one pupil said, there is 'something for everyone'. This helps to sustain pupils' engagement with, and enthusiasm for, learning.
- Leaders use additional funding appropriately well. The special educational needs coordinator works systematically to provide useful support for pupils with additional

learning needs. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress over time. Similarly, those who start Year 7 needing to catch up in English or mathematics do so quickly because the extra help they receive is of sufficiently high quality. Disadvantaged pupils typically achieve well in the secondary phase and do increasingly well in the primary phase of the school.

Governance of the school

- The school's trustees form the governing body. They carry out their work with diligence, determined that the school evolves to be the best that it can be. Alongside school leaders, they promote the school's intent and moral purpose successfully.
- Governors have worked consciously to improve their collective skills. They recruit new governors strategically to bring complementary skills to the wider governing body. They make effective use of training and advice from beyond the school to support their checks on standards in the school. This helps to ensure that their work contributes effectively to the school's ongoing journey of improvement.
- Governors fulfil their legal duties conscientiously. They review policies systematically to ensure that these are fit for purpose. Since the school has moved into its new premises, they have rightly shifted their focus from operational to strategic support. This enables them to challenge leaders successfully to sustain the school's journey of improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- It is no coincidence that nurture is one of the three pillars of the school's motto. Pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school's work and is particularly evident in the primary phase. Many parents recognise this as a real strength of the school, describing it as 'safe and caring'. A small number of parents, mainly those of pupils in the secondary phase, expressed less positive views.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Staff benefit from extensive training that gives them the knowledge and confidence to act in pupils' best interests. Concerns about pupils' welfare are addressed promptly, helping pupils to feel safe. Leaders are alert to emerging patterns of concern, adapting the curriculum and bringing in experts to tackle relevant topics as they arise. This helps pupils to learn how to make sensible choices around their own safety and management of risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Across the school, pupils typically learn well and make increasingly good progress over time. Their experience in English and mathematics is particularly positive, as a result of clear expectations and a consistent approach to learning that pupils understand and respond to well.

- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, including at the higher levels needed for post-16 courses. They use what they know to plan learning appropriately, building sequentially on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. They provide opportunities for pupils to learn at different levels, developing their confidence as they progress. However, pupils are sometimes not directed precisely enough to what will move them on promptly from their different starting points. Consequently, some work is too easy and some is too hard for the pupils who are attempting it.
- Where staffing is consistent, pupils respond appropriately to clear expectations for their good conduct. Teachers know them well and manage their behaviour successfully, so that the learning environment in classrooms is positive. In the secondary phase, where continuity has been affected by staff turnover and absence, routines are less well established in some parts of the school. At times, this leads to pupils losing focus, which impedes the quality of their learning.
- Leaders are acutely aware of where the quality of teaching is, or has been, less effective than in the strongest parts of the school. Their work to develop the quality of teaching in the primary phase has been successful, and is having a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Their work to ensure similar consistency in the secondary phase is leading to ongoing improvement in the small number of areas where teaching is not currently quite as effective. Teaching in the sixth form is strong across the curriculum.
- Where teaching is most effective, additional adults are deployed carefully to support pupils with particular needs. Teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and deepen their thinking. This was particularly evident in post-16 lessons, where students talked about being really challenged to think about what they were learning. This aspect of teaching is currently less well developed in early years, where adults' interactions with children are not always sufficiently purposeful.
- Younger pupils are supported successfully to develop their reading. Phonics teaching is effective, with at least average proportions of pupils meeting the standard of the Year 1 phonics check. Recent work has raised the profile of reading, particularly in the primary phase. Pupils use their phonics skills successfully when tackling unfamiliar texts and when they are writing. This helps them to access and achieve successfully across the wider curriculum.
- Leaders provide useful opportunities for pupils to develop good study habits beyond the classroom. The after-school study club is well attended, demonstrating pupils' eagerness to engage with it. Some parents report that their children do not receive feedback about the homework they complete, which reduces its purpose and impact.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders encourage an atmosphere of tolerance around the school. Most pupils behave respectfully and feel respected. They report feeling accepted by each other, regardless of any differences they may have. The school's clear ethos, linked to the four core

values of wisdom, temperance, courage and justice, is evident in pupils' and adults' day-to-day routines and behaviours.

- Parents' and pupils' views about bullying are varied. Younger pupils feel confident that adults act promptly and effectively to resolve any issues that occur. Older pupils who spoke to inspectors expressed similar views, describing bullying as minimal. However, a small minority of pupils and parents were less positive about this aspect of the school, feeling that staff were not always successful in resolving incidents of unkind behaviour.
- Pupils benefit from useful opportunities to develop their wider understanding of the world. They learn about relevant issues in an age-appropriate way, through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons and other planned activities and visitors. Primary-aged pupils told inspectors how they are elected to the school council, for instance, while older pupils described a secure understanding of British law.
- Secondary-aged pupils receive useful careers information and guidance that support their next steps successfully. Leaders have given careful thought to exposing pupils to interesting experiences that guide their thinking about life after school. Pupils receive helpful and impartial advice about their post-16 choices. As a result, every pupil who completed Year 11 in 2018 moved on to an education, employment or training opportunity.
- A very small number of pupils are supported in alternative provision away from the school. Leaders match these placements carefully to meet pupils' needs appropriately. Ongoing liaison between the school and the alternative providers keeps placements under constant review, checking that pupils are safe and being successful.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Adults' high expectations for pupils' good conduct are evident. The vast majority of pupils meet these standards successfully and consistently, especially in the primary part of the school. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and treat their new building and resources with respect.
- Moving to the current building has brought challenges around managing pupils' behaviour, particularly for secondary-aged pupils when moving around the school. Leaders have addressed this effectively, making behaviour management systems more stringent and applying them more consistently than in the past. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions has increased this year, as pupils have been held to account for their actions.
- While instances of more challenging behaviour are managed well, a small number of pupils require ongoing support to ensure that their conduct meets the high standards demonstrated by most other pupils. Opportunities for younger and older pupils to interact positively during social times are in the early stages of development, now that the school has come back together after a period of time operating across two separate sites.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance closely, to ensure that pupils are safe. They work closely with families when pupils do not come to school as much as they should. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and is particularly positive in the

primary phase. However, disadvantaged pupils' attendance has declined since last year, which leaders are working to address. Pupils at alternative provision have improved their attendance since taking up their placements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Throughout their time at the school, pupils typically achieve well. In 2018, attainment at the end of early years and key stages 1, 2 and 4 was overall broadly in line with national comparators. As a result, pupils are suitably prepared for their next stage in education.
- Over time, standards in the early years foundation stage have risen. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception Year is now consistently above average and is on track to increase further this year. Children achieve standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are at least in line with the national average.
- Standards in phonics are similarly strong. High numbers of pupils reach the standard of the phonics check by the end of Year 1. Those who do not achieve this benchmark are supported well during Year 2. Consequently, most pupils have securely developed reading skills by the time they start key stage 2.
- Pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2018 were broadly average but with some variability. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics and science was above the national average. Outcomes in reading and writing were slightly lower. Progress across key stage 2 was average in writing and mathematics, but lower in reading.
- In the past, middle prior attaining pupils did not do as well as they should. Work to improve the levels of challenge for different groups of learners has addressed this issue successfully. As a result, pupils currently in the primary phase of the school are making good progress towards leaders' suitably ambitious targets for them.
- Pupils in Years 8 and 9 are achieving well. Their work shows good progress across a range of subject areas. Year 7 pupils are currently making less progress towards their targets. A current project to develop the effectiveness of pupils' transition from Year 6 to Year 7 is under way, but it is too soon to see the impact of this work.
- In 2018, pupils made broadly average progress overall by the end of key stage 4. However, leaders recognised that achievement in core subjects was much stronger than in some of the foundation subjects. By reviewing curriculum time allocations and retaining a clear focus on pupils who are underachieving, leaders are beginning to reduce this variation. Pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are making stronger progress across the breadth of their curriculum than they did in the past.
- Historically, the very small numbers of disadvantaged pupils have not done as well as they should during their primary phase of education. In comparison, disadvantaged pupils in the secondary part of the school have made very good progress. As a result of leaders' decisive and specific actions, disadvantaged pupils, except for those in Year 11, are now making much better progress than in the past. This is enabling them to catch up with other pupils nationally. Similar improvements are evident for pupils with SEND.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a good start in early years. Leaders manage children’s transition into school thoughtfully, to ensure that they settle quickly. On the whole, routines are well established, with children responding positively to adults’ high expectations, and developing their independence. Increasingly high proportions of children achieve a good level of development by the end of early years, showing that they are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Children play well together. They learn to share and take turns, showing the utmost respect and courtesy towards each other. They interact positively with the adults around them, but not always in a way that consistently supports their learning. Consequently, children can lose interest with the activity they are engaged in, when their conversations with adults do not focus sharply enough on developing their thinking.
- Children’s early reading and writing skills are developed adequately through phonics sessions, story-telling and reading activities. At times, adults’ expectations of what children can achieve are not high enough. Consequently, children do not get enough routine opportunities to apply or extend their newly learned writing skills.
- Adults give close attention to children’s well-being. They make sure they are dressed appropriately for outdoor activities and teach them how to wash their hands before lunch. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Staff keep a watchful eye on children to ensure that they are safe.
- Parents are well informed about their child’s learning. They appreciate the care and support their child receives. They value the information that teachers share with them, via newsletters, opportunities to come into classrooms and useful workshops on how to help their child to read. This effective partnership working supports children’s progress successfully.
- Leaders are developing the outside environment to ensure that it captures children’s interests and enables them to be fully immersed in their learning. During the inspection, children were observed enjoying a range of newly installed activities, such as a role-play area, a large sandpit and a water wall.
- Leaders have a clear vision for developing the early years provision further. They are not complacent; they are ambitious for all children to achieve well and be inquisitive learners. They are reflective about how the provision could be strengthened further, proactively seeking relevant support from skilled, external practitioners.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form opened in September 2018. There are currently a small number of students in Year 12, most of whom attended the school during Year 11.
- Leaders have high aspirations for their sixth-form provision. They have established a clear rationale for the opportunities and experiences they want their students to have. Their initial work has secured the confidence of parents and students, with greater numbers of Year 11 pupils planning to join the sixth form next year.

- Leaders have ensured that having small numbers of students this year has not restricted curriculum choices. Helpful and impartial advice during Year 11 supports students in ensuring the school sixth form is the most appropriate choice for them. Students follow a suitably broad and challenging range of academic qualifications that meet their needs and career aspirations.
- Students experience good-quality teaching in the sixth form, which helps them to make good progress. Teachers use their subject knowledge skilfully to challenge students to learn well across a range of subjects. Students have confidence in their teachers, who support them well via carefully structured work and opportunities to think deeply. They do their best to minimise the impact of inevitable restrictions on group size when working together in subjects such as drama.
- It is too soon for any students to have completed formal qualifications. Students' work shows them to be making good progress across a range of subjects. Their work is well organised and reflects the standards that would be expected at this point in the course. Teachers and leaders make effective use of support from beyond the school to assure themselves that their judgements about how well students are doing are accurate.
- The very small number of students who need to re-sit their GCSE mathematics qualification are supported well. As a result, they make good progress that is helping them to improve their GCSE qualification in this subject. All students in the current cohort already have a suitable GCSE qualification in English.
- Students are very positive about their sixth-form experience so far. They feel very well supported by their teachers, tutors and the head of sixth form. They value how they are encouraged to be independent, such as when taking responsibility for their learning and when working together in tutor groups. They learn useful skills such as cooking and how to complete university application forms. Students receive helpful advice and guidance about their next steps after school, with contributions from apprenticeship providers as well as universities. It is too soon to see the impact of this work.
- Leaders have planned appropriate enrichment activities for students as part of their study programme. Students are beginning to utilise opportunities to contribute more widely to the life of the school, through involvement in the student council and by supporting younger pupils in their lessons. Leaders do not currently monitor this aspect of the study programme closely, but some students clearly engage with and enjoy them. Work experience is planned to take place later in the academic year.
- Leaders monitor sixth-form provision appropriately. They ensure that students attend regularly and are well cared for. They make helpful checks on the quality of teaching and students' outcomes. This enables useful training and support to be put in place, which builds staff expertise and so ensures that provision is of a sufficiently high quality.

School details

Unique reference number	139668
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10085982

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,000
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	18
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Howard Oyns
Interim Principal	Mrs Jenny Clough
Telephone number	01243 792690
Website	www.chichesterfreeschool.org.uk
Email address	office@chichesterfreeschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 June 2015

Information about this school

- Chichester Free School opened in September 2013 and is an all-through school for pupils aged four to 19. It has two classes in each year group in the primary phase and capacity for four tutor groups in each year group in the secondary phase, although Year 11 currently only has three.
- The school incorporates a sixth form, which opened in September 2018. It currently has a small number of students in Year 12 and none in Year 13.
- Sussex Education Trust sponsors the school. The governing body is formed of trustees. The chair of governors was not in his current post at the time of the last inspection. The composition of the governing body has also changed notably during this time.

- The school moved to its current and permanent premises in September 2018, after five years in temporary accommodation. For the past academic year, the primary and secondary phases of the school were based on different sites.
- The school is in an area of relatively low social deprivation. A below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals.
- Most pupils are of White British origin. A very small number of children speak English as an additional language.
- Above-average proportions of pupils have SEND. However, fewer pupils have an education, health and care plan than is the case nationally.
- The previous principal left the school in December 2017. The current principal joined the school in January 2018 and is interim in her post.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision, either at another local school or at the West Sussex Alternative Provision College.
- Wrap-around before- and after-school care is available for pupils in the primary phase. This is run by an independent company and is inspected separately from the rest of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes in the primary phase and 26 lessons in the secondary phase and sixth form, across a broad range of subjects. Some of these visits were conducted jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also went to five tutor sessions and attended an assembly.
- Members of the inspection team met with groups of leaders, teachers and pupils, and with representatives of the governing body. They also talked informally to a small number of parents of primary-aged pupils at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors worked alongside school leaders to review a sample of pupils' work from across the school. They also looked at pupils' books in lessons and talked to pupils about their learning.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised as part of the inspection. These included leaders' monitoring and evaluation of standards in the school, their plans for school improvement, and information about pupils' academic achievement, attendance and behaviour. They also reviewed information on the school's website, as well as procedures for, and records relating to, safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors took account of 205 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including 200 free-text comments. They also considered survey responses from 277 pupils, mainly from the secondary phase, and 68 staff from across the school.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Frances Nation	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Swan	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Small	Ofsted Inspector

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