

The Chalfonts Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110529
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356771
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Chris Wood HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1765
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Burnage
Headteacher	Sue Tanner
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
School address	Narcot Lane Chalfont St Peter Gerrards Cross SL9 8TP
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Introduction

This inspection was conducted by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed 61 lessons taught by 60 teachers. This included a total of six joint observations with school leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, policies, action plans and documents relating to the tracking of students' progress. Meetings were held with college staff, three members of the governing body and five groups of students who were representative of the college's diversity. Inspectors also analysed the responses to questionnaires returned by 319 parents and carers, 148 students and 76 members of the college staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The rate of progress made by all students, particularly higher-attaining students in Key Stage 4, to ascertain whether teaching is appropriately adapted and/or sufficiently challenging.
- The extent to which the school's care, guidance and support have led to improving outcomes for all students so that they have equal opportunities to achieve.
- The impact of the actions taken by leaders at all levels in securing exceptional improvements or maintaining and building on previously outstanding performance in key areas.

Information about the school

The Chalfonts Community College is much larger than the average sized secondary school. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is just below the national average. A small but growing percentage of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that seen nationally. The college has additionally resourced provision for 10 students with physical disabilities.

The college has held specialist status for technology since 1996. It achieved training school status in 2007.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Chalfonts Community College is an outstanding school. Exceptional leadership from the principal, supported by other skilled leaders and an excellent governing body, has secured ongoing improvements in many areas of the college's work. Astute enhancements to the outstanding curriculum, including the specialist technology provision, provide carefully tailored pathways that fully meet the needs of students who wish to follow academic or vocational routes. Supported by a range of excellent partnerships, the curriculum provides students with extensive opportunities to contribute to their community and helps them to develop excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. It is also highly successful in encouraging many students to value and adopt healthy lifestyles.

The proportion of students attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been above the national average in each of the past three years. Indeed, during this time the majority of attainment indicators have been significantly above average and there is a trend of improvement. Overall, students make good progress and achieve well. In some subjects, such as mathematics, students make outstanding progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress in their learning because of the excellent care, guidance and support that they, like all students, receive.

The college is a highly cohesive community. The college's motto of 'success is an attitude' can be seen clearly in the students' strong enjoyment of learning and in their good and often exemplary behaviour. One student summed up the Chalfonts' experience when saying 'The facilities are great and the opportunities for learning are wonderful and open to anyone.' Excellent safeguarding arrangements and very effective pastoral systems mean that students feel and are kept exceptionally safe.

The quality of teaching is good. The proportion of outstanding lessons is increasing because support for teachers' continuing professional development is excellent. Nevertheless, teachers are not complacent. They are rightly focused on improving their teaching skills further so that all students develop more confident independent learning skills and are challenged to make even faster progress in their learning.

Parents and carers are very supportive of the work of the school. One parent spoke for others when saying, 'I have been very impressed with the communication between the school and myself. In spite of the number of children at the school each is an individual and they and their family are treated as such.' Nevertheless, leaders are rightly committed to involving even more parents and carers in shaping the future direction of the college so that outcomes, including attendance which is currently average, continue to improve.

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Self-evaluation is anchored in precise analysis and a sophisticated understanding of the performance of different groups. This enables the college to be highly successful in promoting community cohesion and equality of opportunity. Consequently many students achieve the challenging targets that are set. Leaders at all levels have been successful in driving continuous improvement, building well on previous outstanding performance. Consequently, there is outstanding capacity to sustain and improve on these developments in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that the good progress made by students accelerates further by:
 - using existing best practice to develop students' independent learning skills
 - ensuring that lessons fully challenge students of all abilities.
- Enhance the good systems that are in place for working with parents and carers so that outcomes, including attendance, continue to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the college with average levels of attainment. Since 2008, almost all of the major attainment indicators have been above national averages by the end of Key Stage 4. The proportion of students attaining five GCSEs, including English and mathematics at grades A* to C, has been above average in each of the previous three years. Attainment in the specialist subjects has been improving and compares favourably with national averages. This thorough grounding in a range of subjects, underpinned by confident use of information and communication technology, means that students are well prepared for their future education and careers.

Overall, students make good progress in their learning and achieve well. They are well motivated and are increasingly prepared to take risks when challenged. In lessons inspectors looked in particular at the progress made by higher-attaining students and found that they made progress at the same good rate as their peers. Students make outstanding progress in mathematics. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. College leaders are now ambitiously focused on ensuring that such exceptional rates of progress are more consistently achieved across all subjects.

Students feel cared for and exceptionally safe because of their excellent relationships with college staff. Students acknowledge that any problems are dealt with quickly, fairly and sensitively. For example, one student said, 'The school is a safe and happy place.' Students are polite and welcoming. Their behaviour around the college campus is sensible. In lessons their behaviour for learning is good and often exemplary. Many older students act as role models and demonstrate considerable maturity when helping others through their mentoring roles. Many students have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Take up of school meals is high and participation in sporting activities is strong. Attendance is broadly average.

Students make excellent contributions to the college and wider communities through their involvement in the college council, as curriculum leaders, as members of the Key Stage 3

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Eco group and by leading activities for pupils in local primary schools. In addition, fund raising for charities and several national and international links contribute strongly to students' outstanding social and cultural development. Many lessons across the curriculum reflect the strengths in pupils' knowledge about other faiths and cultures. One Year 7 student, for example, explained that learning about Sikhism had helped him to see the importance of equality and that everybody is equal. Another talked with enthusiasm about forming political parties and writing manifestos while learning about persuasive language. In religious education (RE), students are taught very successfully to grapple with philosophical ideas and this is helping them to become open-minded and critical thinkers.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good and improving and 20% of the lessons observed by inspectors were outstanding. The strengths in teaching included:

- the teachers' enthusiasm, high expectations, strong subject knowledge and detailed planning which enable students to work at a good pace
- the imaginative activities and good resources which engage students' interest and encourage confident participation
- regular opportunities for students to ask questions and check their own progress and that of their peers

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- skilful and varied questioning which gauges students' understanding and extends their thinking
- oral feedback and marking of students' work which increasingly directs students to the actions they need to take to improve their work.

In a very small minority of lessons, teachers speak for too long and their questioning is less effective. In these lessons, students do not always demonstrate sufficient confidence to work independently. Occasionally, there are missed opportunities to challenge students so that they make quicker progress towards their personal targets. ♦ However, there is much existing best practice and experienced teachers are used increasingly to provide training in these areas. ♦♦

The outstanding curriculum meets the needs of every student. Excellent cross-curricular links help students to understand how knowledge and skills can be applied across subject boundaries. In Key Stage 3, students benefit greatly from several integrated learning projects. Some of these opportunities, such as a local regeneration project, have a direct impact on the local community. Others, linked to fitness, have raised awareness of sports participation for people with disabilities. Students in Key Stage 4 select from a wide range of academic and vocational courses and carefully personalised pathways. Provision for the engineering diploma and the outstanding on-site beauty salon are just two of the very successful options that complement the more traditional routes on offer. The specialism has been a catalyst for many recent developments. In particular, it has enabled excellent partnerships to develop that benefit students at the college and in other schools. There is an impressive range of educational visits and a wide variety of sporting and artistic clubs. The take-up of these is consistently high. Leaders analyse participation rates to ensure that all students have access to appropriate provision.

♦The care, guidance and support provided by the college are outstanding. One student echoed the views of others when saying that staff 'would do anything to help students succeed'. In spite of its size, students are known very well as individuals. Excellent monitoring of the progress of groups allows the college to target its resources well. It liaises very effectively with external agencies to ensure that support is in place for those that need it most. The support for students moving from primary school is excellent. This includes close liaison with feeder schools, personal contact with parents and carers and early identification of students with special educational needs. For those students with a physical disability, the additionally resourced base provides high quality support that enables them to access fully all that the college has to offer. Throughout their time at college, students benefit from excellent guidance when making choices about their future education and careers.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The principal is inspirational; her commitment to securing the best outcomes for students and staff alike is relentless. Ambitious senior and middle leaders share this vision fully. Self-evaluation at all levels is accurate and based on meticulous analysis. This enables college leaders to address areas for development quickly. Systems in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning are highly effective. The professional development opportunities that staff receive, underpinned by an annual conference, high quality in-house training and excellent partnerships with a local university, are impressive. Consequently, staff feel proud to work at the college, understand its goals and play their part in achieving them.

The outstanding governing body is very well regarded. It is challenging, innovative and responsive to change. All statutory duties are carried out thoroughly and monitored closely, including the excellent systems that keep students and members of the college community safe. Wisely, members of the governing body are keen to take a leading role in enhancing the college's good strategies for involving parents and carers in the strategic direction of the school.

The way in which the college promotes community cohesion and equality of opportunity is outstanding. For example, an innovative project involving around 800 students identified a network of family and friendship ties in Great Britain and abroad. Subsequently, students wanted to celebrate the growing number of college students who speak English as an additional language. The languages spoken by staff were identified as part of a college-wide competition. These included Guajarati, Hungarian, Arabic, Lugandan and Swahili. Plans are now in place to develop this project further so that students gain an even better understanding of each other's language, cultures and beliefs. All groups of students achieve equally well and there are very few incidents of bullying or racism.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students start with lower than average attainment but leave with attainment that is in line with the national average. Some students attain results that are above the national average. Overall, students make good progress because, as they variously commented, teachers are 'caring and look after students', are 'committed to helping us learn', 'inform me of my progress and targets' and 'help me to prepare for university'. ◇ Sixth form students are seen by younger students as role models and they take on responsibilities with enthusiasm. They organise events such as the junior sports festival, participate in drama and sports and take a leading role in the work of the college council.

Students are challenged to attain their best by their teachers and aspire to meet the ambitious targets they are set. They are supported well by college staff who monitor their progress closely. They are highly motivated and demonstrate outstanding behaviour both in and out of their classes. This ensures that they make the best of the wide range of academic, vocational and developmental curriculum opportunities that the college offers. Teaching is good and a growing proportion is outstanding. In the best lessons students' are fully challenged and make quicker progress because teachers encourage them to take control of their learning. Students are very well supported by the college to take their next steps in life either through the education system or into the world of work. Consistent with the whole college, leadership of the sixth form is outstanding and provides challenge to all areas and individuals who are involved. Self-evaluation is accurate and thorough, providing a clear focus on the necessary developments that will improve outcomes further.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was slightly above the national average. Most parents and carers are very supportive of the work of the college, particularly the extent to which their children enjoy school and are kept safe. ♦ Written comments frequently referred to staff as 'professional', 'enthusiastic', 'dedicated', 'available' and 'caring'. One typical comment said, 'I have had three children go through the college. My experience throughout nine years has been memorable. The support and encouragement from staff has been superb.'

Some parents and carers raised concerns about instances of poor behaviour. Although valid, these were often historical or related to individual examples. Inspectors found that behaviour was good and a very large majority of parents and carers agreed that unacceptable behaviour was dealt with well. There were no other patterns in the comments made. However, a few parents and carers felt that more could be done to involve them in their children's learning. Inspectors found that college leaders are committed to getting parents even more involved in the life of the school so that outcomes for students improve further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chalfonts Community College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 319 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,765 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	136	43	164	51	8	3	9	3
The school keeps my child safe	141	44	168	53	5	2	4	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	146	46	153	48	13	4	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	124	39	164	51	21	7	7	2
The teaching is good at this school	109	34	186	58	13	4	5	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	109	34	159	50	36	11	7	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	97	30	190	60	16	5	6	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	133	42	144	45	6	2	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	135	42	148	46	14	4	8	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	142	45	143	45	15	5	9	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	106	33	161	50	16	5	9	3
The school is led and managed effectively	196	61	103	32	8	3	6	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	177	55	120	38	11	3	7	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be. <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



31 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Chalfonts Community College, Chalfont St Peter SL9 8TP

Recently I visited your college with a team of inspectors to look at how well you were doing. Thank you for your help. We enjoyed talking to you. I am delighted to say that you go to an outstanding school with a good sixth form.

You make good progress in your learning because you are highly motivated and the teaching you receive is good and often outstanding. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress. In Year 11, your examination results are consistently above the national average. In the sixth form your examination results are similar to other students nationally and improving. ♦ You enjoy learning and have excellent opportunities to pick the academic and vocational courses that best suit your interests and needs. Consequently, you are well prepared for your future education or careers. Your attendance is average.

Your behaviour is good and often exemplary. You get along well with your teachers and each other. You feel extremely safe because the care, guidance and support provided by the college are excellent and the systems it has in place to deal with the rare incidence of bullying are effective. You enjoy keeping healthy and regularly participate in sporting activities. You make an excellent contribution to the college and local community through membership of the college council, the Eco group and through your roles as mentors and curriculum leaders. You thoroughly enjoy finding out about other faiths and cultures. This was seen clearly in your concern for celebrating language diversity in the college and in your impressive ability to reflect sensibly on complex philosophical questions, such as those posed in subjects like RE.

Your principal and other leaders in the school provide outstanding leadership. As they are never complacent, we have agreed that there are some things that could be even better. These include ensuring that:

- teachers plan lessons that are even more challenging so that you achieve your ambitious personal targets
- your parents and carers have even more opportunities to get involved with the college so that your achievement continues to improve.

You can help by attending school regularly and continuing to work productively with your teachers when they plan challenging work for you to do.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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