

# The Charles Dickens School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118910
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	358470
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robin Gaff

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1150
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ron Hutton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Olsson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Broadstairs Road Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2RL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 862988
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 38 lessons, observing 35 teachers. The inspectors held meetings with groups of students, as well as with staff and with members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, looked at planning and evaluation documents and scrutinised the school's own analysis of students' attainment and progress. A total of 161 questionnaires completed by parents and carers were received and analysed, as well as questionnaires completed by students and staff.

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

- The extent to which the recent rise in students' attainment is being securely maintained and their rates of progress improved.
- The extent of the school's success in ensuring that teaching leads to consistently good achievement.
- The impact of the school's specialism on students' achievement, particularly for middle and higher attaining students.
- The role of middle leaders in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

## Information about the school

The Charles Dickens School is a larger-than-average secondary school. It is a non-selective school in an area which operates a policy of selection by ability. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average. The main group represented in the school is of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is lower than that found nationally. The proportion of students who, when they join the school, have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is well-above average. These cover a wide range of additional needs. The school has a visually impaired unit which caters for a small number of students. The school first gained specialist status as a mathematics and computing school in 2006. It provides a number of vocational courses in partnership with two other local providers. At the time of the inspection, the school had just completed a move into new, or extensively refurbished, buildings.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This school continues to give its students a good standard of education. When the inspection began the school had just completed its move into new, and extensively remodelled, buildings. The new premises provide an attractive and stimulating learning environment. They include extensive and up-to-date information and communication technology (ICT) facilities which are helping to ensure that students gain a good grasp of this important basic skill. However, the redevelopment process has been lengthy and has been subject to some considerable delays. This, together with the absence, due to illness, of some key members of the teaching staff, has had a negative impact on teachers' ability to ensure continuity of learning. These factors undoubtedly had a bearing on the dip in attainment represented by the 2010 GCSE results, which were well-below the national average. Nevertheless, leaders at all levels have worked very effectively to minimise their impact on students' achievement, and have successfully reversed this temporary decline.

Students throughout the school, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress, particularly in the core areas of English and mathematics. The quality of teaching is good, although leaders recognise the need to ensure that more is outstanding in order to improve students' achievement still further. The curriculum, which is enhanced by productive partnerships with local businesses and with other educational providers, is well-matched to students' abilities and interests. Students, including those who are potentially vulnerable due to their circumstances, receive excellent care, guidance and support. Those who are visually impaired benefit a great deal from dedicated and expert staff who help to ensure that they are fully included in school life.

Students like and respect their new school buildings. They behave well, and say that they feel safe in school. Its Healthy School status endorses the school's successful efforts to ensure that students understand the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community, and a high proportion of potentially vulnerable students take on positions of responsibility. Close links with other schools and colleges and with the world of work, as well as students' increasingly secure grasp of basic skills, prepare students well for further education, training and future employment.

The senior leadership team, supported by the active and knowledgeable governing body, has an accurate understanding of the quality of provision. The members are strongly committed to improving it still further to ensure that students' attainment continues to rise. The effectiveness of middle leaders is more variable, because not all play a major role in evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers do not have sufficient opportunities to observe and learn from the outstanding practice that exists within the school.

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The problems associated with the move into the new buildings, as well as unavoidable staff absences, which leaders have not sought to use as excuses for poor performance, have adversely affected the school's progress towards becoming outstanding. Nevertheless, its capacity for further sustained improvement remains good. This is because leaders have successfully addressed weaknesses identified by the previous inspection, and built upon the school's strengths. The new development also enhances the school's capacity to improve, by providing students with an environment in which teachers benefit from excellent facilities, and students can thrive. ♦

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment still further so that, by 2013, it is consistently in line with or above national averages, by increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching.
- Ensure that all subject leaders consistently evaluate, and set challenging targets for improving, the quality of teaching and learning in their areas.
- Give teachers more opportunities to observe and to learn from the outstanding practice that already exists within the school.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>2</b>
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Students join the school with levels of attainment which are well-below those found nationally. By the time they leave, their attainment, represented by their results at GCSE and in equivalent qualifications, is low, but is much closer to national expectations. This represents good progress. Results in 2010, particularly in mathematics, were lower than in previous years. However, passes already achieved and module results gained by current Year 11 students, as well as the school's own reliable assessment data, indicate that attainment is now rapidly approaching, and in some cases exceeding, national averages. This rapid improvement is also reflected in the performance of other year groups, whose attainment, as indicated by inspectors' judgements in the lessons observed, is broadly average. Year 10 students are making outstanding progress, especially in English and mathematics.

Students show a positive attitude to learning in lessons. They are attentive to their teachers and are prepared to listen to, and learn from, one another. Their good behaviour contributes positively to their learning and progress. They make especially good progress when they are given plenty of opportunities for independent learning. For example, one Year 7 student, when asked why she enjoyed drama, replied, 'Because Miss lets us get on with it!' Students respond well to teachers' close monitoring of their learning and their good use of questioning. Occasionally, they become distracted because they are not given enough chances to work together and to reflect on what they have learned.

Students report that there is little bullying, and that any that does occur is dealt with quickly and effectively. Their safe and sensible behaviour was exemplified by the way they evacuated the building in an extremely orderly fashion, following the temporary malfunction of a newly-installed alarm. Students participate enthusiastically in the good range of physical activities which the school provides, although their choice of food at lunch-time is sometimes less appropriate. They make a good contribution to the school and to the local community, for example as school council members or college representatives, and in providing musical entertainment for elderly people. They also raise

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large sums of money for a variety of charities. Students learn about life elsewhere in the world from, for example, the school's links with a school in Africa. They relate well to one another and are courteous and helpful to visitors. They show a strong understanding of right and wrong, and support the school's systems for rewarding good and discouraging inappropriate behaviour. Students' extensive opportunities for work experience, their well-developed team-working skills, and their extremely good grasp of the use of ICT illustrate their very sound preparation for future learning and for work. ◆◆◆

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Teachers know their subjects well, and the students they teach. They use this knowledge to carefully prepare lessons which, in most cases, include activities which engage and match the abilities of all groups of students. Working well in partnership with teaching assistants and specialist staff, they ensure that visually impaired students participate fully in lessons and make as much progress as their peers. In an outstanding sociology lesson, the teacher used his own and the students' experiences extremely well, which resulted in the students developing an excellent understanding of complex sociological concepts, such as secondary socialisation. Most teachers give students detailed feedback on their work so that they know how well they are doing and what to do to improve. In a small minority of lessons, teachers spent too long on explanations, and did not include enough opportunities for students to work together or to assess their own and others' work.

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The school has developed its curriculum to include distinctive pathways in each key stage. This allows students to learn at an appropriate pace, in a range of subjects matching their interests and attainment levels. The curriculum includes a good variety of academic and vocational courses in Key Stage 4. It also enables students to make productive links between different subject areas, such as English and religious studies. The school's specialism makes a positive impact on the achievement of all groups of students' learning and development. It has helped to raise attainment in mathematics, although to a lesser extent in statistics. The school has successfully adapted programmes to benefit individual students, for example by enabling Year 11 students who have already gained a GCSE pass in English to attend additional mathematics lessons in order to maximise their chances of success. Students' learning and development are enhanced by a good range of well-attended clubs and after-school activities, trips, visits and special events, which give them good opportunities to learn about the world outside the classroom.

Community support officers, as well as teachers and other staff, ensure that students are welcomed when they join the school, and make smooth transitions from primary school, between year groups within the school, and to further education or training. ♦ Potentially vulnerable students, including those at risk of underachieving, are extremely confident in the staff's willingness and ability to support them, and are highly appreciative of the care and support they receive. The school's excellent work with outside agencies means that liaison with families is extremely effective in ensuring, for example, that students attend regularly and are punctual. Its systems for encouraging good behaviour are effective, as evidenced by low and declining exclusion rates. The school can point to many examples of students who have made good or outstanding progress, despite facing considerable barriers.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school has come through a period of major change and has now entered a period of stability and growth. This is because of the strong leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of leaders and managers at all levels, who are strongly focused on raising students' aspirations as well as their attainment. The school has set, and is now meeting or exceeding, challenging targets for students' achievement. Leaders are not at all complacent about this, and know what needs to be done to sustain this improvement. Some middle leaders have played a significant and effective part in rapidly raising attainment by, for example, closely analysing students' performance and rigorously evaluating teaching and assessment in their departments. However, this is not yet

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consistent across the whole school. The governing body includes a good range of experience and relevant expertise, understands the challenges the school faces, and holds leaders accountable for all aspects of its performance.

The school has successfully adopted a wide range of strategies to engage parents, most of whom are pleased with the service it provides. One parent commented, 'We have been well informed on how well our child has advanced, and have had informative and helpful conversations with teachers when need be.' Leaders recognise the need to give parents and carers more opportunities to influence their decision making. During the inspection, the school was able to demonstrate the robustness and efficiency of its systems for safeguarding students, including procedures for vetting staff appointments. The school's good promotion of equality of opportunity is shown by the rarity of racist behaviour, and the good outcomes achieved by students from different traditions and with different abilities. Inspectors found no evidence of any discrimination. The school promotes community cohesion well. The school is a harmonious community, and students gain a thorough understanding of life in other parts of the world. However, their opportunities to learn directly about ways of life elsewhere in the United Kingdom are more limited.

The school, particularly with regard to the building project, has made good use of the resources available to it, and the outcomes achieved by students demonstrate that it provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who completed questionnaires was broadly average. A large majority of the responses were positive. For example, most parents and carers who responded agree that the school keeps their child safe and that their children make enough progress. A few parents and carers do not agree that the school deals effectively



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with poor behaviour. Inspectors found that the school has strong and effective systems for encouraging students to behave well. A few parents and carers expressed concern about specific issues, which inspectors investigated and discussed with school leaders, but found no evidence to support these concerns.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Charles Dickens 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 161 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	28	93	58	17	11	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	50	31	95	59	13	8	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	29	96	60	12	7	5	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	27	94	58	15	9	5	3
The teaching is good at this school	31	19	102	63	8	5	5	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	17	98	61	23	14	5	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	16	94	58	26	16	4	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)	31	19	95	59	13	8	4	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	19	100	62	15	9	6	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	29	83	52	19	12	7	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	18	89	55	19	12	9	6
The school is led and managed effectively	49	30	87	54	14	9	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	39	75	47	10	6	5	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	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



16 May 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Charles Dickens School, Broadstairs CT10 2RL**

I am writing to thank you all for being so welcoming and helpful to the inspectors who recently visited your school. This letter is to tell you about what we found.

Your school provides you with a good standard of education. Your attainment is rising fast and you make good progress from your starting points. Most of you enjoy school life. You say you feel safe and you are not particularly concerned about bullying because it is rare and is dealt with well. We would all like to congratulate you on your safe and sensible behaviour when we all had to leave the building quickly because of the faulty fire alarm. You behave well in lessons, especially when you are given the chance to work in pairs or groups. You can help by always trying your hardest in lessons. You know how well you are doing and what to do to improve your work. You understand the importance of healthy lifestyles, and lots of you enjoy taking part in sport. You contribute well to the school and wider community, especially by raising fantastic sums of money for charity. Well done! You benefit from good courses in the lower part of the school and a good choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11. Staff take extremely good care of you and help you to settle quickly into school life, and to prepare for the future.

The headteacher, staff and governing body are all working hard to make the school even better, so that your results go on improving. To help them to do this, we have asked them to do the following things.

- Make sure all the heads of department check regularly on how well you are learning.
- Make the teaching even better by giving teachers more chances to observe one another.

Yours sincerely

Robin Gaff

Lead inspector

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