

Chiltern Edge Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123245
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	359404
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Alan Taylor-Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	575
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Johnson
Headteacher	Daniel Sadler
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 35 lessons and the work of 34 teachers. In addition, meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, and staff. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's development plans, its self-review, analyses of the attainment and progress of its students, records of lesson observations, and policies. Inspectors took account of the responses on the 65 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

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

- The current strengths in the teaching and how consistent they are across the school.
- The effectiveness of the links between monitoring and self-evaluation, and development planning processes, and how strongly these activities drive improvement.
- The impact of students' involvement in helping to improve their school, particularly on the quality of their learning and their progress.

Information about the school

Chiltern Edge Community School is a smaller-than-average secondary school situated in Oxfordshire but drawing many of its students from Reading. The school is a specialist language college and it also offers many of its facilities for community use. The proportion of its students from minority ethnic groups is near the national average, and a small but growing number have English as an additional language. The proportion of its students who have special education needs and/or disabilities is slightly less than average. The number of students at the school has fallen over recent years. The school holds the International School award and the Healthy Schools award. It shares its site and its reception with the secondary section of a local special school and a Sure Start Centre. There is an independently-run day nursery on the site which is subject to separate inspection procedures.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The quality of the education that Chiltern Edge Community School provides for its students is no less than satisfactory in any respect. Many aspects of its work are good.

This is an improving school. The headteacher champions the very best outcomes for all students and communicates a clear vision for improvement. There have been significant changes to aspects of the school's work over the last year and many have already had a positive impact. These priorities are reflected clearly in the school's development planning, and progress in each area is evaluated regularly. These strengths, together with the effective manner in which change is managed, even with the challenge of falling student rolls and associated budgetary constraints, give the school a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Many of the outcomes for students are good. They leave the school with above average levels of attainment as a consequence of the satisfactory progress made from their starting points.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and there are strengths evident in many departments. The senior leadership team is giving clear direction and support to improve it. This includes an emphasis on regularly assessing students' progress and understanding over the course of a lesson to inform teaching, although this is not a consistently well developed skill across all departments yet.

The language specialism makes an important contribution to the life of the school. In addition to around 80% of students studying German or French (and some both), there are many opportunities for students to travel abroad and to broaden their social and cultural understanding in this and other ways.

Parents and carers are pleased with the quality of the information sent home about their children's progress. However, the systems used to monitor achievement do not provide senior staff with snapshots of the current rate of progress of all groups of students against national expectations. This limits their capacity to apply the intervention strategies on offer currently, with sufficient precision.

Students are happy and enjoy being at the school. Their attendance is good and they are punctual to lessons. Relationships are good and students behave well around the site and in lessons. They are sometimes reluctant to ask for clarification or to pin down a misconception in their own, or their friends', understanding of the work. Only the best teaching seen by inspectors was able to draw out students' intellectual curiosity and inquisitive spirit.

Students enjoy being consulted about possible changes in their school and respond very positively. The school council is already an active and busy group and there are plans to expand its range of influence further.

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Students are well cared for and supported. They feel confident that staff will respond to any problems they have, and many know about and appreciate the fact that the school offers specialist counselling support. The quality of advice given about students' transition to college or employment-based training is good.

The governing body is currently undergoing significant reorganisation in order to be able to support and challenge the school much more effectively. It is now in a position to do this satisfactorily, and does so.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to improve the quality of students' learning and the progress they make, develop the quality of teaching to consistently good or better by:
 - supporting all staff to continually gauge students' progress over the course of a lesson by using well-developed questioning techniques and the feedback obtained from students to steer the course of teaching and learning throughout a lesson
 - encouraging students to speak up so that they can sharpen their own understanding and that of their peers through discussion.
- Refine the systems that track the achievement of students so that these systems are able to provide high quality information about the current attainment and progress of all groups, to inform intervention procedures more effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enjoy many of their lessons and feel that staff have appropriate expectations of them. They show a willingness to learn and they are cooperative in lessons. When given good stimuli, students are willing to play an active part in their learning. This was exemplified in a mathematics lesson, when demanding work on loci was tackled well by students because they responded positively to the teacher's prompting and questioning and were prepared to rise to the challenge, generating questions of their own to clarify their learning. In another lesson, students were divided into 'presenters' and 'questioners' and, having undertaken some research, explored the key ideas of microbiology in this exciting way. However, too much learning is only satisfactory because it does not offer sufficient opportunities for students to use their initiative and their natural enthusiasm. The attainment in 2010 of students known to be eligible for free school meals was lower than that of their peers nationally because they did not make the extra progress needed to lift their performance. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the support given by teachers, and other staff in some lessons, although they do not always have the chance to approach work in ways that are well suited to their different needs.

Students feel that the school is a safe place, and they value the support of their friends and the staff. There are many opportunities for students to contribute to their school, including participating in the work of the recently reorganised school council, being sports and house captains and playing a part in the work of the Power Group which tackles any

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bullying issues. Many students also give their time and energy generously to the local community by, for example, working with their peers in the co-located special school, contributing their views and ideas to the local village development plan, and teaching German in a local primary school. All Year 9 students undertake a week of valuable service to the community. The majority take part in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available, and maintain their health and fitness by enjoying sporting activities in and beyond school time. Students have a well-developed understanding of health and personal safety issues and many chose to apply it to the decisions they make, for example in the food chosen at break and lunchtimes.

Students develop a good range of skills to help them to secure their future economic well-being, including acquiring a good understanding of the world of work through the work experience programme, with its links to a number of curriculum areas. Students have a good sense of social and cultural issues that are relevant beyond their immediate locality, developed through the philosophy and ethics course in Key Stage 4 and in assemblies and in the tutorial programme, and as a result of the range of trips and visits, some of which are to other European countries. They show the capacity to apply this learning confidently.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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 satisfactory and it is improving. Although relatively little teaching is outstanding, individual lessons showed a developing use of questioning skills, the use of

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lesson objectives to steer learning and the use of a range of learning styles and activities. Most of the teaching secures the interest and involvement of students. In a minority of lessons, when this is not the case, behaviour becomes more challenging and progress falters. There is an emphasis throughout the school on using assessment to guide teaching and learning; when this is done well, it strongly supports good progress. This is seen most consistently in humanities subjects. However, it is not a feature of all teaching in the school.

The curriculum is designed very much with the needs of groups of students in mind. There is a good range of vocational opportunities available, many as a consequence of partnership arrangements with other local providers, but uptake is low. Recent developments include BTECs in sport and in science, and these courses are catering well for the needs of a range of students who may otherwise underachieve. Many students study a language to GCSE and some achieve GCSEs in two. The curriculum's strengths are in the way in which it is delivered, and in the range of opportunities presented to students within subjects. For example, the Year 7 camp, which involves work in science, geography and physical education, is a memorable experience for all. There are opportunities for immersion experiences, for example a 'Languages at Work' day in Year 9 and a dedicated humanities day in Year 7. There is good provision for intervention to support literacy and numeracy needs.

Students are well cared for and supported. The new mixed-age tutor system caused much debate when suggested, but it has proved to be an effective way to respond to individual needs quickly and very effectively. It has, for example, strongly supported the mentoring system which now operates in all year groups in a flexible manner to suit the priorities of each year group. Some students have complex personal and social needs and they are given good quality individual help and support, in close liaison with families and with a range of outside agencies. The school can point to specific examples of where its intervention and support has helped students to overcome significant challenges to their well-being and achievement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher identified last year a number of important ways in which the school's work could be improved, and work began on them promptly and effectively. These changes in the curriculum, the pastoral support system, the way that teaching is monitored and improved and in the work of the governing body are improving provision and they have a good capacity to support further improvements in achievement and other

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outcomes for students. Whole-school priorities are reflected in the work of the senior leadership team and all middle leaders, and good development planning processes steer line management meetings and serve to hold leaders to account for the quality of outcomes. It is too soon to see the impact of some of these initiatives, particularly the curriculum changes. Other developments, such as the introduction of the house system, have had a more immediate and positive impact.

Improving the quality of teaching to good and outstanding is given an appropriately high priority. This is undertaken in a phased and collaborative manner, and by securing the cooperation of staff to make the necessary changes to their teaching styles via coaching, training and other support mechanisms. The school's judgements of the quality of teaching are secure, except by some middle leaders at the boundary of satisfactory and good.

The school gives a high priority to tackling discrimination and offering equal opportunities to all students and staff. The uptake of provision by various groups of students is monitored and systems to gauge impact are being developed. Staff set aspirational targets for all students and are able to identify examples of how a focus on the needs of groups and individuals has led to their achieving them.

Senior staff value the good links established between parents and carers and the school. General school news is communicated well and frequently through the website and the newsletter, and parents and carers receive regular reports on the progress of their children. The school is actively involved with several community groups to work to improve the degree of social cohesion in its locality. The 'Laugh out Loud' club helps to raise the aspirations of some potentially vulnerable young people, and there are good links with the local youth club.

The school has good systems in place to ensure the safety and well-being of students. Senior staff seek regular affirmation of the quality of these systems through external audit and they are highly responsive to the need to improve any aspect.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at the school. There were no areas for concern in any aspect of the questionnaire responses; the level of satisfaction expressed was high in many cases. The majority of comments were very supportive of the work of the school, and there was no pattern in the few that expressed specific concerns. This overall sense of satisfaction was summed up by one parent when they said, 'I honestly believe I could not find a school my child would be happier at. There is so much more to education than just formal qualifications and Chiltern Edge provides this.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 575 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	42	35	54	2	3	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	27	42	35	54	3	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	42	34	52	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	38	34	52	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	29	42	65	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	37	31	48	7	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	35	38	58	3	5	1	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)	27	42	31	48	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	37	35	54	5	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	32	33	51	8	12	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	34	34	52	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	38	35	54	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	52	25	38	3	5	2	3

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:	<p>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.</p> <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.



1 April 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Chiltern Edge Community School, Reading RG49LN

Thank you for the welcome you showed the inspection team when we visited recently. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. The full report is available on the Ofsted website, but I have provided a brief summary here.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. Aspects of its work are good. Students leave at the end of Key Stage 4 with attainment that is higher than the national average, as a result of making satisfactory progress over their time at the school. You feel safe at the school, and you behave well around the site and show a willingness to learn in lessons. You are prepared well for your next steps in life because of the good advice and guidance provided. Levels of care and support are good for all of you, and there is extra support provided for those with specific challenges in their personal lives. The curriculum is broad and made relevant to your needs but few of you choose to take up vocational qualifications at the moment.

Your headteacher and senior staff want the best possible outcomes for you; their good work means that the school has the capacity to get even better. ♦ Recent big changes include the move to mixed-age tutor groups, which many of you said you were unsure about but you now think are a good idea. I agreed with your headteacher that there are two main areas to continue to address to bring about improvements.

- Improve the quality of teaching across the whole school, by ensuring teachers check your understanding frequently in lessons, using a range of techniques, and encourage you to use your curiosity to question more and probe any misconceptions you may have.
- Adapt the information the school currently holds about your achievement to enable it to compare everyone's progress to the level expected nationally, so as to be able to intervene and support some of you more effectively.

I know that you will wish to work with staff to help to improve your school. There are already developments underway to enable your student council to collect and represent your views and opinions even more clearly to support this to happen. I wish you every happiness and success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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