

School inspection report

23 to 25 April 2024

Chase Grammar School

Convent Close

Cannock

Staffordshire

WS11 0UR

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders' knowledge and understanding of the needs of pupils helps them to achieve their aim of providing pupils with an individualised education. The wellbeing of pupils is central to leaders' development planning. They actively listen to the views of pupils and encourage them to take on their own leadership roles. There is a sense of mutual respect across the community. Leaders adeptly manage the joint provision with its sister school.
2. The directors provide effective oversight, support and challenge to school leaders. They ensure that leaders implement the school's policies and procedures effectively. Leaders and directors work effectively together to understand and mitigate risks to pupil wellbeing.
3. There is a well-planned curriculum, which is supported by an extensive enrichment programme. Teachers are knowledgeable and use a range of strategies to enable pupils to make good progress. Pupils are consistently challenged to extend themselves and achieve beyond their own expectations, both in terms of their academic progress and their personal development, many succeed in doing so.
4. Leaders maintain a detailed oversight of pupils' progress which enables them to identify individual needs. Leaders then identify teaching strategies in order to provide targeted support. As a consequence, pupils make good progress from their starting points.
5. In the early years setting, children learn in a happy and supportive environment. The curriculum is planned effectively, enabling children to learn about the world around them through an array of varied learning opportunities. Children become increasingly independent and develop their social awareness during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes.
6. Leaders deliver a wellbeing programme which supports the school's focus on mutual respect, equality and inclusivity. The wellbeing programme also incorporates the relationships and sex education (RSE) which further supports pupils' personal development. However, some teaching of RSE to older pupils does engage them effectively, which can inhibit their progress.
7. The school has appropriate policies and procedures to manage behaviour and address bullying. Records are monitored effectively by leaders, who have a clear oversight of individual behaviour and take appropriate action when required. However, the school's behaviour policy is not always implemented consistently by all staff.
8. The school does not currently have any boarders. Nevertheless, suitable arrangements for the accommodation and welfare of boarding are in place.
9. Pupils are well prepared for life after school through well-structured and personalised careers advice. Leaders encourage pupils to be ambitious about their futures. Older pupils feel well-supported by guidance they receive regarding a wide range of post-school opportunities.
10. Leaders place a high priority on safeguarding pupils and promoting their wellbeing. The school's policies and procedures are effective. Suitable training for staff is in place and updated regularly. Leaders take prompt action when needed and liaise appropriately with external agencies.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- strengthen the delivery of the RSE curriculum so that it is taught in a way that engages pupils more consistently
- ensure that all teachers implement the school's behaviour policy consistently.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They have embedded the school's ethos, 'Expect to Achieve', not only across the curriculum but in many aspects of the daily life of the school. As a consequence, pupils understand the importance of having high expectations and are willing to challenge themselves to achieve the best outcomes. This attitude to life is reinforced by leaders and has a positive impact on pupil progress and self-confidence.
12. Leaders have effective processes to manage the relationship with the sister school. Much of the schools' provision and activities are shared. Leaders seek to balance the wellbeing needs of pupils in both schools, and they are alert to any unintended consequences to these arrangements.
13. The school's directors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, enabling them to have effective oversight of the work of school leaders. The board receive regular reports on all aspects of school life including safeguarding, health and safety and pupils' academic progress. Directors visit the school regularly to scrutinise the implementation of policies and procedures. The board have ensured that school leaders have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. As a result, they consistently achieve the school's aim to provide an individualised education with a positive effect on pupil wellbeing.
14. Leaders have an effective and consultative approach to self-evaluation. They place a high priority on listening to the views of pupils, which are then reflected in their development plans. Their three key themes of developing excellence in personal development, in academic progress and improving the school's facilities enhance pupil wellbeing. Leaders review any developments in terms of the impact on pupils, such as the recent restructuring of the weekly timetable. The school development plan is reflected in faculty planning so that staff understand their roles in enabling pupils to achieve their goals.
15. In both the prep and senior school, leaders have a detailed oversight of teaching. They use a range of strategies which includes listening to the views of learners. Key areas for development are identified both in whole school and faculty improvement targets. As a consequence, a culture of continuous improvement has been firmly established, which enables pupils to make good progress in their learning.
16. Leaders monitor pupil progress closely so that individualised support and learning strategies can be put in place for individual and groups of pupils. Senior leaders, heads of faculty and heads of houses met weekly to ensure that all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress relative to their starting points.
17. There is a careful culture of risk mitigation which pervades all areas of school life. Risk assessments in such areas as safeguarding, educational visits and the physical environment of the school site are robust, regularly reviewed and adapted as needed. This reflects leaders' awareness of how to identify and manage risk to ensure the wellbeing of pupils.
18. Leaders in the early years have the appropriate levels of skill and knowledge for their roles. They have put in place the required levels of supervision with rigorous safeguarding protocols, risk assessments and health and safety procedures to ensure the wellbeing of the children.

19. Boarding leaders have in place suitable policies and procedures to support boarders and enhance their wellbeing while away from home. Although the school does not currently have any boarders, the provision for boarding was inspected and meets the required standards.
20. Leaders ensure that teaching does not discriminate against any pupil or group of pupils. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place, which includes ensuring that as many pupils as possible are able to participate in educational visits. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.
21. The school provides parents with regular written progress on pupils as well as more general information. Leaders manage effectively any complaints that are received and suitable records are maintained. Effective links with external agencies, such as the Staffordshire local authority, are in place.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

22. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. An atmosphere of purposeful learning is evident across the school community. This is enhanced by a curriculum which is well planned, does not discriminate and is informed by leaders' knowledge of pupils' needs. Pupils are prepared to challenge themselves and are not afraid to make mistakes, in line with leaders' ethos. Pupils learn to recognise that the investment of time and effort in their own learning not only helps them make progress but has a positive effect on their self-confidence and wellbeing.
24. Across the curriculum, pupils make good progress in developing a range of skills and deepening their knowledge in mathematics, science and literacy. The latter is illustrated by older pupils adeptly contrasting different styles of contextual poetry. They also develop their linguistic skills well, and this is evident in pupils' progress in French, German and Mandarin.
25. The progression in pupils' communication skills is evidenced by their ability to express ideas and opinions eloquently, and often persuasively, when debating and presenting their views. The development in pupils' creative and aesthetic skills are typically seen in their portfolios, with many fine examples of artwork and photography. The high level of creative writing skills of younger learners can be seen in examples of their work on the walls of the prep school.
26. Leaders have implemented a well-planned assessment framework. Pupil progress is measured using gold, silver and bronze levels of progression. Pupils are motivated by aiming to achieve their gold or silver targets. As a result, pupils make good progress relative to their starting points. Measured against national averages, their attainment at GCSE and A level is above the national average for all pupils taking these examinations.
27. Leaders monitor progress with care, which is then used to inform appropriate support for individual pupils. Effective individual support for pupils who have SEND is provided both during lessons and outside the classroom. Teachers plan carefully, incorporating strategies to support their learning. As a consequence, these pupils typically make progress in line with their peers.
28. Leaders in the early years create a child-centred environment which focuses on the fun of learning through play. A well-planned curriculum enables children to develop a range of number and communication skills. Their progress is carefully monitored by teachers, with additional support put in place for individual children as required. Progress is recorded through learning journals, which show that the children make good progress against the early learning goals relative to their starting points.
29. Teaching across the school is effectively planned. Teachers have good subject knowledge, a detailed understanding of the aptitudes of their pupils, and use a range of effective teaching methods. They provide consistently detailed feedback to pupils on their work, which enhances pupil progress. Leaders have also implemented cross-subject planning, typified by linking pupils' work in classics on Pompeii with the mechanics of volcanic eruptions in geography. Such collaborative planning enables pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding to a deeper level, by enabling them to apply their knowledge and skills across different subjects.
30. Leaders have developed a well-planned enrichment programme, including provision for pupils to be actively involved in sport, music and drama, as well as more specialised opportunities such as developing flying skills and experimenting with launching a mini satellite. This programme of

activities enables pupils to develop their interests, social skills, self-confidence and sense of wellbeing.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

32. Leaders consistently prioritise the emotional wellbeing of pupils and promote opportunities for pupils to enhance their personal development. This is manifested through the 'Chase Passport' scheme which encompasses nine character traits, ranging from integrity to collaboration. Pupils take responsibility for challenging themselves to achieve the different elements of the passport scheme. This not only enables pupils to develop their personal qualities, but also enhances their sense of wellbeing and self-confidence.
33. Pupils' physical health is supported by a well-planned physical education (PE) and games curriculum. The opportunity to engage in sporting activities is further enhanced by the school's enrichment programme. This has a positive impact on pupils' fitness, self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils deepen their understanding about healthy lifestyles, and the choices that they can make, through the school's delivery of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education which is part of the wellbeing programme.
34. Leaders provide pupils with an extensive range of pupil leadership opportunities, in both the prep and senior school. They actively listen to the views of pupils, which helps to develop mutual trust and has a positive effect on the self-esteem of pupils of all ages. School leaders work collaboratively with pupils to solve issues that arise, such as improving the effectiveness of the school's recycling system. Pupil leaders then have the responsibility to give feedback to their peers about decisions made by school leaders through assemblies. Pupil leadership opportunities also enhance pupils' sense of social responsibility.
35. The wellbeing programme covers all aspects of emotional and mental health support. It also gives pupils confidence in how they can engage positively with others who have different perspectives to their own. This enhances their mutual respect for everyone across the school community and increases their understanding of diversity.
36. The wellbeing programme also incorporates RSE, where the curriculum has been developed in consultation with parents. Although the RSE provision covers all of the required elements, the way in which it is taught does not always engage pupils effectively. Pupils feel that some content is too repetitive, and some not covered frequently enough, which can inhibit their interest and therefore their progress is not consistent.
37. Leaders in the early years setting have established a wellbeing programme which helps children recognise the importance of kindness and respect for others. In this nurturing environment, children are able to develop their social skills enabling them to resolve conflicts and build friendships.
38. Leaders have put in place appropriate policies for behaviour and anti-bullying. Records of behaviour and incidents of bullying are carefully maintained, enabling leaders to identify patterns and trends. They are proactive in tackling any examples of poor behaviour using appropriate sanctions, but more importantly helping pupils to reflect on their actions and learn from their mistakes. However, records and observations of some low-level misbehaviour showed that some staff do not implement the behaviour policy consistently, with the result that some pupils feel that they are treated differently to their peers.

39. Effective health and safety, fire safety and site maintenance policies and procedures are in place. Staff training is regularly updated, and appropriate checks are made on fire equipment, evacuation routes and electrical equipment. Where appropriate leaders source external advice to ensure that the school site is a safe environment.
40. First aid and medical provision is appropriate for supporting pupils who are ill or have specific medical needs. Appropriate record-keeping for the administration of medicine is in place. Suitable numbers of staff are trained in first aid. Although there are not any boarders currently at the school, there is provision in place for boarder's health and welfare needs.
41. Appropriate arrangements for the supervision of pupils, including children in the early years setting, are in place.
42. The school's attendance and admissions registers are rigorously maintained. Individual pupil absences are monitored carefully and, when needed, appropriate action is taken to help pupils improve their attendance. The required reports are made when pupils enter or leave the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 43. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

44. The school community is culturally and ethnically diverse, and there is an overriding sense of mutual respect between the pupils. Leaders further enrich the lives of pupils by shared links with the sister school, Chase School International Study Centre. Pupils from both schools are part of the same three-house system, which fosters new opportunities for global friendships and mutual understanding. This blended community is characterised by social inclusivity. Pupils are valued as individuals regardless of their personal characteristics. The sense of equality in the school is enhanced by leaders' focus on consideration and kindness for others.
45. Leaders implement a broad and well-planned curriculum which enables British values to be embedded in the school culture. Through the wellbeing programme pupils engage in discussion about the values of democracy, the rule of law and the rights of the individual. Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They recognise, especially as they get older, the importance in society of taking responsibility for their actions. Pupils talk maturely about the importance of being prepared for life in British society. They take an active role in leading assemblies and discussion groups on a range of issues such as Black History Month, in which they focus on the contribution to our lives of different groups in our society. Pupils develop an increasing understanding of the different human perspective on issues in the wider world, such as the conflict in the Middle East. Teachers facilitate discussion between pupils on challenging issues in an impartial manner, which has a positive effect on their sense of social responsibility.
46. In the prep school, leaders have created many opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of democracy and the role of Parliament. Pupils have also developed an understanding of the role of local services such as the fire service and recycling centres. Pupils' increasing understanding of the world outside school has a positive impact on their social awareness.
47. Pupils develop a growing sense of economic awareness as they move through the school. Through the wellbeing curriculum, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of finance. This is typified by younger pupils considering the link between money and happiness, while older pupils are prepared for the challenge of managing their finances at university. The enrichment programme gives pupils the chance to develop their entrepreneurial skills when planning and running stalls at the Christmas or summer fairs.
48. In the early years setting, leaders have effectively implemented a cross-curricular approach which enables children to learn about the world. Using storytelling and play, such as with the topic on rainforests, children develop their sense of social awareness.
49. Pupils' social development is enhanced through the many opportunities to take on the responsibility of pupil leadership roles, such as on the pupil-led councils and interest groups. Pupils recognise the importance of helping and representing the views of others. There are opportunities for pupils to volunteer in the local community, such as gardening in the local church, litter collecting and organising events for charity. These opportunities have a positive impact on pupils' sense of social responsibility.
50. The school's careers programme is extensive and up to date. As soon as pupils enter the senior school, they learn different aspects of preparing for life after school. Pupils are given tailored

support and guidance when making their subject choices at GCSE for the sixth form. Pupils are ambitious about their futures and value the provision that the school makes available, including opportunities to meet with professionals from outside the school. In their final two years, pupils are well prepared for applications to higher education, apprenticeships or entering employment.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

52. Leaders consistently monitor the welfare of pupils and this is reflected in a school culture in which safeguarding is prioritised. The school has a clear and appropriate safeguarding policy incorporating the latest statutory guidance. This policy is implemented effectively by school leaders.
53. A well-trained safeguarding team which oversees pupil wellbeing across the prep and senior schools. The safeguarding team, which includes the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo), meets regularly to review the support in place for pupils for whom there are concerns. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are reassured by their many points of contact with trusted adults.
54. The advisory board conduct a thorough annual review of safeguarding and monitor its implementation carefully through the work of the safeguarding director. Directors receive regular safeguarding reports and actively review action taken by the school in response to any concerns that arise. Staff and directors are trained effectively in child protection procedures, including online safety, identifying child-on-child abuse and possible risks from the local community including extremism and county lines. There is an extensive safeguarding induction in place for new staff.
55. Safeguarding concerns are recorded meticulously and referrals are made promptly to the relevant external agencies, with whom the school works effectively. Information about individual pupils is managed effectively, balancing the need for appropriate sharing with confidentiality. Low-level concerns regarding staff are also appropriately logged and reviewed regularly.
56. Pupils know how to access online resources safely. Appropriate oversight of the school's filtering and monitoring of online activity is in place.
57. Leaders implement suitable safeguarding arrangements for the early years setting. Appropriate recruitment checks are completed for staff and volunteers including prohibition from childcare. Suitable procedures are in place for the handover of children at the start and end of each school day.
58. Leaders ensure that recruitment checks are completed for all staff (including those who work in boarding), supply staff, directors, volunteers and host families. A suitable single central record is in place and staff files provide the necessary evidence that all checks have been completed correctly.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 59. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Chase Grammar School
Department for Education number	860/6008
Address	Chase Grammar School Convent Close Cannock Staffordshire WS11 0UR
Phone number	01543 501800
Email address	info@chasegrammar.com
Website	www.chasegrammar.com
Proprietor	Achieve Education
Principal	Mr Michael Hartland
Age range	2 to 19
Number of pupils	150
Number of boarding pupils	0
Date of previous inspection	11 to 12 March 2020

Information about the school

60. Chase Grammar School is a co-educational independent boarding and day school located in Cannock, Staffordshire. The school consists of a prep school and a senior school which includes a sixth form. The school is owned and managed by Achieve Education. The governance of the school is supported by an advisory board of directors, and by additional advisors who have relevant educational experience. The school is fully integrated with Chase Grammar School International Study Centre which is registered and inspected separately. Pupils share many aspects of the school's provision.
61. Boarders are accommodated in three houses on the school site. One is for male sixth-form pupils, another is for female sixth-form pupils, while the third is a co-educational house for pupils from Year 7 to Year 11. There were no pupils registered at the school currently boarding at the time of the inspection.
62. There are seven children in the early years comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
63. The school has identified 44 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Nine pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
64. No pupils in the school have English as an additional language.
65. The school states its aims are to provide an individualised education which nurtures, enriches and extends pupils, focusing on academic success, personal development and global citizenship. The ethos of the school, "Expect to Achieve", encourages pupils to have high expectations of their future achievements.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 to 25 April 2024

66. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

67. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with directors
- discussions with the principal, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

68. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
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