

Chew Valley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109306
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	385469
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1201
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Wibberley
Headteacher	Mark Mallett
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
School address	Chew Magna Bristol BS40 8QB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They visited 55 lessons, taught by 55 teachers and held meetings with staff, students, parents and carers and member of the governing body. They observed the school's work, interrogated the school's assessment records and looked at the minutes of the meetings of the governing body, aspects of community work, the minutes of meetings with the School Improvement Partner, faculty evaluations and school action plans and evaluations. They also scrutinised 396 parent and carer questionnaires, 34 staff questionnaires and 79 student questionnaires

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 lessons are well matched to students' abilities and are delivered with pace so that learning is consistently at least good.
- The extent to which staff question students and mark their work to assess their understanding.
- How the school has used its specialist performing arts status to improve the quality of teaching and to raise standards.

Information about the school

This above-average-sized school serves a rural area with a significant number of pupils travelling from neighbouring Bristol. The vast majority of the students are from a White British heritages and the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language is well-below average, as is the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well-below average. The school has been a specialist performing arts college since September 2003. The school has a number of prestigious awards including Healthy School status and 'Artsmark' Gold.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Chew Valley is an outstanding school which provides excellent opportunities for students to thrive and develop as mature and well-rounded young people. They are very well prepared to meet the challenges of the future and they have the skills, aptitudes and ambition to make a very marked contribution to society. The highly effective sixth form prepares students equally well for their next phase of education or for work. Students of all ages are aspirational and many have already decided on where they see themselves in the future and have a clear understanding of how the school will help them meet their ambition.

Attainment is high. Standards in many subjects have been well-above average for a number of years. Achievement, including progress, is outstanding through a combination of excellent teaching, a highly motivating curriculum, which meets students' needs well, and a highly caring and supportive pastoral system. Teaching and assessment are excellent, with many examples of outstanding practice. Teachers use questions very well to assess students during lessons. They then use this information to inform students how to improve often using students' responses as teaching points. During the inspection, inspectors saw students enjoying a wide variety of lessons with many different activities. Their attitudes to learning were excellent, as was behaviour.

Staff know students very well and offer excellent care. The school identifies a variety of groups whose circumstances makes them more vulnerable and ensures they are very well supported, for example those who are young carers. As a result, students enjoy school. Safeguarding procedures in school are of a high standard and consequently all students who answered the questionnaire and those who met with inspectors said they feel very safe. This judgement is also supported by the returns from the parent and carer questionnaires.

The school's specialist area of performing arts ensures the school makes an excellent contribution to the local area. Students have an outstanding understanding of the arts and culture. They also learn about life in different areas of the world, including visits to Zambia, Honduras, India and South Africa. However, while they learn about different religions and social circumstances their understanding of life in a modern multicultural United Kingdom is less well developed. The specialist area has also been instrumental in supporting the school's drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning and hence raise standards.

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The school has worked very successfully to improve many elements of its provision. The teaching and learning group has been influential in improving classroom practice. Lessons regularly are well matched to the variety of needs of the students. They are delivered at a good pace so that now achievement is excellent. The school has an accurate self-evaluation which feeds into a comprehensive improvement plan. Staff share the ambition for continuous improvement and are not complacent, leadership is highly effective and there is an outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend opportunities for students to systematically learn about life in a modern multicultural United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students start at the school with broadly average levels of attainment. Examination results show that students make excellent progress so that levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are consistently well above average. Results show high standards across a variety of GCSE subjects, including English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. In 2010 all students who entered separate sciences gained either an A* or A grade, in 2011 the proportion of students who sat separate sciences was doubled and results were very good. Almost three quarters of the cohort complete a GCSE in a modern foreign language with results in 2011 being back up to the high standards after a slight dip in 2010. Results for the diplomas in media and arts and in construction show how well the school meets the needs of different groups. Despite being few in number, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities within the school are well supported and also make outstanding progress.

During the inspection, inspectors observed students making good, and often outstanding, progress in lessons. Progress was often outstanding when teaching activities helped develop students' understanding as well as focusing on subject knowledge. Learning is also highly effective because staff know their students well so teachers are able to identify individuals who need additional support or extension work.

Students enjoy coming to school and respect each other and their teachers. Relationships are very good. Students have excellent social and interpersonal skills. They enjoy a wide variety of opportunities to take part in sports and they also have a very good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. Students are also aware of the risks of smoking and other activities and are confident they can get support from the school nurse if they need help. A number also commented that they are given advice to reduce their stress levels during examination times.

Students have a highly developed understanding of moral issues and they demonstrate a strong spiritual awareness in their consideration of emotions and

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beliefs, including work within ethics and philosophy. Students make an excellent contribution to the local community and the school. The school council has a number of groups including a 'chicken team' who look after chickens and auction the eggs. Students also enjoy taking part in wide variety of cultural activities. High attendance, along with excellent key skills and work-related skills and attitudes, ensures that they are very well prepared for the future. The proportion of students who are not in education, employment or training after they have left school is extremely low and all individuals have highly ambitions.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have very good subject knowledge, know their students very well and match the work well to each individual's needs. In the best lessons, questioning is used highly effectively to engage students and to assess how well they have learnt. In subjects like mathematics there is a strong emphasis on developing understanding as well as subject knowledge. Because lessons are engaging and relationships are excellent, behaviour is excellent, which means that teachers can teach imaginatively using a wide variety of activities, often including group work or paired work. A real strength is the way lessons ensure students are supported to extend their learning. As one teacher explained: 'Lessons are like an iceberg, I do what is above the water and students are expected to complete what is below for themselves.' Marking is informative and supportive so that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

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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The curriculum meets students’ needs, interests and aspirations very well. There is a strong emphasis on GCSE courses and all students complete at least a half course in religious education. Where appropriate, students follow a suitable vocational course, such as diplomas or BTEC. In Years 10 and 11 a small group follow a very well structured course to support preparation for the world of work. In Year 9 a group of around a dozen students receive additional support for their literacy skills so they are better able to meet the demands of GCSE. There is a very large variety of clubs and activities at lunchtime and after school, and a wide range of visits and trips enlivens the curriculum.

The school takes very good care of all its students and tailors support to their individual needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. This includes well-coordinated support from outside agencies. The school gains very good support from key staff who work closely with parents and carers to improve attendance or to support students when there are problems, along with highly effective contributions from the school nurse. The very strong pastoral systems provide highly effective support for students’ emotional and behavioural needs and help students to become mature and thoughtful young people. Students say that the school informs and supports them well prior to arriving at the school, when they make choices at the end of Year 9 and before leaving or going on to the sixth form.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection the headteacher, very well supported by leaders at all levels, has brought about significant improvements. The drive and ambition of these outstanding leaders is shared by all staff. Targets are challenging and students respond well. Staff are highly motivated and want to give of their best. All staff who answered the staff questionnaire said they were proud to work at the school, that their contribution was valued and they knew what the school was trying to achieve. These responses are testament to how effective leaders have been in motivating and supporting staff. The school works well with local primary schools and external agencies and it has developed some effective links with other secondary schools and local higher education establishments.

The governing body is very supportive of the school and has well-defined and effective committees. Members of the governing body analyse data to challenge the

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school and they have formulated clear criteria by which bursaries are offered to students within the sixth form in an equitable way. The school closely analyses all outcomes to ensure equality of opportunity. It identifies any underachievement of individuals or groups so that action can quickly be implemented and ensure that all achieve very well.

The school gives very good support to the local community and works well with its partners. It has good relationships with its parents and carers although it has identified more could be done to improve communication. Safeguarding is a high priority and the school does all it can to ensure the safety of the students. It has updated its risk assessment procedures so that now there is an overview as well as individual aspects in different subject areas. Community cohesion is good and students have a very good understanding of local and global issues. The school provides outstanding value for money, given the outstanding outcomes its pupils consistently achieve over time.

These are the grades for 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	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	1
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	1

Sixth form

The sixth form has a very purposeful and caring ethos and students thoroughly enjoy their studies, making excellent progress to achieve their potential. Progress measures show the achievement of the vast majority of students who take A-level courses has been significantly above average for the last few years. Attendance is high and relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students develop very good social and learning skills and they are keen to support students in other years.

Students respond very well to some excellent teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and aspirations well. Consequently, learning is very good. Teachers

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expect students to attain highly and they ensure students are challenged to extend work for themselves. This is also very good preparation for the many students who progress to higher education. Students are confident and appreciate the very good help and advice they receive. The strong programme of international visits and excellent access to sporting and other activities enhance the curriculum.

The sixth form is successful in no small part because of the outstanding leadership which ensures that students achieve excellent outcomes. Students are set challenging targets and their progress is systematically monitored to ensure any potential underachievement is quickly rectified.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of responses to questionnaires was very high and showed that the vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with the school. A high proportion agreed that their children enjoy school and that they felt safe, with a very large majority agreeing that they are happy with their children’s experience at school. Less favourable areas included the way in which the school takes note of suggestions and concerns and support for their children’s learning.

A few parents and carers commented upon individual issues. These included opportunities for all to go on school trips, some of the food options available at lunchtime and break, the use of rewards and poor communication between school and parents and carers. All areas of concern were discussed with the school by inspectors and the headteacher will take them into account. The school has already identified ways of improving communication.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chew Valley 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 396 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	182	46	192	48	15	4	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	185	47	203	51	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	117	30	226	57	32	8	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	145	37	214	54	13	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	158	40	221	56	5	1	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	103	26	203	51	57	14	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	101	26	234	59	36	9	4	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)	127	32	215	54	20	5	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	129	33	232	59	14	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	146	37	204	52	22	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	94	24	218	55	27	7	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	163	41	195	49	14	4	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	199	50	180	45	5	1	0	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 are 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.



3 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Chew Valley School, Chew Magna BS40 8QB

When I visited your school recently with my colleagues we met some of you at lunchtime and talked to others during lessons and at break. We were impressed with your excellent behaviour and manners and your very good contribution to the life of the school and the local community. You told us that you really enjoy school and this is one reason why we judge your school to be outstanding.

You make excellent progress both in lessons and over time. Results in your GCSE examinations are consistently high. We saw some very interesting lessons and judged that teaching is outstanding. We were impressed by how many of you knew what you wanted to achieve and your determination to achieve this ambition. You have very good relationships with staff and lessons are challenging. The excellent curriculum enables all of you to achieve well and almost all of you said in the questionnaire that the school prepares you well for the future. When we met you, you said that you could take part in lots of sport and that the school made sure you kept healthy although some of you expressed concern that not all the options in the canteen were as healthy as you would have liked. This was also identified as an issue by some of your parents and carers. You make an excellent contribution to the local area through your very strong cultural awareness in the performing arts. Some of you also enjoy your visits abroad to countries like Honduras and South Africa. However, your understanding of life across modern multicultural United Kingdom is not as well developed and this is an area we have asked the school to improve.

Staff support and care for you very well. They help you to settle at the start of Year 7 and make sure you are able to go forward to the next stage of your education when you leave. You all said you felt safe and you enjoyed the many opportunities the school provides.

Your very effective headteacher, members of the governing body and staff have made a very concerted effort to ensure all of you get the best possible education. We wish you well at this outstanding school of which you are justifiably proud.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

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