

The Crypt School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136578
Local authority	Gloucester
Inspection number	382229
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	798
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard James
Headteacher	Jonathan Standen
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 February 2008
School address	Podsmead Gloucester GL2 5AE
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	16–17 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jonathan Palk

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Greenway

Additional inspector

Paul Williams

Additional inspector

Richard Kearsey

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors carried out observations of 38 part lessons taught by 38 teachers. Seven of the lessons were jointly observed with members of the school's leadership team. One inspector undertook a learning walk which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at provision in the sixth form. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, three members of the governing body and different groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and students' work. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection and analysed 161 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers as well as questionnaires completed by a sample of students from each year group and 48 completed by staff.

Information about the school

The Crypt School is a selective boys' grammar school with a specialist status in science and languages. This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The sixth form admits girls and students from two local grammar schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average, as is the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs or who have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, is similar to that in most schools. The school has met and exceeded government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school converted to an academy on 1 April 2011.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school and one that has improved rapidly. Success is underpinned by a strong culture of learning and an ethos of high aspiration and equality of opportunity. The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The following comment illustrates the high esteem in which the school is held by parents and carers, staff and students alike: 'The school inspires and motivates everyone.'
- Students' achievement is outstanding. This includes disabled students and those who have special educational needs and also those who speak English as an additional language. Students leave at the end of Year 11 with attainment that is well above average. Most sixth formers advance into higher education.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are passionate about their teaching and use skilful questioning to challenge students and make them think. Occasionally teaching in some subjects is not as strong because the pace of learning slows or students' writing targets are not addressed.
- Students' behaviour and commitment to learning in all lessons are exceptional and this has a highly positive effect on their learning. They feel very safe in school. The students rate behaviour highly. They look after each other well and ensure everyone is included.
- The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are highly successful. The school knows itself well. The governing body bring an excellent oversight to bear on school improvement. Monitoring and evaluation of students' progress are carried out very rigorously and, along with the outstanding curriculum, ensure that over time the needs and interests of all students are met very effectively. The school provides many memorable experiences for its students including charitable fund raising, sport, music, art and drama which successfully promote their mature appreciation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maximise learning and progress in all lessons by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are structured to proceed at the pace of the very best
 - maximising opportunities to further advance students' writing skills.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students start in Year 7 with attainment that is above average. Students are keen and exceptionally well motivated. Students are very respectful of each other and collaborate willingly during lessons, taking on roles within teams and supporting each other's learning through sensitive feedback. This was exemplified well in a Year 13 English lesson on the gothic genre, when lead learners wove quotations into their responses by which they subtly invited others to join in a consideration of the theme 'male dominance'. Students demonstrate significant strengths in oral skills that make a powerful contribution to learning in lessons, as in a Year 10 geography lesson, where they made outstanding progress, maturely discussing and comparing the topographical features of Bangladesh and Gloucestershire that are likely causes of flooding. The information exchange, expertly tutored by the teacher, made full reference to the technical vocabulary required to secure the higher level and the students' questions of each other perfectly demonstrated their enthusiasm to push their learning forwards.

Progress throughout the school is outstanding. By the time the students leave at the end of Year 11 their attainment is exceptionally high, especially so in mathematics. The school consistently adds significant value to the performance of all groups of students across the range of subjects. Since the last inspection there has been rapid improvement in the attainment of the most able students, exceeding the demanding targets set for five GCSEs at A to A* grades including English and mathematics. All achieve a minimum of five A* to C grades including English and mathematics. Challenging targets for eight GCSEs at A to A* grades are set and being met. Where subjects have not delivered consistently high performance action has been swift and successful. Those students entering with average attainment exceed national expectations for this group. This is helped greatly by the school's rigorous monitoring of progress, timely interventions and extensive preparation for examinations.

Parents and carers strongly agree in the questionnaires that their children are achieving very well. Teaching higher-level thinking skills in English and mathematics has impacted well on their exceptional performance. The performance of a few students with special educational needs is no less impressive. There are a few students in the sixth form whose value added in some subjects is not as high as the

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expectations set by the school. The reasons are well understood and effective action is being taken. The school's data of current progress and inspection evidence confirm this.

Quality of teaching

Students and their parents and carers rightly express great confidence in the quality of teaching. High aspirations are evident right from the start of lessons with staff setting exactly the right level of expectations for all students including disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Lessons are relevant and enjoyable, providing many opportunities for achievements to be shared, celebrated and built upon. In a Year 9 English lesson, middle ability students were expertly supported by the teacher so that all students were able to fully explore the interplay of theme and character. The combination of task and topic was brought alive by deft and skilful questioning throughout. Consequently, the quality of responses and thought behind students' reflections upon stereotype and hubris was superb and reflected fully the outstanding progress that all had made in the use of poetic imagery. A Year 8 information and communication technology lesson made use of a range of assessment activities and high quality tasks that constantly related the topic material to current practice in conveying information. As a result, the teacher was able to empower students to articulate and then apply the key features required to analyse, improve and secure their knowledge and understanding.

The qualities of the consistently good and often outstanding teaching include high expectations, not just in terms of achievement, but in the amount, complexity and challenge of learning activities covered in lessons. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and understand how to pace learning so that time for imaginative and engaging activities is used flexibly, and students are able to generate exciting questions of their own and develop new lines of enquiry. High quality questioning and supplementary responses that secure understanding and deepen thinking ensure that all students are able to justify, extend and qualify their answers. Exemplary use is made of success criteria and academic guidance to identify next steps on what and how to improve further. There are a few lessons where the pace is slower and the teacher's strategies are not so well matched to the students' needs. In those lessons, progress is not as good as it could be.

There is some excellent integration of communication skills across the curriculum through the development of oracy, and great care is taken to introduce subject-specific vocabulary into all lessons ensuring that higher levels can be accessed by students. There is however some inconsistency in the approaches to securing high quality extended writing, and not all teachers demonstrate how students can improve on their writing skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is outstanding. Students place a high importance on their own learning

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and show this, for example, by their commitment to group work in lessons and preparing for examinations. Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare and any that occur are dealt with very well. Staff, students, parents and carers report that behaviour is good in lessons and there is virtually no bullying of any type, including name-calling or homophobic comments, within the school. Students agreed that they feel safe in school all or most of the time. This is reflected in a student's comment: 'Teachers are always here for you.' They have an extremely good understanding of how to take care of themselves and one another. Students take their roles very seriously, saying these give them enormous pride, particularly their involvement in the sustainable school building projects and restructuring of the inter-house competition to ensure all are included. The use of exclusions both internally and for fixed periods has fallen dramatically. Attendance has improved year on year, is well above average and students are punctual despite the distance that some travel.

Leadership and management

All in school share the ambition to excel in all they do for the benefit of the students and work unstintingly to ensure that this is achieved. The headteacher, ably assisted by the senior leadership team, delegates well and middle leaders play a vital role in monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching in their areas. The school monitors and evaluates the progress of the pupils rigorously and any potential gaps in students' progress are swiftly dealt with so that for all students it is rapid and sustained. Consequently, attainment and progress have improved strongly. Senior leaders are highly successful in improving the quality of teaching and in enhancing students' attainment so that these are now outstanding. The learning team, led by a lead practitioner, identifies accurately and showcases the skills of the most successful teachers across subjects. In this climate of professionalism all teachers are eager to emulate the skills of the very best in their pursuit of excellent teaching. As one member of staff commented, 'Our doors are now open to each other.' Lesson observations and students' progress information form the basis for staff's continuing professional development as well as managing their performance. The professional and personal skills of the governing body are deployed effectively and they are adept in handling information on students' progress and departmental performance, enabling them to give an excellent level of challenge and support to senior leaders.

The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are highly effective in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. There is zero tolerance of any form of discrimination. Communication with parents and carers is highly effective. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust and senior leaders set the safety of students as a key priority. Robust and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses ensures that action planning is sharply focused on improving the academic and personal outcomes of all the students. This, together with the outstanding overall effectiveness of the school, gives an excellent capacity to improve further.

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. It manifests itself in outstanding achievement as well as the ability of the school to engage with each

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individual within an excellent curriculum which deepens and broadens their experience and makes a strong contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The students appreciate the quiet private place the school gives them for daily prayer at lunchtimes. All are given opportunities to shine through a rich mix of sport, creativity and music regardless of their ability. The students develop a respect for each other's talents and abilities and this is promoted well through events, for example the Crypt enrichment challenge and school theatrical and musical productions.

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.



18 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Crypt School, Gloucester GL2 5AE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks to those of you who gave up your time to speak with us and those of you who completed the questionnaire. I am delighted to inform you that we judged your school to be outstanding. We were hugely impressed by your behaviour and your mature attitude to learning. Your teachers really encourage you to do well and we can see that, in turn, you thoroughly enjoy learning and play a major part in achieving as well as you do. Those of you in the sixth form told us that you enjoy being there hugely and are making good progress. We agree that the effectiveness of your sixth form is good.

We have picked out a few of the outstanding features.

- The inclusive ethos of high aspirations and success for all provides you with a great platform for learning.
- Your lessons are interesting, well paced, provide opportunities for high quality discussion and a time for you to reflect on and advance your learning.
- Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through the curriculum and underpins your outstanding academic and personal development. Consequently, you are extremely well prepared for life beyond school.
- Your school is particularly well led and managed. It is not complacent. Your headmaster says that this inspection does not end the journey of improvement, but provides impetus for further development.

We have asked the school to share the very best teaching practice that exists more widely across all subjects and to ensure that when writing is expected of you that you are reminded of what you need to do make this even better. We know that you will rise to this challenge.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely
Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector

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