

Chorlton High School

Address: Nell Lane, M21 7SL

Unique reference number (URN): 139148

Inspection report: 18 November 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils' high achievement is reflected in the outcomes that they consistently secure in national examinations. Over time, these have been consistently above national averages in a number of subjects and for different groups of pupils. This is indicative of the impact of leaders' high expectations for all pupils across the school. Pupils in key stage 3 also achieve well. This picture of very positive achievement is evident from the high quality of pupils' work and their ability to retain and develop a deep body of knowledge across the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have other additional vulnerabilities are well supported to achieve their full potential. They achieve well from a wide range of starting points. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is particularly impressive. Their outcomes in national examinations have been consistently and increasingly above national averages.

Overall, pupils are extremely well prepared for their next stages in employment, education and training.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have rigorous and effective systems in place to maintain a vigilant focus on pupils' attendance. They work diligently to provide tailored support for individual pupils, including those who are vulnerable, so that they attend school regularly and benefit from all that the school has to offer. Leaders analyse patterns and trends in attendance data carefully. They use this to pre-empt difficulties and adapt to pupils' changing circumstances. Consequently, attendance rates remain high. Persistent absence is low and has sharply decreased further in recent years.

Staff and pupils understand the clear and embedded systems that are used consistently to manage pupils' behaviour. This creates a culture of calmness and respect that permeates social times and lessons in school. Pupils approach their learning with a positive attitude and are keen to engage in opportunities and activities. Leaders role model positive behaviours and they teach pupils how to navigate challenging scenarios. This helps pupils to develop a clear sense of independence and responsibility. They help each other to self-regulate and uphold the school's expectations. Pupils seek out additional support when they need it, trusting that adults will help them. This is particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other vulnerabilities, who appreciate the specific adjustments that staff make to support their positive behaviour and engagement in learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have comprehensively designed a broad and ambitious curriculum that provides pupils with choice and a positive grounding for their future. They make careful decisions about the curriculum so that pupils' experiences are not restricted by their ability or starting points.

An embedded programme of training and support equips teachers with deep subject-specific knowledge. They are provided with helpful information about pupils' individual needs and barriers, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They use this to make skilful adaptations where required. Teachers share a clear understanding of the important knowledge that pupils should learn at each stage and they are adept at identifying and addressing any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Across subjects and phases, teachers deliver the curriculum to a high standard. As a result, pupils are supported to build on what they already know and deepen their understanding of challenging concepts effectively.

Leaders place a high priority on securing the required foundational knowledge for all pupils, such as reading skills. Those who have gaps in their reading knowledge are given swift support to address this so that they can read with fluency and confidence. A school-wide scholar programme teaches pupils how to be organised and diligent in their learning. Across subjects, teachers explicitly focus on key vocabulary, comprehension, spelling and oracy. Targeted support is provided, for example, for handwriting and numeracy when needed.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

The school has developed highly effective transition arrangements that rigorously identify and assess pupils' individual needs. Staff expertly target support when teaching so that those pupils with additional needs can access the same challenging curriculum as their peers. This approach is central to the school's ethos and curriculum design so that aspirations for all pupils remain high.

The school caters for pupils with a wide range of additional needs, for example pupils who have newly arrived in the country or speak English as an additional language. In these cases, the school provides highly effective targeted support. Staff access a wide range of internal and external agency support, such as mentoring and family work. They also work effectively with the virtual school to support pupils currently or previously in care. This ensures that these pupils thrive individually and achieve well.

School leaders ensure that pupils' needs and best interests are central to their decisions. They make careful, strategic choices about the use of the pupil premium funding, for example, with a focus on developing secure knowledge and skills for all pupils in key stage 3. This is monitored and reviewed effectively by leaders at all levels, which ensures that there is maximum impact for disadvantaged pupils.

Alternative provision is used appropriately when needed to support pupils' progress. The school maintains clear oversight of these pupils as valued members of their school community. Often these additional experiences help pupils to reintegrate successfully back into school.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders, governors and trustees know the school extremely well. They monitor and evaluate the school's provision rigorously. The information that they gather is used by leaders at all levels to maintain a sharp and meaningful focus on priorities that will make the most

difference to pupils' achievements and experiences. This culture of continuous improvement has led to consistently high standards across all areas of the school's work.

Trustees fulfil their statutory responsibilities diligently and delegate a range of responsibilities to local governors, who live and work within the community. This, coupled with clear oversight, support and professional learning, creates layers of support and challenge. School leaders are appropriately held to account for the quality of education that pupils receive and their use of resources, such as pupil premium funding.

Leaders share the same core values that are rooted in removing barriers for pupils and making decisions in their best interests. They routinely evaluate the impact of their decisions on pupils who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known or previously known to children's social care.

All staff, including early career teachers and those who are trainees, access an established programme of professional learning. Staff views are considered carefully when leaders implement change and devise policies. This allows staff to focus on their professional responsibilities to pupils while maintaining a positive work-life balance. Consequently, staff feel well supported and valued. They work harmoniously with leaders, governors and trustees to continuously improve the school.

Personal development and well-being

Strong standard 

The school provides pupils with an extensive programme of personal development and enrichment opportunities. Both within and beyond the curriculum, leaders place a particular emphasis on developing pupils' creative talents and access to arts programmes, for example, in music, drama, photography and dance. This encourages active participation in school performances and community projects, enabling pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are supported to build highly developed social skills and levels of independence effectively. They are tolerant and able to speak with maturity and confidence when discussing their beliefs and opinions.

Pupils receive age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education. They learn how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Pupils understand how to guard against risks, including when online. They relish the opportunities that they have to take on additional responsibilities and develop their character, for example volunteering in the local community or as part of their student council. They also take part in a wide range of trips. In their written work and discussions, pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of modern British values and the wider world.

Central to the school's provision is highly effective pastoral care and support. Staff have positive relationships with pupils and know them well. Specialist staff are proactive in identifying pupils and groups, who may need additional help at different times. This support is provided sensitively and intelligently to help pupils to overcome obstacles, achieve success and improve their life chances.

Leaders have a deep understanding of local context and they use this to secure employer engagement opportunities and information for pupils. An effective programme of information, advice and guidance, including work experience, prepares pupils well for life after school.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

At Chorlton High School, pupils flourish. They are proud to belong and contribute to a high-achieving and caring community, where difference is welcomed and diversity is celebrated. Pupils know that their voice matters and that staff will support them when they face challenges. This creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere, where pupils feel safe to be themselves. Pupils know that adults will not give up on them. This encourages them to strive relentlessly to meet the high expectations that they are surrounded by.

Pupils treat each other with respect. They are rewarded regularly for their positive behaviour and if they struggle, they are skilfully supported by adults who know them well. This ensures that staff know how to resolve disputes and restore positive behaviours.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have additional barriers to their learning, achieve highly. They enjoy a broad and rich curriculum that appeals to their interests and talents. As a result, pupils attend school regularly and engage enthusiastically in their lessons. They benefit from a consistently high standard of teaching across subjects. Expert staff understand individual pupils' needs. Staff reduce barriers to learning and close any gaps in pupils' knowledge. This helps pupils, from a range of different starting points, to develop a deep body of knowledge and skills. Pupils' outcomes have been above average in national examinations and they continue to improve across a wide range of subjects. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training.

Pupils benefit from the emphasis that the school places upon their wider development and enrichment opportunities. The personal development programme is responsive to local and national risks, for example pupils recently took part in an interactive drama performance exploring the dangers of knife crime. As a result, pupils develop a rich understanding of the wider world and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their work in all areas. They should seek continued improvement, overcoming barriers and challenges, in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.

About this inspection

This school is part of The Prospere Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Linda Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jenny Andrews.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the local governing body, the chair of trustees, the CEO and a representative from the local authority.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of seven alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Headteacher: Zoe Morris

Lead inspector:

Amanda Downing, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Michael Pennington, His Majesty's Inspector

Rebecca Sharples, His Majesty's Inspector

Amina Modan, His Majesty's Inspector

Andy Cunningham, His Majesty's Inspector

Jenny Jones, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 18 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,529

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,530

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

30.67%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.64%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support

20.80%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	61.2%	45.2%	Above
2023/24	54.1%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23	62.6%	45.3%	Above

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	53.9	45.9	Above
2023/24	51.2	45.9	Above
2022/23	52.2	46.3	Above

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	0.23	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23	0.17	-0.03	Close to average
2021/22	0.23	-0.03	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	41.4%	25.6%	Above
2023/24	33.0%	25.8%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23	31.8%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	43.9	34.9	Above
2023/24	41.1	34.6	Above
2022/23	37.8	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	-0.29	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23	-0.67	-0.57	Close to average
2021/22	-0.55	-0.55	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	41.4%	52.8%	-11.4 pp
2023/24	33.0%	53.1%	-20.1 pp
2022/23	31.8%	52.4%	-20.7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	43.9	50.3	-6.4
2023/24	41.1	50.0	-8.9
2022/23	37.8	50.3	-12.5

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24	-0.29	0.16	-0.45
2022/23	-0.67	0.17	-0.84
2021/22	-0.55	0.15	-0.71

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022 leavers	89%	93%	Below
2021 leavers	95%	94%	Average
2020 leavers	91%	94%	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	6.4%	7.7%	Below
2023/24	7.8%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23	8.6%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	14.6%	21.1%	Below
2023/24	20.4%	25.6%	Below
2022/23	23.9%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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