

Churchfields School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126453
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	360086
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	947
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Gregory
Headteacher	Steve Flavin
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 47 lessons taught by 45 different teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to planning, monitoring, safeguarding, communications with parents and carers, and questionnaires from 193 parents and carers and 100 students.

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

- The progress made by different groups of students, particularly those who join the school at times other than at the start of Year 7.
- The effectiveness of the school's use of assessment in lessons and beyond to ensure all groups of students progress well.
- Whether the school's self-evaluation is sufficiently critical and what this indicates about the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

The school is of average size. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is higher than the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is also above the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. A high proportion of students enter the school other than at the beginning of Year 7 than is the case nationally. The school has had specialist status in mathematics, computing and science since 2006.

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

All groups of students are making good progress, although trends over three years indicate that attainment is low. Achievement overall is satisfactory. A relentless focus on raising attainment has led to an impressive narrowing of the gap between the school's results and the national average since the last inspection. Where needed, students receive high quality guidance that enables them to attain their challenging targets. The school is assiduous in the arrangements it makes to ensure that it meets the needs of the many students joining the school at times other than the start of Year 7. Outstanding care, guidance and support also contribute to a very positive ethos. Students talk proudly about how they value the presence of students from so many different backgrounds.

The school has sensibly utilised this diversity to promote students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Students develop a clear set of values that include high expectations about behaviour and a commendable willingness to consider the views of others. Students willingly accept responsibility and have many opportunities to do so. However, older students would like more opportunities to influence decision-making in the school. The curriculum provides a flexible range of pathways and promotes workplace skills well. The specialism has resulted in all students developing well the information and communication technology (ICT) skills they will need in the future. At times, opportunities are missed to further promote students' language development in all subjects.

Teachers were observed carefully targeting their thought-provoking questions to maximise learning. The use of targets, reviews of learning at the end of lessons and thorough marking are also areas of growing strength. Students' progress was greatest in the lessons that contained relatively short introductions so students could devote more time to work matched to their targets. The pace of learning was noticeably better when frequent and regular opportunities to review learning were included within lessons. Where these strengths were less apparent, levels of concentration reduced and the pace of learning slowed.

The management of teaching and learning is very effective, largely because the school has an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in this aspect of provision. The governing body is highly influential in the development of the school and provides exactly the right blend of support and challenge. All the subjects associated with the school's specialism are flourishing, with science and ICT having a track record of contributing greatly to the school's improved examination results. Strategically, the priority given to improving attainment is well-established. In the past, improvement has been driven successfully by the senior leadership team, with a more limited contribution from the school's capable middle leaders. The successful implementation of action plans to address

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this aspect is further confirmation of the school's good capacity for sustained 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?

- Improve progress in order to ensure students attain at a higher level by:
 - using more frequent reviews in lessons in order to boost the pace of learning
 - ensuring students consistently have access to work matched to their targets
 - more consistently promoting students' language development
 - increasing the involvement of middle leaders in the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Increasing the opportunities that older students have to influence decision-making.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students start in the school with levels of attainment that are below average, and often well below. Their progress and the quality of learning are good and this is enabling the school to rapidly close the gap in attainment that exists between the school and the national average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has increased from 30% in 2008 to 42% in 2010. Students are on track to attain at higher levels than in 2010.

In science and ICT, well-chosen courses enable students to attain above average outcomes. Following several years in which staffing difficulties impeded improvement, attainment in English and mathematics is rising quickly as a result of more effective teaching and leadership in these areas. In other subjects, a positive improvement picture is also evident. The school ensures that all groups progress well. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive additional, individually planned support and these students make especially strong progress.

Students who speak English as an additional language have particularly positive attitudes to learning but there is some variability amongst other groups. Quite often, students' concentration levels were enhanced by questioning designed to ensure that all students had to think about responses. Where questioning relied on willing volunteers, instances were observed of some students demonstrating lower levels of engagement. Most students' commitment to learning means they are justifiably frustrated on the few occasions when they are distracted by those who undertake some minor off-task behaviour.

Students cooperate well with each other and show they are capable of working independently. Students gain above average insights into the world of work because their involvement in vocational learning is substantial. Above-average attendance and students' willingness to accept responsibility mean that they are prepared well for the next stage in their education. Students have extensive opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. For instance, as part of the school's specialism, students are involved with younger pupils in the school's feeder primary schools. The students' spiritual and

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cultural development is promoted very well because the school plans a range of opportunities for students to reflect on and to develop their understanding of a variety of faiths. The school also plans special 'Wow' days designed to promote awe and wonder. During the inspection, a notable example of this was evident in the look on the faces of younger students as they witnessed a spectacular science experiment.

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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	3
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	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 use of 'three level' lesson plans are effective in providing activities for the different ability groups in lessons, particularly where these are linked directly to students' targets. For instance, in a highly effective mathematics lesson, students were able to challenge themselves by choosing questions at three different levels related to their investigations into the properties of circles. Teachers' questioning is effective because teachers ask follow-up questions to probe learning and increasingly adopt strategies to ensure all students have to think about responses. Effective practice was observed in which students were required to critically comment on the responses made by others in the class. There is some first-rate assessment practice in which students are actively involved in using GCSE criteria to assess their own progress or that of their peers. The very best lesson endings also combine insights into the next steps in learning and opportunities that require students to prove they can apply their learning. In an outstanding history lesson, the

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teacher increased the challenge through the use of effective strategies designed to promote the quality of students' writing.

The more effective teaching also uses a strong visual dimension. For instance, the levels of attention noticeably increased when students could see pictures associated with the French sentences they were translating. Teaching assistants are managed well so that they contribute to the good progress made by the students they support. A few lessons were also observed in which teachers talked for too long and this slowed the progress for some students because concentration levels waned and they were denied access to work that was more appropriate to their abilities.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities, although it is at an early stage of monitoring the participation of students in these to check whether all groups are participating equally. The existence of three pathways ensures that the curriculum effectively meets the needs of the full ability range. Important changes to the curriculum have been made in order to ensure more students study a modern foreign language. The curriculum also allows for flexible examination entry so students are able to increase the range of subjects they study. To raise expectations, quite large numbers of students with no family history of involvement in higher education visit Cambridge University. The school is sensibly developing some options for students from Year 9 upwards through its partnerships with other providers.

The highly effective use of assessment information facilitates timely and very effective interventions. The school can identify many examples of how it works with external agencies to provide effective care for potentially vulnerable students. Above-average attendance, very low exclusions and the good progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are all positive indicators of the effectiveness of this aspect of provision. The management of transition, particularly for the many students who speak English as an additional language who arrive at times other than the start of Year 7, is also a major strength.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have been unrelenting in their quest for higher standards, for instance in overcoming the staffing problems that reduced the progress students made in the two years following the last inspection. The governing body and senior school leaders have established clear lines of accountability supported by the timely availability of important assessment information. Performance management is robust and contributes strongly to school improvement. Middle leaders are highly competent in their roles and the school is

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implementing plans to increase the involvement of these leaders in the monitoring of teaching. Records related to the monitoring of teaching and learning are impressive and show that judgements are accurate. The large majority of staff consider professional development to be effective and this view is further reinforced by the improvements evident in lessons.

The governing body is very ambitious and sets the strategic direction for the school. The governing body has instigated important improvements, for example, in ensuring that teachers concentrate on students' learning. They have insisted that all staff have key data that allow them to better meet the needs of different groups of learners. The school has a record of having taken effective, concerted action to improve the progress made by boys and by students who speak English as an additional language. On a day-to-day basis, finances are managed well.

The school is thorough in its approach to safeguarding so that it meets the government's requirements and has resulted in the very large majority of parents, carers and students indicating that students feel safe. There is an active development of community cohesion in response to its audit. There is now evidence of strengths related to all aspects of this requirement. The headteacher's strong moral purpose is an important feature in this regard. For instance, the school is taking seriously the need to promote community cohesion beyond its own community through its links with schools where the vast majority of students are of White British backgrounds.

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	1
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 the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed with all the statements. A very small minority did not feel that the school helps them support their child's learning or that the school deals effectively with unacceptable

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behavioural issues. Inspectors looked into these concerns carefully. They judged that the school, through the improvements it has made to the use of targets, is now able to provide parents and carers with more information that will enable them to support their child's learning. They also judged that the school is effective in managing behaviour, a fact reflected in the low number of exclusions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Churchfields 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 193 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 947 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	26	123	64	14	7	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	71	37	111	58	10	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	75	39	98	51	17	9	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	28	117	61	19	10	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	56	29	126	65	9	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	22	114	59	26	13	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	16	128	66	24	12	2	1
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)	68	35	109	56	5	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	23	128	66	10	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	25	107	55	22	11	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	18	119	62	18	9	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	59	31	114	59	8	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	36	106	55	14	7	1	1

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).

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.



16 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Churchfields School, Swindon SN3 1HQ

I would like to thank you for making us feel very welcome when we inspected your school recently. Special thanks go to those of you who met with us, for their perceptive comments that helped us in making our judgements.

Our main conclusion was that Churchfields is a satisfactory school. Although achievement is satisfactory, your school is improving attainment rapidly because it is ensuring you make good progress. Your school very sensibly celebrates its diversity. It is a real source of pride that so many of you have connections to so many different parts of the world. The school is to be congratulated on the provision of its care, guidance and support because this is very well targeted to help all of you to achieve your potential. You develop a clear set of values, work very well with each other and develop well the skills you will need in the future. Attendance is above average and behaviour is good. Teaching is good and assessment is used effectively so that you all know what you must do to improve. In the best lessons, teachers' questioning is really effective in ensuring all of you have to think about the key ideas.

To help the school move to 'good' and then 'outstanding', we have asked that your attainment rises to a higher level. We have asked leaders to ensure that more teaching is as good as the very best and that there is more involvement by leaders in checking how well you learn. We have also asked teachers to ensure you have more time in lessons working on activities matched to your targets. Although you receive helpful guidance on how to improve, we think the pace of learning will be enhanced if you receive more regular feedback on your efforts within lessons. We think those students who told us they would like greater opportunity to influence decision-making have a good point, therefore this is also reflected in the report. We think you can help improve your school by sharing the many good ideas you have with your school leaders. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

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