

Inspection of Herschel Grammar School

Northampton Avenue, Slough, Berkshire SL1 3BW

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

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 Joanne Rockall. This school is part of The Schelwood Trust which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jonathan McNaughton Reekie.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged 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 September 2012.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in the vibrant community of this school. They are ambitious for themselves and what they can achieve, modelled by the high aspirations that staff have for them, but also fostered by an increasing independence as they progress through the school. Lessons are engaging places of learning, where pupils are keen to ask questions and challenge one another's opinions, founded on the highly secure knowledge and skills they have accrued as a result of exceptional teaching.

Relationships across the school are warm and founded on respect. Pupils live out daily the school's values of responsibility, success and care. Pupils are known well by staff, meaning they know how best to support them, both academically and more widely. Behaviour is exceptionally settled and calm, both in lessons and at social times.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well in this school. At GCSE and A Level, outcomes are high and often sit in the highest percentages nationally. But it is not just in examination outcomes that pupils thrive. They are happy and proud to be associated with their school. Pupils engage with work beyond the school in their local community, such as litter picking, volunteering in care homes and nurseries and supporting local events.

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

The school has a highly ambitious curriculum which supports all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to do exceptionally well. The knowledge and skills that pupils need to develop have been carefully sequenced, building from Year 7 through to the sixth form, so that pupils develop a broad range of knowledge and are increasingly able to apply this independently.

A buzz of excitement pervades the school. Pupils move with purpose to lessons that engage them, keen to get learning. In lessons, behaviour is very strong. Pupils engage readily, lessons are highly focused and learning is rarely disrupted. Around the school, conduct is similarly calm, and pupils show adults and one another respect in their interactions.

Lessons are characterised by highly expert teaching. Explanations are clear, and pupils pick up the knowledge and skills they need to understand their learning at a high level. Staff are adept at asking questions both to check pupils' understanding and to ensure that pupils think hard about their learning. As a result, pupils routinely think deeply and challenge themselves. Staff know how to adapt their input so that pupils with SEND can access the same high-quality opportunities as their peers. Pupils are increasingly independent, with careful thought given to homework and independent study that pupils engage with readily.

There is an exemplary range of opportunities for pupils to develop beyond the classroom. For example, the school's 'culture week' is a well-considered opportunity

for pupils to learn about a range of other countries and cultures beyond their own. A large range of clubs and house competitions, along with initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Young Enterprise schemes, supplement opportunities in the classroom. There is a range of leadership opportunities for pupils to engage with. They are proud to hold responsibilities such as house captain, being members of the year and school councils or contributing to the 'Eco-Committee'. Sixth-formers work as mentors for younger pupils and as head prefects.

Lessons in personal, social, health and economic education are closely linked with a pastoral programme, assemblies and visiting speakers. These all work seamlessly together to develop fully rounded pupils. A well-developed careers programme is also in place to support pupils in considering their options when they leave school. This connects across the school and is especially bespoke to students' needs and next steps in the sixth form. These programmes also leave room to respond to the needs of the pupils in the school.

Leaders are astute in their identification of what works well in their school and what they can refine further. Their plans are founded on a secure understanding of the school, and they take decisive actions where they are needed. Trustees and governors know the school well and hold leaders to account effectively through a range of developed systems.

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	137726
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10296369
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
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	1,068
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	311
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jonathan McNaughton Reekie
Headteacher	Joanne Rockall
Website	www.herschel.slough.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school has been an academy since February 2012, forming The Schelwood Trust in October 2016. There is one other school within the trust. The headteacher of this school is the trust's senior executive lead.
- The school currently uses no 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.

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also held an online meeting with representatives from the board of trustees.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and computing. 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. The lead inspector met with some leaders from other curriculum subjects.
- 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 took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governor and trustee minutes.
- The team spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. It took account of parent and carer and staff views through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Marian Feeley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Judy Rider	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wayne	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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