

Chesterfield High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137514
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	395604
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	David Selby

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	1,299
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom Battersby
Headteacher	Simon Penney
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Additional Inspector
Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 47 lessons taught by 47 teachers and visited a number of other lessons to observe students' behaviour. They also visited an assembly. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and groups of students. Inspectors examined a range of documents, including the academy's self-evaluation and development plans, minutes of governing body meetings, records of attendance and behaviour, bullying and racial incidents logs and the single central record of safeguarding checks. They scrutinised a broad range of students' work through sampling their books and files, also in lessons. Inspectors considered the completed questionnaires from 221 students, 50 members of staff and 106 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Chesterfield High School is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form, which is relatively small compared to the size of the school. Almost all students are of White British heritage with very few speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average and increasing. Overall, there are a higher proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs than is found nationally. The school converted to academy status in October 2011. A small number of students attend alternative provision for parts of the week through the academy's joint working with other schools in the local 'Impact' programme. The academy is a Sports Leaders UK Leadership Academy and holds the Healthy School Enhanced status. The academy meets the current floor standards which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because the achievement of students has been limited by the progress they make in a number of subjects, including, most significantly, mathematics. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Overall achievement is satisfactory because attainment is well above average when all qualifications are included and current information on students' progress, including lesson observations, indicate that previous under-achievement has been improved and is now at least satisfactory for all groups of students.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. There are examples of good and better practice. Strong leadership has led to improvement in teaching over the last year. Teachers do not always provide activities and experiences which are well matched to individual students. Marking is of inconsistent quality and variable effectiveness.
- Behaviour is good and is built on good relationships within the academy community. Students approach their learning well. Incidents of bullying are rare and any are dealt with swiftly and successfully. Attendance is above average. This is an improvement and reflects good management arrangements and support for students.
- Leaders have a clear vision for improvement in the academy and this is widely shared by staff and the governing body. The disappointing results in 2011 led to a range of improvement initiatives. The systems for driving these forward and then monitoring and evaluating their impact sometimes lack detail. The performance management of staff links to the academy's improvement aims.

The curriculum provides opportunities for students to consider wider moral issues and develop their cultural awareness.

- The sixth form is satisfactory, reflecting satisfactory achievement overall. Recent improvement has continued during the temporary leadership arrangements this year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the planned actions to raise students' achievement lead to consistently high performance in mathematics and in all other subjects.
- Ensure that all teaching is at least good and more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan and deliver lessons which meet the needs of different groups of students, and include tasks and activities that build on previous learning and match each student's learning needs
 - improving the frequency and quality of marking so that it gives students helpful information on how they can improve their work
 - developing and implementing whole-school approaches to supporting students' wider skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Ensure that the impact of the range of improvement initiatives across the academy leads to consistent and rapid development by:
 - using more detailed and sharper evaluation criteria in development planning
 - ensuring that quality assurance systems are refined and applied consistently by leaders at all levels.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most students enter the academy with attainment which is above average and go on to gain results at GCSE and in other qualifications which are above average overall. Attainment in mathematics and, to a lesser extent English, however, has not kept up with the national trend of improvement over the last three years. The academy's data, including confirmed results from examinations already taken, suggest that attainment in all areas will at least reach national averages this year and is on a trend of improvement. The academy undertook a detailed analysis of the outcomes from 2011 and this has led to improvement in the systems for monitoring students' performance with identified interventions to support any students who may be falling behind.

Due to previous underachievement, students leaving the school at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2011 did not make the expected progress across a range of academic subjects including English, mathematics, the humanities, modern foreign languages and science. Inspection evidence indicates that current students' progress is

accelerating, with rapid progress, particularly in some mathematics lessons, and is now satisfactory overall.

The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good and is complemented by a determination to place students on courses which match their needs. As with all students, progress in English and mathematics has been less strong. The academy has plans for developing literacy and numeracy across the school but these are in the very early stages of implementation.

Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory with attainment which is above average for vocational courses and average but increasing for AS and A level. While there is a smaller proportion than usually found of most-able students in the sixth form, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades at A level is lower than could be expected. There are improved systems for monitoring the work of sixth form students and these have led to increased progress recently.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory overall. While inspectors observed a wide range of teaching quality, including a relatively high proportion of good teaching, there is inconsistency with too much satisfactory teaching and few examples of outstanding practice, leading to satisfactory achievement. Stronger teaching was seen in the classes of older students. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and provide a structure which ensures students are challenged yet also trusted to work independently. This was seen in sixth form lessons in French and information and communication technology where students were fully engaged and made rapid progress. A Year 8 mathematics lesson had similar levels of students' involvement and enthusiasm which led to learning at a rapid pace. In weaker lessons, teachers have lower expectations and too often provide work which is only suitable for one group of students within the class. This often does not provide sufficient challenge but on occasions the work can be too demanding for all students. Teaching which is well matched to individual learning needs contributes to the good progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs.

Assessment practice has been identified as a priority in the academy's development plan. Marking is sometimes superficial and does not always provide sufficient guidance on how students can improve their work. There is, however, some good practice where response and improvement are demanded from students but this practice is not widespread.

Opportunities for wider learning and skills development in lessons are not always used to the full. There is some strong practice in developing awareness of challenging issues as was seen in sensitive discussions in history and religious education. Common approaches to the teaching and enhancement of students' literacy and numeracy skills are not in place although the academy has started to develop in these areas.

While a low proportion of the parents and carers completed the Ofsted questionnaires, most feel that teaching is effective although a few indicate that they have concerns over its inconsistent quality. These views correspond to those of

students. Inspectors found that the academy uses appropriate support, training and challenge to ensure that the high standards in its expectations of teachers are met increasingly.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The quality of the relationships between students and staff is a strength of the academy. Students are typically courteous and polite and are willing to talk maturely about their views. They show good respect for adults, each other and their environment. One example of this, which characterises the academy's ethos, is the way students need no prompting to follow guidance and allow a family of wild ducks to live peacefully in the academy's busy main quadrangle. The academy is calm and harmonious. Behaviour in lessons is good and instances of disruptive behaviour are infrequent. However, some students become passive in lessons where they are not challenged to learn quickly. Rates of exclusion from the academy are very low.

Attendance has improved and is above the national average. This reflects the academy's effective systems and increased challenge and support from staff. Punctuality to lessons is good and the 'no bells' system does not slow down learning at the start of lessons. The punctuality to school of a few students is less consistent. Any incidents of bullying are rare and if they occur are dealt with quickly and thoroughly. Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying and sixth form students were able to explain clearly the academy's effective approach towards homophobic bullying. The good arrangements for providing mentoring support help students to feel safe in the academy.

Most of the questionnaire responses from parents and carers indicated that they feel behaviour is good and their children feel safe. This is in line with staff views. Students were slightly less positive about behaviour in their questionnaires although this was not the case in their conversations and discussions with inspectors. The inspectors found that behaviour in the academy is good.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for improvement which was given focus and urgency when the achievement of students in 2011 was confirmed. This vision is shared and understood by staff more widely and has given direction to a number of developments and initiatives aimed at increasing students' achievement. These have secured improvement although planning and monitoring systems do not link to challenging evaluation criteria well enough to ensure that leaders at all levels know that the rate of progress is sufficient. The governing body brings a wide range of skills and experience to support the strategic and day-to-day work of the academy. It provides clear and thoughtful challenge.

The leadership of teaching is effective. It is based on a clear awareness of what needs to be done to bring about improvement and has led to increases in the quality of teaching. The performance management of teachers is linked to the academy's priorities and shapes the professional development opportunities offered in the school. These meet the needs of the vast majority of school staff and are exemplified

by strong induction support for newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the academy.

The improvement in the academy's performance, including students' better attendance and in the quality of teaching and, recently, in students' achievement, indicate that it has a secure capacity needed to improve further.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is matched to students' needs although it does not allow access for all students to all subjects. There are many opportunities for the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding in lessons. These are added to by the wide range of after-school and other extra-curricular activities. They range from visiting speakers discussing their religious beliefs with sixth form students, through leadership volunteering and other challenges linked to sports, to a well-established programme of international visits.

The academy's commitment to equality of opportunity is seen in its approach to tackling discrimination and to avoiding stereotyping, for example, in its encouragement of girls' football. While the achievement of different groups of students has shown variation in the past this is now less evident. Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well and the most-able students make rapid progress in mathematics. The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students are systematic and meet requirements.

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.



22 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Chesterfield High School, Crosby, L23 9YB

Thank for the help you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Our particular thanks go to those of you who gave up their time to speak to inspectors and to those of you who completed the questionnaires. Your views helped us build our picture of your school.

The inspectors judge Chesterfield High School to be providing you with a satisfactory education. We were pleased to see the positive relationships you have with each other, your teachers and visitors and the way you approach your learning. Attainment in the school is high in a number of subjects, but the school's results showed that many of you did not reach your potential in 2011. Your progress is now stronger.

The headteacher, members of the governing body, senior leaders and other teachers are determined to improve the academy and have plans to help them achieve this. We have asked them to make sure their checks on how well this is happening lead to rapid progress and, in particular that your achievement increases. You told us that teaching includes some exciting and interesting lessons but it also varies in quality; we saw this during the inspection. We have asked your teachers to plan lessons which will challenge each of you and support this by marking your work more consistently and with information on how you can improve. We have suggested the school should look at how to help you improve your literacy and numeracy skills in all your lessons. This will help you do even better now and in the future.

You have an important part to play by continuing to do your best and working together as well as we saw during the inspection. We are sure that you will aim to do these.

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Lead Inspector

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