

Cheam High School

Chatsworth Road, Cheam, Sutton, SM3 8PW

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The percentage of students attaining five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics has been well above average for several years.
- Over recent years, most students have made outstanding progress.
- Sixth formers achieve academic and work-related qualifications which reflect the outstanding progress they make.
- The specialist provision for a group of sixth form students with statements of special educational needs is outstanding. It reflects the school's determination to give all students the best possible start to their future lives.
- Teaching is often inspirational, stimulating, and enjoyed by students. The quality of marking is exemplary in several subjects. Teachers are enthusiastic and always keen to improve their practice.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. They are keen to learn and get on well with each other whatever their backgrounds.
- The enormous choice within the curriculum means that students can study practically any subjects, in any combination that they want.
- Students' personal development has a high profile. The personal, social and health education programme tackles topical, controversial and challenging issues head on.
- The headteacher's, senior and middle leaders' and governors' excellent leadership and management underpins everything that the school achieves. This has led to improvements in teaching and students' achievement.
- The school functions like a well-oiled machine with students' well-being and education at the heart of its work.
- Leaders, overseen by governors, monitor students' achievement and the quality of teaching accurately and support swings into place for any students who need it. Teachers welcome the excellent training provided to extend their skills.
- A parent, correctly, describes the school as 'playing a huge part in students being happy, well rounded and well educated, and that staff never give up on them'.
- Sixth formers mature into thoughtful, considerate young adults. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or work.
- Procedures for safeguarding and child protection are outstanding and contribute to students feeling safe and confident at school.
- The outstanding learning support assistants and pastoral team are the key reason why practically all students overcome their learning or personal difficulties.
- Careers advice and guidance is well organised and effective. Starting in Year 7, students are encouraged to have high aspirations and reflect on the impact of their education on their futures.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed just over 40 part-lessons, several of them jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed tutor sessions and assemblies.
- Inspectors spoke to many students informally as well as meeting representatives from several year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, and staff with responsibility for subjects and other aspects of the school's work.
- The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors.
- Inspectors discussed their observations with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, monitoring records and reviews. They also scrutinised the governing body minutes and information about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students' work in lessons and outside of lessons.
- Inspectors took into account questionnaires completed by 167 members of staff and 120 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Karon Buck	Additional Inspector
Heidi Boreham	Additional Inspector
Lynne Kaufmann	Additional Inspector
Steve Nelson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cheam High School converted to become an academy on 1 June 2011. When its predecessor school with the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is situated in an area where there is selective education, offering almost 850 places in the borough.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. The sixth form is also larger than average.
- About 70% of the students attending the school are White British (60% in the sixth form), along with an average percentage of students from many different minority ethnic groups, the largest being 10% of students from Asian backgrounds (20% in the sixth form) .
- An average proportion of students speak English as an additional language, of whom only a few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students who receive support through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding for specific groups, including students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children. A few looked after children attend the school.
- In recent years, between 20 and 30 students have been eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding. This is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average. The most common needs relate to students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and moderate learning difficulties. The school is a popular choice for parents of statemented students, including those with Down syndrome.
- The sixth form includes a specialist post-16 Entry Level Provision (PEP) for 24 students with a statement of special educational needs who need a stepping stone between school and college or residential provision.
- A very small number of students in Years 10 (one day a week) and 11 (two days a week) study mechanics or building courses at Carshalton College.
- The school has a number of students on the 'Tennis in Education' scheme which operates in the main school and sixth form.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise standards further:
 - extend the exemplary marking seen in several subjects across all departments
 - share the best practice of blending improvement in students' writing and spelling within lessons in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher never ceases to look for ways to improve this outstanding school: a key reason why it has maintained such high standards. She is very well supported by an efficient and effective senior leadership team and governing body. The school is organised meticulously and runs very smoothly. The school community is purposeful in a calm atmosphere, so that high-quality teaching and learning flourish.
- Teachers' and support staff's morale is high because the headteacher ensures that everyone involved with the school is respected, valued and appreciated. This culture contributes to students' outstanding behaviour and fosters excellent relationships all round.
- Electronic collection of information about students' attainment and progress means staff can easily access and analyse performance. Senior leaders do this in numerous ways, for example by progress from students' starting points or over recent weeks, by their individual needs or by attendance. When underachievement is identified, its causes are explored and rapid action is taken.
- If the causes relate to problems in students' lives, year leaders and the outstanding pastoral team are immediately involved to identify the best way to help students. They contact outside agencies if needed, or, for example, involve one of the trained emotional literacy support assistants for support in school.
- Middle leaders know they are accountable for their department's performance and carry out this work diligently. Many of them deliver lessons which are exemplars of outstanding practice. The school describes the mathematics department as having 'detailed and complex arrangements which maximise students' achievement'. These successful arrangements are reflected in the department's GCSE and A-level results.
- The allocation of pupil premium funds is planned carefully and evaluated every year. Key staff have responsibility for overseeing these students' progress. Learning support assistants work very effectively with these students, and with disabled students and those with special educational needs. Students receive revision materials and funding to participate in extra-curricular trips and visits or to buy basic equipment.
- The leadership and management of teaching are outstanding. Senior and middle leaders gauge the quality of teaching accurately and organise a wealth of interesting training. Fun awards are given to teachers who are nominated by their colleagues for some excellent marking or imaginative idea, for example. Their work is displayed to share good practice. All staff accept that their performance will affect their salaries.
- It is hard to think of a subject which is not included in the school's curriculum. The school's size makes it viable to offer 20 different option subjects in Years 9 to 11 and over 50 courses in the sixth form. In both key stages, students can blend work-related courses with academic ones. They can mix and match subjects they wish to pursue, for example AS levels in economics and mathematics and two BTEC music courses. The curriculum is not rigid but altered every year to accommodate students' wishes.
- A valuable and effective part of the curriculum are the weekly lessons on Communications (Year 7), Learning to Learn (Years 7 and 8) and Life (Years 7 to 11). These all broaden students' horizons, develop their thinking, group work, speaking and writing skills. Reading challenges for Year 7, reading in tutor time and the original way the library is organised all stimulate reading for pleasure.
- The Life course particularly is outstanding and contributes significantly to students' preparation for life in modern Britain. It epitomises the school's anti-discrimination stance, its equality of opportunity for all and its inclusive community.
- The course is regularly updated to respond to students' requests and current issues. Additions this year include sessions on extremism, discussing British values, what is worth fighting for and other stimulating topics. All the prepared presentations include up-to-date materials related to home and world events.
- Religious education lessons contribute equally important topics such as medical ethics, and extend students' knowledge of world faiths. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. The performing arts and many other subjects extend students' cultural awareness, as do the numerous trips and visits overseas and in the United Kingdom. Students thoughtfully reflect on their experiences of different faiths and cultures, and consider moral issues when discussing the difference between right and wrong. In all years, students give generously to charities.
- The school has been awarded the Challenge Award more than once. This is given for excellent education for a school's most-able, gifted and talented students and for challenge across all abilities. Representatives from all departments attend meetings and come up with imaginative ways to deepen these students' understanding. Students themselves request ideas, such as a visit to the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) to extend knowledge of mathematics and physics.
- Other schools visit the sixth form PEP group as this provision is a model of good practice. Equally outstanding is the support for all students with special educational needs. Under excellent leadership,

students make rapid progress, for example, in improving their reading or in strengthening their confidence.

- Careers advice is thorough and very effective. Recently, all Year 11 students spent a successful day sampling their potential choice of sixth form courses (wearing the sixth form dress code). An independent adviser meets any student who wishes to discuss options and future careers. Parents are fully involved in helping students to choose their options. A careers adviser finds work experience positions for almost all Year 10 students; a few work in school with the site manager.
- Parents' responses to the online questionnaire were extremely positive with over 90% saying they would recommend the school to others. The school does everything possible to keep parents informed about their child's education and to seek their views. It provides helpful leaflets for parents on topics such as living with a teenager. It encourages them to support reading at home.
- The school has a good relationship with the local authority but its support is not needed for this outstanding school.
- Feedback from Carshalton College is regular so that staff monitor students' attendance, behaviour and progress. In the past, the small number of students attending the college have stayed on into Year 12 and been successful.
- Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective and meet all statutory requirements. Several governors and senior staff have received safe recruitment training. All staff are regularly trained in safeguarding procedures. Policies are on the school's excellent website and up to date.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body has overseen many years of this school's success. Along with many supportive and effective governors, the governing body's excellent relationship with senior leaders underpins the school's successful growth.
 - Governors receive clear information about results and current standards so that they can celebrate outstanding achievements and question leaders about less successful outcomes. They are equally confident analysing information about the school's performance relative to national standards. They endorse early GCSE entries and understand why some performance statistics can be misleading.
 - Keeping a careful eye on finances, the governors scrutinise pupil premium spending thoroughly. They appreciate that the 2014 results were an interruption to an upward trend in these students' progress.
 - Many teachers' outstanding work is rewarded in salary increases but, very occasionally, teachers do not move up the scales if their performance has not met their targets. Governors know where the quality of teaching is outstanding because they receive detailed feedback from senior leaders about lesson observations, linked to outcomes. They are aware that a specific course to improve the few teachers whose teaching is less strong is extremely successful.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Underpinning this are the strict routines and expectations set by all staff. Students arrive at lessons with the right equipment because it is checked regularly in form time, as is their uniform. There is practically no litter because students appreciate and value their environment. They move around the school sensibly.
- Students are punctual and their attendance is well above average. The number of persistent absentees is low. Permanent exclusions are very rare but the school uses fixed-term exclusions when necessary. These effectively reinforce the high standards of behaviour expected at all times.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. In a letter for the inspectors, a sixth former summed up what many students said: 'When you walk in the school gates, you feel so safe because you know that you are surrounded by such helpful, friendly and caring staff as well as students.'
- Teachers and many experienced support staff work tirelessly to help all students needing support, whether for their studies or social and emotional needs. Many staff have been trained in child protection and take courses to acquire relevant pastoral care skills. A parent described the school's support for students, particularly in Year 7, as 'amazing'.
- A high priority is given to informing students about e-safety, particularly the dangers of social media, and making them aware of the school's zero tolerance of bullying. Only a tiny number of students have

experienced any form of bullying. Through assemblies, tutor time and Life lessons, students learn about issues related to homophobia, racist behaviour and different lifestyles; they discuss these sensitive topics sensibly.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers' expert knowledge and passion for their subject, combined with students' enthusiasm to learn, generates high-quality learning and rapid progress. Teaching is outstanding in the majority of lessons and particularly in English, mathematics, art, modern foreign languages, the Life course and religious education.
- The school's key focus on 'enthusing, engaging and motivating students' is reflected in many lessons. For example, teachers use interactive whiteboards imaginatively and prepare stimulating visual material relevant to the work being covered.
- Examples of the features that led to outstanding learning included:
 - asking students questions that make them think, justify their answers and, often, posing more probing questions
 - checking that students have understood work during lessons and clarifying misunderstandings as they emerge
 - having well-planned lessons but flexibility to adjust them to match the flow of learning
 - ensuring students know what level or grade they should be achieving and showing them how to get there
 - focusing on subject-specific vocabulary and the language of the subject
 - exploiting how well students work together to discuss challenges, share ideas and prepare presentations
 - knowing the best way to prepare students for examinations and giving them the confidence to succeed
 - challenging all students, particularly the most able, to aim high and be ambitious.
- Teachers are fully aware of the importance of strengthening students' written work. For example, in lessons, many of them slip in references to spelling or sentence construction. Such excellent practice is not seen in all lessons.
- Similarly, there is much outstanding marking which is particularly effective when students respond to the teachers' comments and assimilate the advice given. This excellent practice has not yet permeated all teachers' support for students, though their verbal feedback in lessons is often of a high quality.
- Most students read fluently and the well-stocked library encourages them to read for pleasure. Teachers develop students' strong numeracy skills in subjects such as science, business studies and geography.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The percentage of students attaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics since the school became an academy increased every year until 2014. This headline measure was lower in 2014, though it was still well above average. Taking students' best entry results into consideration, it rises to 73% because, by the end of Year 11, over 70% of students attained A*-C grades in both English and mathematics and over 80% did so in the separate subjects.
- The school continues to enter some students early for certain GCSEs and those who do not attain the top grades are re-entered. The school believes the experience of sitting a formal examination encourages students to aim higher and most attain higher grades by the end of Year 11. Early entry does not limit the potential of the most able, for example the most competent mathematicians study for a higher level qualification in Year 11.
- Standards are very high in English, mathematics, most science qualifications, art, business studies, health and social care, construction, applied information technology, religious education and the school's specialism – French and German.
- Progress is outstanding overall and in many subjects. It is particularly outstanding in mathematics, French and German. In many lessons during the inspection, students mastered new concepts or analysed and evaluated work rapidly.
- Students who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as others and there is little difference between ethnic groups, although those of Asian heritages do extremely well.
- The gap in English and mathematics GCSE results between disadvantaged students and others in the school and others nationally narrowed in recent years to less than one third of a GCSE grade in English and mathematics in 2013. In 2014, the school gap increased to just over one GCSE grade in English and

just below one grade in mathematics; the gap to other students nationally was slightly over half a GCSE grade in both subjects.

- In 2013, disadvantaged students made outstanding progress, slightly above that of other students in English and almost the same in mathematics. This was a reflection of the school's successful support for these students. Despite the same high quality support, in 2014, about one third of disadvantaged students made less progress in English and mathematics than other students in the school and others nationally. Even so, the disadvantaged students who took science, humanities and languages made more progress than others in the school.
- The school had correctly predicted that, for a range of unusual and exceptional factors, several disadvantaged students would not achieve well in 2014. Had this not been the case, the gap between their achievement and others' would certainly have narrowed further. In all years at present, disadvantaged students are making outstanding progress. Accurate school information shows that the gap will be almost negligible in 2015.
- Students with statements of special educational needs make outstanding progress and attain well above average results. A few other disabled students and those with special educational needs (several of whom were also disadvantaged) did not make such strong progress in 2014. Nevertheless, as in recent years, their results were above those attained by similar students in other schools. The courses and teaching the school provides for these students fully meets their needs.
- Students' combined end of Year 6 results suggest that the school has an above average percentage of the most-able students. However, several of them have relatively lower levels in writing. The percentage of A*/A grades these students achieve is well above expectations based on their starting points; it has improved in recent years. These students continue to make outstanding progress.
- The small number of students studying at Carshalton College make consistently good progress and gain much in practical skills, confidence and self-esteem.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- The sixth form gives students a valuable education that matches their wide range of needs; it prepares them extremely well for their futures. About one third of students have joined the sixth form from other schools. They settle quickly. One said 'I feel at home here' and students say that they feel safe. Their behaviour is mature, setting an excellent example for younger students. Their leadership skills are evident in the many ways they support the school's work.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Department leaders discuss their rigorous analysis of examination results with senior leaders. Combined with teaching observation records, this analysis forms the basis of evaluation of the sixth form as a whole and future plans.
- Students make outstanding progress in most work-related courses and attain a high percentage of distinctions. Progress in academic qualifications is also excellent, generating a 99% pass rate at A level in 2014 and over 60% or more A*/B grades in several subjects.
- The small number of students who have not attained GCSE English and/or mathematics have two lessons a week. The success rate has not been strong. From September 2015, one option choice will now be given over to these lessons.
- There is much outstanding teaching, for example, lessons which are vibrant in modern foreign languages, stimulating in philosophy and ethics, challenging in mathematics, topical in sociology or creative in art. The characteristics of outstanding learning are similar to those seen in the main school.
- PEP students make outstanding progress and gain many useful life skills in shopping, cooking, telephoning or using public transport ('I get to my work experience on my own.'). At the same time, they all gain certificates in English and mathematics. Students write a journal with pictures, quizzes, and literacy and numeracy prompts. They are taught exceptionally well and leadership of their courses is excellent.
- Over 90% of students stay for two years in the sixth form and complete their courses. Students receive the same outstanding careers advice as younger ones and sixth formers met during the inspection praised its quality. They discuss their futures with teachers, tutors, and internal and external careers advisers because 'all of them must have a plan'.
- Over 200 students went to university in 2014 and it is rare that the rest, including PEP students, do not proceed into higher education, training or employment. Students get help with applications and mock interviews if needed. An excellent assembly for students on their futures included a poem about moral and personal values and how they should present themselves in interviews.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136785
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	453339
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,045
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	553
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Satchell
Headteacher	Rebecca Allott
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8644 5790
Fax number	020 8641 8611
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