

# Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Gilberd School

Brinkley Lane, Colchester, Essex CO4 9PU

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 February 2025

## Outcome

The Gilberd School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is James Mitchell. 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.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in this exceptional school. Pupils recognise and respect the very high expectations staff have for their academic achievement. They respond with a determination to achieve, and they produce work of an excellent standard. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve extremely well.

Pupils respond equally to the aspiration shown for their development as individuals. Pupils develop a strong sense of community. They are proud to be a 'Gilberdian' and strive to make a difference. Pupils ambitiously look at the honour boards prominently displayed around the school, with a determination to see their name up there. Many pupils take on responsibilities because they see the importance of making a contribution. This sense of commitment helps pupils develop into compassionate, confident young people, who are ready for life beyond school.

Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are highly motivated and respect each other's right to learn. This helps create a calm, focused learning environment where learning proceeds without disruption. Around school, pupils are highly considerate of each other and their environment. This helps create a safe, welcoming, inclusive culture where everyone is seen as equal and valued for who they are.

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

The school has continued to ensure its aspirational curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Subject experts have clearly defined what pupils should learn and when. Pupils, including those with SEND, follow a curriculum that often goes beyond the breadth and depth of the national curriculum in key stage 3.

Excellent teaching of each subject means pupils' learning is very strong. They are well prepared for study in key stage 4. The proportion of pupils who study the full suite of English Baccalaureate subjects is low. This is due to the small number of pupils who continue studying a modern foreign language. However, pupils continue to study a broad and aspirational curriculum. Pupils develop a rich and deep understanding of a wide range of subjects, reflected in very strong published outcomes. This means, pupils are highly knowledgeable and extremely well equipped for their next steps.

Reading is the backbone of the curriculum. Pupils read widely and often. The school quickly identifies those pupils who struggle with reading. They accurately identify and address the specific barriers individual pupils have. These pupils access individually tailored programmes to help them catch up. They rapidly become fluent, confident readers. Teachers expect pupils to read and use subject-specific language accurately. As a result, pupils are confident communicators who eloquently articulate their learning.

The school quickly identifies the specific needs for pupils with SEND. Detailed information is provided to teachers so that they can adapt their teaching. Teachers expertly encompass these adaptations into their practice. As a result, all pupils benefit and pupils with SEND make exceptional progress alongside their peers.

The provision for pupils' personal development is exemplary. The development of pupils' character permeates through every aspect of school life. Pupils understand the fundamental values that are important to life in modern Britain. They know why these values are important in their commitment to live their lives well and contribute positively to society. The careers programme provides pupils with the information they need. Pupils access information from a wide range of employers and educational organisations. This is enriched by visits and discussions with members of the school's extensive alumni network. Consequently, pupils make well-informed choices for their future.

Pupils access a plethora of life-defining opportunities. They proudly represent the school in sports teams. The annual school show is a huge production that showcases pupils' extensive talents in the arts. The Combined Cadet Force and Duke of Edinburgh's Award provide pupils the chance to take on challenging and adventurous activities. Learning is brought to life by visits, for example to a Formula 1 team.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They share the school's vision and high standards. They value the trust the school has in their contribution to school improvement. Staff know that leaders' actions that continue to improve the school have been robustly challenged by the governors. Consequently, staff have confidence in these strategies and implement them consistently.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## 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 outstanding 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in November 2018.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137926
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10295046
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,565
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Laurence Jones
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Gillian Marshall
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Mitchell
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.gilberd.com">www.gilberd.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	21 and 22 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Alpha Trust.
- The headteacher took up the position in September 2024, having previously held the position of head of school since 2021.
- The school uses 10 unregistered and one registered provider of 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteachers and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the trust board, local governing body and the trust's chief executive officer.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at documentation about the curriculum and reviewed documentation for pupils with SEND.
- 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' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments submitted. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. They also spoke with staff about their experience of working at the school and groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons.

## Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Sutton

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Celano

Ofsted Inspector

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