

Cheshunt School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117596
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	393474
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	David Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	813
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Morton
Headteacher	Andy Stainton
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2010
School address	College Road Cheshunt Waltham Cross EN8 9LY
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	2–3 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Curd

Additional Inspector

Michael Phipps

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors conducted 42 lesson observations, including joint observations with members of the senior management team. Inspectors were able to see 42 of the 58 teachers on the staff teach; a total of 21 hours was spent directly observing teaching. All staff were offered professional feedback. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, and nominated staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and observed the school's work. The inspection team looked at a range of documents provided by senior managers, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, the minutes of the governing body meetings, the school's most recent self-evaluation, and the headteacher's evaluation of the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average secondary school. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and so is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Academic outcomes meet the government's minimum floor standards for secondary schools. Cheshunt School became subject to special measures in November 2010; HMI visited the school in May and September 2011 and January 2012.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. This is now a satisfactory school that has made considerable progress in the last 12 months. Standards, attendance and behaviour have all improved as a direct result of significant improvements in teaching. In order to become a good school, the remaining variations in teaching and the use of assessment need to be addressed so that all students make good progress. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Attainment by the end of Year 11 is below average, but is rising; in 2011, the proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSE passes was average and the early results of the 2012 entry, confirmed by the examination boards, are more positive than in previous years across all of the subjects within the English Baccalaureate. Overall, students are making satisfactory progress and some students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, are beginning to make good progress.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. It is small, but provision is satisfactory. Attainment at A level is broadly in line with the national average. Sixth-form students are making satisfactory progress overall and some are making better progress than might be expected, given their starting points.
- Teaching is satisfactory and has improved consistently since September 2011. During this inspection, nearly seven out of ten lessons were found to be good or better; the improvements that leaders have secured in teaching are directly related to the improvements in standards and achievement. Some satisfactory teaching remains and a small number of inadequate lessons was observed by inspectors.
- The students' behaviour and safety are satisfactory; the school provides a

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friendly environment. Attendance has risen significantly and is in line with schools nationally. The rate of persistent absence has declined notably and is below the national figure. The students' positive attitudes to learning are clearly evident where teaching is effective.

- Leadership and management are good; the improvements secured in behaviour, attendance, teaching, and student achievement since the last inspection represent a significant achievement in the school's performance. There have been notable improvements to the curriculum, but these have not had time to have full impact across the school. The school's capacity to improve is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and teaching by:
 - involving students in assessment activities derived from the examination boards' requirements
 - securing consistency in the quality of marking, in line with the best practice available in the school
 - ensuring that professional development opportunities and performance management help secure consistently good teaching in all subjects.
- Secure the impact of the positive curriculum changes introduced by:
 - ensuring that staff focus on developing the students' subject-specific literacy and numeracy skills,
 - building independent learning and developing the students' self- and peer-assessment skills in line with the best practice in the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory and an increasing proportion of students is making good progress often from low starting points. The proportion of students securing five higher-grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, has risen for the last three years, although the 2011 results remained well below average. Early examination results for 2012 are notably better than those of previous years; for example, the percentage of those securing a higher-grade pass in mathematics has already exceeded the 2011 outcomes. The numbers of students entered for all of the English Baccalaureate subjects remains below average. Literacy and numeracy skills are improving, with significant numbers of students in Years 9 to 11 securing level 1 and level 2 vocational qualifications before they take their GCSE examinations.

Variations between the performance of girls and boys are being eliminated by improved tracking and academic mentoring. The results secured by students known to be eligible for free school meals remain close to school average. Students with

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disabilities and special educational needs often make above average progress because of the small group tuition provided, their increased rate of attendance and the impact of the improvement in teaching. In the classroom, the improvement in students' progress since January 2012 mirrors the quality of teaching seen on this inspection and noted by the headteacher in his most recent review of provision.

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average. Students make satisfactory progress overall, but some make good or outstanding progress. Year 13 outcomes at A level are broadly average, although results in Year 12 are more mixed. Students made good or outstanding progress in all sixth-form lessons seen during the inspection.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory, with a notable trend of improvement since September 2011. In the best lessons, tasks are well planned, questioning is skilful, and learning is driven forward at a brisk pace by precise instruction. In an excellent A level art lesson, the teacher's very clear use of examination board criteria, precise questioning and direction, allowed the students to show their command of the subject language and their artistic skills to demonstrate outstanding progress; the spiritual and cultural dimension in this lesson was excellent. During previous monitoring visits, HMI noted examples of outstanding teaching in physical education, modern foreign languages, geography, and chemistry.

The use of lesson progress criteria has provided a standard approach to raising expectations. However, this is most effective when related clearly to examination board grade criteria. The new marking policy has begun to address the variations in practice found between subjects. Where teaching was good, staff used examination grade criteria with precision to ensure students understood what was expected. In those lessons, teaching, consistently, exhibited strong subject knowledge, imaginative use of resources and information and communication technology, with a strong focus on independent learning. Those lessons had a strong moral, social, or cultural dimension that engaged the students. The improvements secured in teaching disabled students and those with special educational needs have been the key to improved attendance, behaviour and student progress.

Where learning is less successful, tasks provide only limited challenge, often presented to all students across a range of abilities. In the weaker lessons, tasks were not always linked sufficiently well to prior learning; marking was inconsistent in its guidance and impact, and completed work was too variable in its quality and presentation. Where teaching was found to be inadequate, students made little progress because staff talked too much and students were not provided with activities which engaged their attention.

Notable changes have been made to the curriculum across the school. The range of courses now meets the students' learning needs and, as a result, standards are rising. Where staff focus on subject-specific literacy and numeracy skills and on

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building independent learning teaching is consistently successful.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is satisfactory and has improved significantly since September 2011. Exclusions are below the national average, persistent absence has fallen dramatically to a point below the national figure, and attendance is average, having risen sharply during this academic year. The students' attitudes to learning reflect the increased proportion of effective lessons; students respond well to challenging tasks and effective questioning. Instances of bullying are increasingly rare and students note the school is effective when identifying and tackling bullying of any sort, including cyber-bullying, about which they are knowledgeable and positive. In a recently completed parental survey conducted by the school, all groups of students and their parents and carers noted that they feel safe at school at all times and clearly understand what constitutes unsafe situations. Inspectors spoke to groups of students in formal meetings and in a variety of informal settings regarding behaviour and bullying. All were keen to comment on the improvement in behaviour and the school's consistent approach to behaviour management and attendance.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders and the governing body have high expectations and ambition. They have worked effectively to monitor, improve and support teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm of staff and channelling their efforts and skills to good effect. During recent monitoring inspections, a wide range of senior and middle managers have worked alongside inspectors in the joint evaluation of teaching and the views they expressed consistently matched the judgements given by HMI. The school's performance management is robust and the professional development, coordinated well by the lead practitioner and the headteacher, has proved successful. As a result, teaching has improved, with a notable proportion that is good. Consequently, achievement and standards have improved. The consistency of approach to behaviour management has been received well by students and has resulted in rising attendance and falling rates of exclusion. Where teaching is strongest and the use of assessment and marking most effective, leaders and managers have changed practice from focussing on learning objectives to the use of examination board criteria. Teaching promotes positive behaviour and offers an increasingly strong range of spiritual, moral, social, and cultural experiences.

Equality of opportunity has improved significantly and all students now make at least satisfactory progress, with some already making good progress as a result of the improvements secured. Safeguarding meets government requirements.

Changes to the leadership of post-16 provision and to the partnership arrangements developed with other local schools and colleges have brought a stronger match of courses to students' needs. The curriculum is good and provides positive, memorable experiences, both in the classroom, in sport and within a programme of extra-

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curricular opportunities. Curriculum changes have helped to raise attainment. Self-evaluation is accurate and the focus on improving teaching has been a key element in overcoming weaknesses. This shows the school's good capacity to improve.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



4 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Cheshunt School, Waltham Cross, EN8 9LY

As some of you will remember, inspectors have been visiting the school for the last year. Thank you for the courtesy you have extended to my inspectors during these visits. During that time, my colleagues and I have had the privilege to see the progress you make and the standard of your work improve. Well done!

Attendance has improved and is in line with schools nationally and exclusions have fallen significantly as behaviour has improved. This is a direct result of the increasing proportion of good teaching and the consistent way the school now deals with day-to-day problems. You can help maintain this improvement by coming to school as often as you can. It is very pleasing to see how well you have responded in lessons when you are presented with challenging work and the opportunity to show what you can do. I have asked the headteacher and governing body to focus on improving achievement and teaching further by building your subject-specific literacy and numeracy skills through independent learning.

Staff have worked hard to improve the school and, as a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. This is now a satisfactory school, a rising proportion of effective teaching has helped secure satisfactory and increasingly good progress, driven forward by good leadership and management. I shall miss my visits to Cheshunt, you have always made me welcome and I look forward to hearing of your future successes.

Yours sincerely

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

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