Inspection of Colchester County High School for Girls

Norman Way, Colchester, Essex CO3 3US

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	**Outstanding**
The quality of education	**Outstanding**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Sixth-form provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Gillian Marshall. This school is part of Alpha 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), Gillian Marshall, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Laurence Jones.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since January 2009.

What is it like to attend this school?

Colchester County High School for Girls is an exceptional school. Pupils are part of a respectful, kind and hard-working community. One sixth-form student commented, 'What we love about this school is people's attitudes to difference.' Very many others shared this view.

The views of pupils are considered carefully and acted on effectively by the school. As a result, pupils feel safe in the school community. Pupils look out for one another irrespective of their year group. They have a deep sense of loyalty towards the school.

The expectations staff have of pupils are extremely high. Pupils also hold themselves to a high standard. As a result, there is a culture of determination to succeed, not only academically but also to be good people who will make a difference both in school and the wider world.

There is a remarkable range of leadership opportunities for pupils. They, and the school, benefit from pupils' capable leadership of clubs and societies as well as community involvement. They develop confidence and social maturity. Pupils engage with a huge range of extra-curricular clubs including the school orchestra, retro games club and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

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

The quality of education provided by the school is outstanding. As a result, the outcomes for pupils are some of the highest in the country. Sixth-form students also achieve well. The curriculum is planned to ensure that pupils can remember information in the long term. Teachers' checks pick up quickly when pupils forget or misunderstand important knowledge. In response, teachers provide timely and effective support so that pupils do not fall behind. Pupils are exceptionally knowledgeable about their subjects. The skills they demonstrate are remarkable.

The school has an impressive culture of professional development. This ensures teachers have the subject knowledge and skills needed to deliver the curriculum effectively.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is ambitious. One student with SEND commented on 'the support and care received from the school'. This is a view expressed by many pupils with additional needs. Pupils with SEND make excellent progress.

The school places great emphasis on reading. This is evident through specific programmes for weaker readers and whole-school initiatives such as 'drop everything and read'. Support for those children who struggle with reading is well planned and delivered.

The behaviour of pupils is exceptional. Staff expectations of pupils are high and consistent, and the pupils' expectations of their own behaviour and that of their peers are similarly high. Pupils want to behave well. In lessons, pupils focus intently on their learning. This supports them to make rapid and sustained progress. During social times, the school is calm. Pupils are polite and patient when queuing, such as for lunch and mock examinations. Sixth-form students demonstrate confidence and maturity. There is a thread of mutual respect that runs throughout the school.

Pupils have access to a rich and diverse range of activities both in and outside the curriculum to enable them to develop their character. There is a detailed and precise programme of personal, social, health and economic education planned and mapped across the school. This includes an effective careers programme for all pupils. Pupils speak highly of this and the impact it has on them. Sixth-form students describe the range of post-16 options available to them. They feel very well supported when making decisions about their futures. Outside lessons, pupils access an astonishing range of extra-curricular activities. Almost all pupils participate in these clubs. Many of these opportunities are pupil-led. Pupils recognise how fortunate they are to be able to be involved in these activities.

Pupils attend school regularly. This enables them to take full advantage of the high quality of education provided by the school. This is because attendance is monitored effectively but with understanding. If a pupil is late, they are asked if they are alright, not why they are late.

Leaders at all levels have maintained an exceptional level of education for the pupils. Expectations extend well beyond academic achievement. Trustees and governors actively support the school in ensuring that the well-being and workload of staff are addressed effectively. Governors have effective training and hold school leaders to account. Staff enjoy working at the school. They comment very positively on the respect they are shown and the community ethos of the school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	137515
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10242367
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,183
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	257
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Laurence Jones
Headteacher	Gillian Marshall
Website	www.cchsg.com
Date of previous inspection	21 January 2009

Information about this school

- The school is part of Alpha Trust.
- The school selects by ability through the 11+ examination.
- The school admits girls only between Years 7 and 13.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with representatives of the trust, including trustees, the chair of the trust board and the CEO.
- The inspection team met with members of the teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography and art. 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. An additional curriculum review was undertaken in history.
- 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.
- The inspection team met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school. The inspection team also considered the 372 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents provided by the school. These included the school improvement plan, curriculum documentation and school policies.
- Inspectors considered 170 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View. This included 112 texts from parents. Inspectors also considered the 75 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jonathan Rockey, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Adam Dabin	Ofsted Inspector
Aron Whiles	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Dallas	Ofsted Inspector
Rowena Simmons	Ofsted Inspector

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