

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: John Colet School

Wharf Road, Wendover, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP22 6HF

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

John Colet School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Ian Brierly. This school is the only school in a single academy trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Wayne Howell.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy here and are welcoming to visitors. The behaviour and relationships are very positive, both in lessons and in social time. The school has a family feel and its vision of 'every student thriving' underpins all its work. Its work with vulnerable pupils is extremely well coordinated and valued by pupils and parents alike. This contributes to the school's highly inclusive and supportive culture. Pupils enjoy the raft of extra-curricular and leadership opportunities on offer. These enable pupils to nurture their interests and develop character and confidence. For example, the Year 10 mentoring programme for Year 7 pupils, or the many roles taken on by sixth-form students.

The school's shared ambition for all pupils is reflected in their improving achievements in lessons and in public examinations. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Each subject has a very carefully sequenced curriculum from Year 7 to Year 13. Essential knowledge and skills build over time, but content is also placed in the context of the wider world. Lesson routines are consistent and support positive and purposeful learning environments.

Parents are very positive about the school and recent improvements. Many confirm their child is indeed 'thriving'.

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

The key stage 3 curriculum provides pupils with a sound foundation for study in Years 10 and 11. Pupils take a broad range of subjects at key stage 4. The choices are varied and

relevant and most pupils take GCSEs. The numbers taking languages, and thus the full suite of English Baccalaureate subjects, is increasing. Care is also taken that there are then meaningful links to sixth form subjects or other education and training routes. Almost all pupils take the full curriculum alongside their peers. In a few cases some pupils follow more bespoke programmes. These are carefully organised with parents and other partners in the best interests of the individuals.

The delivery of the curriculum is effective in most areas. However, there are some inconsistencies, and the school has already taken effective steps to start to address these. The school now has much more stable subject teams who work collaboratively to refine their teaching approaches. Most teachers carefully select strategies and resources which help pupils to embed important knowledge and skills. They then provide opportunities for pupils to practise applying what they have learned to different tasks. Most teachers also regularly check pupils' understanding and adjust teaching and feedback accordingly.

The school provides clear information to staff about how to support pupils with SEND. Teachers use it to adapt the curriculum and lesson activities. Consequently, pupils generally produce work of a high standard, including pupils with SEND, and those who are disadvantaged. Furthermore, in some cases, pupils demonstrate high levels of confidence and independence in how they connect and use what they have learned previously. For example, in Year 12 sociology and Year 7 history, pupils were enjoying contributing to rich discussions.

The school's literacy strategy is well considered but in the early stages of being rolled out. The school has established an effective programme for supporting pupils who are not yet fluent readers. Any gaps in reading are precisely identified and then pupils receive targeted support. In addition, teachers are mindful of supporting reading in lessons. As a result, these pupils catch up with their peers in good time. However other elements of the literacy strategy are not yet as fully embedded. For example, pupils are not consistently supported to read and use ambitious language in all areas of the curriculum and a consistent approach to reading for pleasure is not yet embedded.

Personal development and careers have a high priority because of their importance in preparing pupils to continue to 'thrive' in the future. Pupils in all years learn how to keep themselves safe and how to manage modern life, including online. The careers programme is relevant and varied thanks to a range of links with employers and training providers. The school ensures that all pupils benefit from these programmes. Bespoke support is provided where necessary, for example for work experience or transition to college.

Governors provide the school with appropriate challenge and support, and they take their statutory responsibilities very seriously. Staff are extremely loyal to the school and proud to work here. They value the trust shown in them and the training provided. They recognise that the school is doing what it can to help manage work pressures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not implemented consistently well across all subjects. This means that sometimes pupils are not developing the subject fluency they need to achieve as highly as they could. The school should continue to ensure that teachers know how to match and adapt activities and resources precisely to enable all pupils to learn the curriculum as intended.
- The school is rolling out its literacy strategy, but it is in the early stages. As a result, some pupils are not yet able to access and use sophisticated language with sufficient levels of accuracy and independence. The school should continue to embed the literacy strategy with all staff, so that all pupils can read, write and discuss issues across the curriculum at appropriately demanding levels.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2016.

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	137261
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10341686
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1107
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	110
Appropriate authority	The trust board
Chair of trust board	Wayne Howell
Headteacher	Ian Brierly
Website	www.johncolet.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is the only school in the John Colet School single academy trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- 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

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior staff.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors focused inspection activity on the following groups of subjects: English, maths and humanities; and art and design, design technology, physical education and computer science. For each group of subjects, inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with groups of staff and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and also considered pupils' opinions expressed through the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunch time.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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' interest first.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed in several letters and emails from parents as well views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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