

Chorlton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105569
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	377266
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	John Peckham HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Aneez Esmail
Headteacher	Andy Park
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Teaching and learning were observed in a total of 46 lessons taught by 46 teachers, and inspectors spoke with groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's daily routines including assembly, break and lunch times and changeover between lessons. They looked at school policies including those relating to safeguarding, records of assessment and case studies of support offered to students over the last three years. They also considered the questionnaire responses from 242 parents and carers and those 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.

- The extent to which teaching and learning in the school have improved since the previous inspection.
- The effectiveness of the school's systems to assess the learning and progress of students.
- The quality of students' written work and presentation.
- The quality of leadership and management at all levels in the school.

Information about the school

Chorlton High School is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school. It is a specialist performing arts college and training school with many more boys than girls. The school is situated in a relatively affluent part of Manchester, although students are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds from around the city. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Just over half the students have minority ethnic heritage, a significant proportion of whom speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is slightly above the national average. The number of students who join or leave during the year is slightly below the national average. The school has gained a number of awards including Artsmark Gold and the International Schools Award.

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

1

Main findings

Since the school's previous inspection significant improvements have taken place. Outstanding leadership from the headteacher and the senior team has enabled a transformation in teaching and learning, in curriculum opportunities and in the quality of care, guidance and support available to students. Despite its large size, this is a learning environment where students feel very much a part of the community and often show admirable care and consideration for each other. A relentless drive from the staff to ensure achievement for all provides outstanding equality of opportunity. Relationships between staff and students and across religious and ethnic differences are harmonious and supportive. This is a genuinely cohesive community.

Leaders and managers have ensured that the school's specialisms, as a training school and in the performing arts, have worked together to drive up standards of teaching and learning. The school's work with other organisations to promote the health and well-being of students, to enrich the curriculum and to support the arts is exemplary. A focus on teaching quality has increased the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, although in some lessons students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the independent learning skills that would help them to pursue their studies in greater depth.

The school has developed an innovative and flexible curriculum that enables most students to achieve well. Not all students, however, have the opportunity to obtain a qualification in information and communication technology. There is rigorous monitoring of progress and a rapid response to identify and intervene when students fall behind. This raises aspirations and drives up attainment. Students leaving Year 11 in 2011 gained GCSE results around the national average, despite many of these students starting secondary school with attainment below average. In the words of a Year 8 student when asked about her impressions of the new school year, 'It's challenging, but that's good because it helps you achieve your targets.'

The behaviour of students in lessons is exceptionally good; teachers ensure that students have appropriate activities and that learning proceeds at a good pace. Outside lessons, however, the movement of students around the school and their behaviour at break and lunchtime is less well managed by the school. Students, on the whole, feel safe in school and report very few incidents of bullying or other serious misbehaviour. They are very confident that the school can deal effectively with any concerns or problems they might experience.

The school has a very accurate picture of its own strengths and weaknesses and has some exceptional practice in the evaluation of the impact of its improvement work. As a result of this and the overall improvements, the school demonstrates outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding learning across the school through:
 - continuing the professional development of the teaching staff by sharing the best practice
 - building on the effective strategies for developing independent learning skills evident in Key Stage 3, to ensure they are consistently applied across all subjects and age groups
 - ensuring that learning time is not lost because of late arrival to classes.

- Ensure that the outstanding behaviour evident in most lessons is extended into the corridors and at break and lunchtime through:
 - more systematic reminders about movement rules such as walking on the left
 - better management where large numbers of students are moving in and from restricted areas such as corridors, stairwells, the dining areas or when queuing for food.

- Develop the curriculum so that all students are able to access an appropriate qualification in information and communication technology by the end of Key Stage 4.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment of students joining the school in Year 7 is now similar to most schools in the country, but for those who left in 2011 and previously, it was lower. Attainment on leaving has risen significantly. The proportion of students gaining five GCSE subjects at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, has risen from a third in 2008 to over half in 2011. Students are attaining higher results in all the courses followed, reflecting better teaching and good support. As a result of this improved attainment, progress for all students is now good. In lessons students enjoy their learning and are keen to improve and do well. Good behaviour in lessons supports a positive climate for learning and enables most lessons to progress briskly, with teachers making regular checks to ensure understanding. Most students take care over the presentation of their work and benefit from good, regular advice from teachers' thorough marking.

If an individual or a group of students (such as from a particular ethnic heritage) falter in their progress towards their ambitious targets they are quickly identified by the school's very careful, frequent monitoring. Support is quickly targeted and in most cases improvement is rapid. As a result of this, students with free school meals and boys (who often underperform) make better progress than nationally. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are often fully and skilfully

integrated into normal classes and teaching assistants are guided by the teachers to tailor good support where appropriate. As a result, these students also make good progress and the school takes exceptional care to ensure they make a successful transition to college when they are 16.

Most students make healthy lifestyle choices and many have become involved in helping the school to promote this, for example, by proposing new healthy foods. Many also choose to participate in extra-curricular sport, dance and drama activities or through the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme. The curriculum at Key Stage 4, however, does not provide sufficient time for physical education for those students who have not chosen it as an examination subject. There is good provision of advice and guidance in relation to sexual health and substance misuse.

The extent to which students contribute to the school and wider community is outstanding; students are proud of their school and committed to supporting its role in the wider community. Many actively raise funds for charities and other causes, such as a linked school in Zambia. The performing arts specialism provides many opportunities for involvement and hundreds of students take advantage of these each year. The school monitors the participation of students and actively encourages all to take part. Student comments on the curriculum have also helped to shape the learning in a number of subjects, such as in the choice of topics in the Key Stage 3 science scheme of work.

Good and improving outcomes in English and mathematics, above average attendance and a range of curriculum enrichment activities, supported by effective careers guidance, ensure that students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Punctuality to school and lessons, however, is less good. The school has been able to build upon its cultural and religious diversity to help promote the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of students, for example, through celebrating different religious festivals. There are opportunities, particularly through the excellent drama teaching, for students to explore spiritual, social and moral issues.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2

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

The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

Learning is characterised by positive relationships and a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Most teachers have good subject knowledge which inspires and excites learning in their subjects. Lessons are well planned and highly effective questioning from teachers ensures that students understand. Teachers' good knowledge of the examination requirements in each subject helps them to inspire confidence and success. Students regularly assess their own work and that of their peers. This, coupled with effective marking and assessment, helps them to be clear about how they can improve. Students are set ambitious targets which are frequently reviewed in the light of progress. The promotion of literacy and initiatives, such as 'The twelve steps to success,' helps to create a positive culture where students are proud to do well. At its best, learning takes place where teachers have planned a range of different strategies. In an outstanding Year 7 geography lesson, for example, students were given a story with missing words and used grid references to find them. These built on their literacy skills, gave a purpose to a challenging task and created excitement and enthusiasm as well as very good learning. There still exists some significant variation in the quality of teaching, however, and in some cases students are too dependent upon their teachers. The school's best practice in the development of independent and collaborative learning skills to allow greater depth of study is not used widely enough.

The curriculum is innovative and provides exceptional opportunities for memorable experiences and success. It promotes smooth transition from primary school through the shared project on *Kensuke's Kingdom*, with its themes of journeys and new beginnings. Literacy is well promoted across the curriculum and vocational qualification routes are carefully used to good effect to enrich experience and enable early success. Opportunities beyond the formal curriculum, especially through the performing arts, are exceptional. Participation in events like the Chorlton Arts Festival and contact with world-class performers such as the Hallé Orchestra provide splendid opportunities for many. However, although two thirds of students continue studying subjects with a high content of information and communication technology, there are insufficient opportunities for students to gain a suitable external qualification to evidence their skills in college or at work. In some subjects learning has not been planned sufficiently well to make best use of double-period time allocations, which slows the pace of learning.

The care and guidance of students is characterised by a dogged determination on the part of leaders and managers to ensure that everyone succeeds, regardless of the barriers that may exist to their learning. Students feel well cared for and this shapes the way that they treat each other. In discussion one student said, 'Despite there being so many students in the school, we are quite protective of each other.' Inspectors observed some highly supportive behaviour from students in integrating a student with disabilities into a lesson. The school's partnerships with other agencies and with parents and carers emphasise its comprehensive commitment. The impact is further illustrated in the strong loyalty felt towards the school by students and their parents and carers.

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?

The headteacher's deep commitment to the long-term improvement and success of the school has helped him to draw together a highly effective senior team who have established very clear goals and strategies. Members of staff at all levels in the school have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and a strong commitment to support the achievement of shared goals. The improvement that has taken place since the previous inspection clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the team. Management systems and processes to ensure the quality of the school's work are well established and in some cases highly sophisticated and effective. The use of impact analysis to evaluate intervention strategies, for example, is exemplary. Senior leaders frequently and thoroughly monitor the work of the school and, as a result, there is a high degree of consistency in areas such as lesson planning and marking. The governing body provides a very high level of support and challenge. It is fortunate to have a good range of skilled and committed members. Structures for managing its business, such as the scrutiny committee, enable its functions to be carried out in a highly effective way.

The way in which leaders and managers promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination is evidenced in the tenacity with which the progress of every student and of all identified groups is promoted. The school's leadership has completed a detailed audit of the school and local community. Leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of the school's context and their work within the school and local community makes a very significant contribution to social cohesion. This is complemented by the school's international work. Procedures for the safeguarding of students are in many cases exemplary, particularly those concerned with child protection and the support of students with additional needs or whose circumstances create particular difficulties. There is a need, however, to improve the procedures for the movement of large numbers of students around the building.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The majority of views expressed by parents and carers were supportive of the school and reflected gratitude for the efforts made on behalf of their children. Some parents and carers expressed a range of individual concerns and criticisms. There were some clear themes in these concerns. The most common related to the behaviour of students in the corridors, an issue which has been identified during the inspection and is covered in this report. Other concerns included insufficiently strong enforcement of uniform rules, not enough challenge for able students and insufficient homework. Inspectors did not see evidence during the inspection that would endorse these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chorlton High 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 242 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,480 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	112	46	117	48	11	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	91	38	135	56	8	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	113	47	100	41	9	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	33	112	46	18	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	85	35	134	55	5	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	31	122	50	25	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	23	153	63	21	9	1	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)	90	37	109	45	14	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	85	35	124	51	12	5	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	72	30	125	52	19	8	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	26	122	50	14	6	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	110	45	109	45	5	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	121	50	102	42	10	4	1	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



22 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Chorlton High School, Manchester M21 7SL

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We are particularly grateful to the students who gave up their time to speak to us and to those of you who completed the questionnaire. We found your views especially helpful in getting a full picture of the school. Many improvements have taken place over recent years and we believe that your school now offers good opportunities for your learning and development and has a number of outstanding features. This is particularly true in the performing arts subjects and many of you take full advantage of these opportunities. Most lessons enable you to make good progress, but we believe that many of you could do more on your own or with others.

We were especially impressed with the care that the school shows in trying to make sure everyone succeeds. We were also impressed with your behaviour in lessons and the support that many of you show to each other. Outside lessons, in the corridors, stairways and social areas, however, your behaviour is less good. We have asked leaders and managers to make the following improvements to help make your school outstanding.

- Increase the proportion of outstanding learning.
- Manage the movement of students in the corridors more effectively.
- Create more opportunities for students to gain a qualification in information and communication technology by the end of Year 11.

We believe that the headteacher and other leaders and managers in the school are doing an outstanding job in encouraging you to do as well as possible and in making the school better. You too can help, particularly by cooperating with your teachers as they improve movement in the corridors and around the school.

Congratulations on being part of such a good school. Please accept my best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely
John Peckham
Her Majesty's Inspector

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