Inspection of Chiltern Way Academy Austen

Shakespeare Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 9BP

Inspection dates:	25 and 26 February 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Jason Minton. This school is part of Chiltern Way Academy 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), Ian McCaul, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Mortimer. There is also an executive principal, Sarah Stevens, who is responsible for this school and others in the trust.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this welcoming and inclusive school. A strong sense of belonging is fostered from the moment they arrive. The introduction of new daily routines means that pupils experience a predictable start to the day. This creates a secure and reassuring environment where pupils behave well. A key feature of this approach is the first lesson of the day, the 'orientation and regulation session'. This helps pupils to regulate their behaviour, and transition smoothly into learning.

Since joining the trust, the school has significantly raised its academic expectations. The newly established curriculum has an ambitious 'golden thread' woven throughout all subject areas. This aims to make sure pupils are well equipped to gain meaningful employment in the future. Older pupils told us how much they value the personalised support they receive to be ready for their next steps. The school has helped them find out about college courses, gain work experience and be ready for their examinations.

Pupils enjoy a fantastic range of lunchtime clubs. There is something to suit every interest, including 'quiet club', board games, sports or other activities. There are a growing number of trips, visits, outdoor learning opportunities and travel training integrated into the curriculum. These provide memorable experiences and help pupils develop into responsible and valued members of the community.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

When the school joined the trust less than a year ago, leaders took swift and decisive action to begin a journey of rapid improvement. An urgent priority was to implement a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum. This includes clearly defined pathways that support all pupils to progress towards their future goals. A broad range of academic and vocational routes mean pupils access a tailored suite of accreditation and qualifications. The school makes every effort to ensure pupils can study their programmes of choice. This includes supporting pupils to access courses beyond the school if necessary.

When pupils join the school, a clear process is followed to gain understanding of gaps in learning and to identify any additional needs. This is particularly important for those pupils who may have spent some time out of education before joining this school. A system to check how well pupils progress through the new curriculum is in its early stages of implementation. This means the school is not yet as clear as it intends to be about the full impact of the new curriculum. While staff acknowledge that this is additional work, leaders are clear about the rationale for this and the benefit to pupils.

The school has introduced a published scheme to help pupils develop their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. There is some variability in how effectively this is delivered across the school. While staff training has taken place, staff are keen to further develop their expertise to deliver this approach with consistency and confidence. The school has clear plans to further develop the reading curriculum, particularly for secondary-age pupils. In the meantime, pupils do learn to read. The curriculum is underpinned by a well-planned series of books which can be adapted for classes to read

together. Additionally, there is a wealth of stimulating books and reading materials which inspire pupils to explore their interests.

The learning environment is well organised, and pupils make great use of sensory spaces to regulate themselves as needed. This means behaviour around the school is generally calm, and pupils are respectful and kind. When a minority of pupils struggle with their behaviour, skilled staff take time to understand the reasons and address the communication that lies behind this. They support them to learn strategies to regulate their own behaviour.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is exemplary. Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum as well life skills and preparation for adulthood lessons. They learn important knowledge and skills, including mindfulness techniques, finance management and how to understand their rights and responsibilities. Pupils remember and talk about these skills enthusiastically. Consequently, they develop their resilience, personality and sense of self-worth and are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Trustees, the local governing board and leaders share the same moral purpose to continuously drive improvements for the pupils. The scheme of delegation supports all layers of governance to understand and fulfil their roles effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The new whole-school assessment system is not yet fully established. This means the school is not able to fully understand the progress pupils are making through the new curriculum or identify and remedy any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The school should continue the work it has started to robustly embed this system and train staff to implement this.
- There is variation in how well the new early reading programme is delivered. Some adults do not have a secure understanding of how to implement the teaching methods as well as they could. This means that sometimes they do not reinforce the consistent strategies that help pupils develop fluency. The school should ensure all staff have the training they need to effectively teach all pupils to read.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148343
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10341891
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	The Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Mortimer
CEO of the trust	Ian McCaul
Headteacher	Jason Minton
Website	www.chilternway.org/our-academies/cwa-austen
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 September 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has become part of the Chiltern Way Academy Trust, joining in April 2024.
- The school caters for pupils with autism. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses two registered and four unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the executive principal, the CEO, the deputy CEO, senior leaders from the trust, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees and the chair of the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, computing, and PSHE (including life skills and preparation for adulthood). For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in a range of other subjects.
- The inspectors gathered the views of parents and staff through discussions and responses to Ofsted's online surveys and spoke to a range of pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Jo Petch, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mineza Maher	Ofsted Inspector

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