

Chaucer Technology School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118924
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358475
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Calvin Pike

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	1186
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Lee
Headteacher	Simon Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They saw 38 lessons taught by 38 teachers and attended an assembly and five tutor group sessions. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at development planning, the school's policies, information about students' performance and the governing body minutes. The team received and analysed questionnaires completed by 69 parents and carers and others from students and staff.

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

- Whether students' achievement and standards, especially in mathematics, are high enough.
- How well students' attendance levels are improving.
- The extent to which the quality of teaching is consistently accelerating students' learning and progress.
- The impact of changes to leadership and management on outcomes across the school.
- The impact of changes to provision in the sixth form on students' achievement.

Information about the school

The school has more students on roll than the average for this type of school. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average. This proportion includes relatively few with a statement of special educational needs. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is the percentage who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national figure. The school has specialist technology status. There is a private nursery on site which is not managed by the governing body of the school and did not form part of this inspection. There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection, including the appointment of a Vice-Principal and a completely new senior management team.

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****3**

Main findings

Chaucer Technology School provides a satisfactory quality of education. It is improving rapidly, and has improved especially over the last two years. Since the last inspection, under the strong leadership of the Principal and new senior leadership team, significant changes have taken place. These changes are already having a positive impact on the quality of students' education, even though they are not yet fully embedded in the practice of all staff.

Students' low attainment, particularly in mathematics, is largely related to previous levels of underachievement. Progress and achievement are now satisfactory and gaining pace quickly and securely. As a result, attainment is rising strongly. In some subjects, such as English literature and drama, progress is good. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as others because of the carefully targeted intervention and quality of support provided. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, so that there is now more good teaching than there was before. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, however, due to inconsistencies in the extent to which teachers address the range of needs in classes, involve students in their own learning, and regularly mark students' work and give guidance on how they can improve. Improvement to teaching has taken place because lessons are monitored regularly, a weekly professional development programme focuses on areas for development and robust action is taken to address weaknesses where necessary. Rigorous systems are now used effectively to track students' progress against clear targets. The curriculum has also been improved and is now good because the range of courses provided better matches the needs and interests of students.

The behaviour of students around the school and in lessons is most often good, but is satisfactory overall as some misbehaviour disturbs a very small minority of lessons. Students are welcoming and polite. Their involvement in contributing to the school's development and that of the wider community is good. Older students in particular take on leadership roles. Through the student council, they share their views regularly and senior leaders listen to these carefully. The greatly improved curriculum and more recently improved quality of school meals and student facilities have been the result of responding to students' needs. Attendance levels are low because a high proportion of students are persistently absent. Nevertheless, the school is taking strong and effective steps to tackle this issue, thus halving the number of students with poor attendance so far this academic year. The quality of care, guidance and support has improved and is now good. This development is appreciated by students and the majority of parents and carers, and contributes well to students' moral and social development.

The school promotes community cohesion well, founded on a close analysis of its local context and good planning to support students' needs. Through improving self-evaluation

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and effective challenge from supportive governors, the Principal and senior staff have identified appropriate, shared aims to raise the quality of education provided. With an increasing majority of staff, they have improved important areas of curriculum and student progress, and are keenly aware of the need for further change. Together, governors and senior staff show a significant and convincing drive for improvement, although the same strong level of ambition is not yet shared by all middle managers in the school. The new leadership and overall management of the sixth form are good. The influence of sixth form leaders has led to improvements in provision and outcomes, and these are satisfactory. Taken together with the increasingly robust self-evaluation, all these factors demonstrate satisfactory capacity for future improvement.

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?

- Raise standards further, particularly in mathematics, and increase the rate of progress in this and the next school year by:
 - improving teaching with higher expectations for all students and work that is matched closely to their needs in all classes
 - more active involvement and engagement of students in their own learning
 - more precise marking that consistently guides students on how to improve.
- Improve attendance and reduce the proportion of students who are persistently absent.
- Ensure that the school's vision and drive for improvement is understood and adopted by staff at all levels, and particularly at middle management level.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students describe how new measures to reduce disruption in lessons, including 'safe-seating' planning, have improved behaviour and helped them concentrate better. In lessons seen, students often work with interest and enjoyment, such as in practising their language skills in paired conversation in Spanish. In a number of lessons, progress was good, and in one, it was outstanding. In a Key Stage 4 drama lesson, students improvised very well and shared techniques enthusiastically as a result of the teacher's excellent questioning. In most lessons, students are compliant and ready to listen, but progress is sometimes limited because they are not sufficiently actively engaged or the work expected is not closely enough suited to their needs in order to challenge them effectively.

There has been a steady improvement to attainment over the last three years. Current data show that an increasing proportion of students are making the progress expected in Key Stage 4 and an even higher proportion are doing so in Key Stage 3. As a result, the school is poised to meet its appropriately higher GCSE targets this academic year, reflecting rapid improvement and the positive impact of systems introduced over the last two years.

Students express confidence in staff and the systems that help them to feel safe. Older students are proud of their own training and roles in helping to keep others safe, for

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example as "buddies" to help younger students who have concerns or feel vulnerable. The number of exclusions and incidents of disruptive behaviour are reducing quickly as a result of the school's sharper focus on these issues and its systems to promote students' well-being. Most students show good understanding of how to live healthy lives. Physical education is one of the school's most popular and effective departments and a large proportion of students participate in extra-curricular sporting events. They speak enthusiastically of the improvements in choice and standards of food now available at the school. Many students are involved in leading charity work locally and internationally, funding events for a local hospice and school-based developments, such as successfully bidding for a project to reduce carbon emissions by 55%. They develop well as citizens and show clear commitment to the school and wider community. Literacy skills have improved since the last inspection. Although at a relatively slower rate, improvements in mathematics have enhanced students' numeracy skills. Together with significant improvements in the curriculum, these developments have equipped students well to participate in an extensive range of work placements. The quality of these initiatives is good and has led a number of students to apprenticeships on leaving school. Through assemblies, subject lessons and various roles across the school, students have many opportunities to develop understanding of their rights, responsibilities, and moral and social principles.

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	4
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	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

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How effective is the provision?

The majority of teachers have strong subject knowledge and use it well to support learning. Good relationships between teachers and students create a positive learning atmosphere in most classrooms. Lesson planning has improved since the last inspection. Plans usually have clear objectives with specific expected outcomes for different groups of students. Most teachers establish good order in classrooms, in some cases using approaches that encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, not all teachers show thorough understanding of the range of students' needs or how students will be effectively involved in their learning. This shortcoming reduces the opportunity to check how well students understand the work or increase the pace of learning where needed. Most teachers mark students' work regularly, but most do not give sufficient guidance overall on how students can improve further.

Considerable improvements have been made to the curriculum since the last inspection. From Year 9, the curriculum 'pathways' now enable students to select from a range of courses that better meet their skills, interests and needs. Students say that these are more interesting. The school's data indicate that the increased choice of curriculum has had a positive influence in improving attendance rates. Reflecting the school's technology status, there is good provision for students to develop their information and communication technology skills in most subjects and a number of out-of-school clubs. There is a popular range of extra-curricular music, dance, drama, sport and art activities.

Clear systems ensure good care, guidance and support for pupils. This is led well by the strong and cooperative pastoral and learning teams for each of the school's five 'colleges'. Providing effective links with primary schools, induction arrangements for new students and supporting vulnerable students and their families, the teams are highly regarded by students. This is evident from the reactions of individual students, such as one describing the support of their pastoral support manager, who said, 'If you are in trouble of any sort, she will sort it out for you!' There are good procedures for improving behaviour and lowering persistent absenteeism. Their impact is evident in the rapid fall in exclusions and in the swiftly decreasing number of students who are persistently absent since the start of this academic year.

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 Principal and senior leadership team work well together, as do the five directors of colleges and their teams. Team members are ambitious to raise achievement and have

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shared their vision with all staff. Some, but not all, middle managers also recognise the need for change and show a determination to improve students' outcomes. The extent to which all leaders are effective in embedding developments is, therefore, satisfactory rather than good. Systems to enhance the school's management have been refined in the last two years. The school's use of data to track students' progress is now being applied consistently across all departments. Through the weekly professional development sessions for all staff, linked to outcomes from monitoring and performance management, similar approaches across departments are reducing variation between the work and outcomes of different subjects. Common systems are applied in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. This approach is bringing about a more coherent picture of the school's strengths and areas for future development than before, and is improving the quality of teaching. Self-evaluation is carried out systematically and is, therefore, providing a better understanding of the school's priorities.

The governing body plays a key role in the school. Governors are committed to the school's improvement and consider options for its development carefully and critically. They offer substantial expertise, developed by regular training, and challenge the school effectively to accelerate change. The school has carefully considered the diversity of its school and local population, and developed effective plans to enhance students' understanding of the school, local and wider community. As a result, the school has good links and partnerships with local and more-distant schools, higher education institutions and other groups. These support its development of community cohesion well. The school recognises it does not involve a large enough proportion of parents and carers at present.

Improvements to attendance mean that students who are persistently absent are increasingly able to enjoy the same improvement as regular attenders, illustrating the school's satisfactory attention to equal opportunities and the reduction of any discrimination. Leaders and managers keep detailed records of the progress of students by ability and ethnic background and take action to address underperformance. The school works effectively with relevant safeguarding agencies and provides suitable training for staff in contact with students. It takes appropriate precautions to keep the site safe. Safe working practices are highlighted across the curriculum.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Examination results are low but have improved in some subjects, such as physical education. Although performance between subjects varies, school data indicate that students make satisfactory progress based on their starting points. Students' attendance has improved and is now broadly average.

A large proportion of sixth form students make a good contribution to the well-being of the school and wider community through opportunities such as contributing to peer-mentoring programmes that unite the student body, leading charity events or acting as sports ambassadors. The school provides students in the sixth form with helpful guidance to prepare them well for university and the next stage in their lives. Students are appreciative of this support from staff. They report that guidance is readily and regularly available when they have difficulties, including after school or during holiday time.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Students comment on how well they are treated as young adults and helped to learn to work more independently. A range of GCSE, AS and A-level subjects, as well as a good variety of vocational courses, are available at the school or consortium partner schools. This improved curriculum provision is satisfactory in meeting most students' needs.

The relatively new leader and managers of the sixth form show much drive and ambition to secure improvements. Together, they have had a strong impact in bringing about rapid change in improving provision in some subjects and in recruitment to the sixth form as a whole. Strong monitoring and evaluation processes are now in place and are having a growing impact across all subjects.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A very small proportion of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire about the school. Most of these were positive about the quality of education provided for their children. The greatest strengths of the school, in their view, are their children's enjoyment, how safe they feel and the degree to which the school keeps them informed of their child's progress. These points are supported by inspection evidence. The relatively few concerns expressed covered a number of areas. Inspection evidence endorsed the view that not all students are making fast enough progress, but found that improvements to provision and practice are increasing the rate of progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chaucer Technology School 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1226 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	28	44	64	3	4	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	17	25	47	68	5	7	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	32	40	58	5	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	22	34	49	10	14	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	12	17	48	65	3	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	13	38	55	15	22	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	10	52	75	8	12	0	0
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)	15	22	44	64	6	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	16	43	62	7	10	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	12	42	61	9	13	4	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	13	47	68	4	6	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	12	17	47	68	4	6	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	20	44	64	5	7	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



11 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Chaucer Technology School, Canterbury CT1 1SU

Thank you for making us welcome in your school. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and views. You told us how the school has changed for the better in the last two years, how you feel safe because of good quality care provided by adults in school, and that you know the senior staff and many teachers are doing a good job.

The inspection found your school is providing a satisfactory education, which is improving. Although examination results are low, your progress and attainment are improving as a result of better teaching and learning. Most of you attend school regularly and the number of students who are too often absent has reduced significantly. From Year 9 and in the sixth form, you have an increasing range of subjects, courses and activities to help you progress. Many of you behave well around school and in lessons, but we agreed with those of you who said there is misbehaviour in a few classes, which sometimes disrupts learning. We noticed that the new behaviour system is helping staff sort this issue out more quickly. You take many of the opportunities provided to develop your leadership skills. Through these, we recognised you have been able to influence some of the improvements in the school. The support you receive to make the progress expected of you is good; we know you appreciate this and were grateful for the examples of it that you shared with us. Senior leaders are committed to making your school as good as possible and the developments introduced in the last two years are already having a positive impact.

We have asked the senior leaders to improve your achievement by making sure that the work you are given meets your needs, that you are more actively involved in lessons and that your work is marked helpfully by all teachers. We asked also for attendance to be improved and the numbers of students who are not benefiting from education because they are regularly absent to be reduced. Another recommendation is to ensure that the school's new systems are understood better and adopted by staff at all levels. All of you can help by telling teachers how you learn best and by encouraging others who come less often to attend regularly and behave well.

Yours sincerely

Calvin Pike

Lead inspector

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