



Chesham High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110504
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278446
Inspection dates 14 December 2005 to 15 December 2005
Reporting inspector Daniel Brian Evans AI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Whitehill
School category	Community		Chesham
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		HP5 1BA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01494 782854
Number on roll	1231	Fax number	01494 775414
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Kris Wilson
Date of previous inspection	20 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr Tim Andrew

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 19	14 December 2005 - 15 December 2005	278446

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chesham High School is a larger than average 11-19 grammar (selective) school with a large sixth form. Students come from a wide catchment area and are mainly of white British backgrounds. A few students speak English as an additional language but none are at an early stage of learning English. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspection team and the school agree that Chesham High school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students in Years 7 to 11 and that provision for sixth form students is good. Provision for the personal development and well-being of students is good throughout the school. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there are variations across the school with some teaching that is good or outstanding. Students of all ages, ethnic group and gender feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Students enter school with well above average attainment and, by the time they leave, achieve high standards. All groups of students make better progress in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form than in Years 10 and 11. The teaching and monitoring of students' progress is more effective in the lower school and in the sixth form. The gap in attainment between boys and girls is narrower than that nationally. However, the proportion of students achieving the highest A* GCSE grade is not as high as it should be. Students are eager learners and the level of care and support shown to them is good. The school has very good extra curricular provision and ensures a safe environment in which to work. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory with many good aspects. Priorities identified by the school include greater challenge for more able students, improved assessment procedures and the application of students' information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Management systems for measuring the impact of these priorities and their implementation across all subjects are not yet fully effective. Governors support the school well. The school's finances are well managed and have enabled the school to recover from a large deficit account a few years ago. The school provides satisfactory value for money. It is held in high regard by parents and the local community although a minority would like to be better informed and to participate more in decision-making. Issues identified in the last inspection report have been dealt with well. The strategies the school has in place show that it has the capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provision is good. It serves the students well and gives good value for money. The school self-evaluation identifies this as a strong feature of its overall provision and the inspection team agrees with this judgement. The students are highly motivated, mature and very appreciative of the efforts made by teachers on their behalf. They enjoy an environment conducive to learning despite the limitations in accommodation, for example, the lack of private study facilities. Students achieve well because teaching is good. Teachers have considerable expertise and knowledge that is used to extend students' understanding. Assessment is used well to track progress and discuss with students their target and predicted grades. The curriculum is good. Courses are designed to meet academic aspiration at A/AS level and on to university entrance. However, there are no vocational courses even in popular subjects such as ICT. Students receive very good support and guidance through a well structured and

led pastoral support team. Excellent opportunities are given for enrichment and in particular for students to take responsibility for example working in the community and as prefects. Personal, social and health education continues to be timetabled in the sixth form and includes opportunities to receive for example regular personal guidance from tutors and help with university and college applications. The sixth form is well led. The head of the sixth form, ably supported by two assistants and eighteen tutors, makes every effort to ensure the availability of opportunity, support and well being for all students.

What the school should do to improve further

* Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the highest attaining students.* Make teaching consistently good across the school, especially in Years 10 and 11, by extending the use of 'assessment for learning' to support all students.* Implement a whole school policy for the use of information and communication technology skills across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Attainment on entry to the school is well above average. Standards in national tests at 14 years of age and in GCSE are well above the national average. The overall trend in standards has risen in line with that nationally; GCSE results have consistently been well above average. The school has broadly met its national test and GCSE targets. The school is aware that results in some subjects including those for more able students are not as high as they should be and has introduced strategies to support students' learning. Students have good ICT skills but they have limited opportunities to apply these skills in a number of subjects. Students make satisfactory progress from Year 7 to Year 11 because, overall, teaching is satisfactory and students are eager learners. However, the work set for more able students is pitched at too low a level. There is little difference between the standards and achievement of minority ethnic groups in the school. Girls make better progress than boys but the gap is less than that nationally; overall the gap has been closing. For example, girls achieved as well as boys in GCSE physics. Achievement in the sixth form is good and pass rates have improved significantly over the past few years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' attitudes to school and learning are good. They are enthusiastic learners and have good relationships with their teachers and fellow students. They behave well. They enjoy learning and in the lessons observed they worked hard and made positive contributions to classroom activities. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students have good awareness of safe practices and healthy lifestyles. Physical education and science make a very strong contribution to

promoting healthy and safe lifestyles. There are very good opportunities for sport. Students are developing positive attitudes towards healthy foods. Students make a very good contribution to the school and the community outside the school. They participate in work experience in Year 11 and a range of community activities including staffing the Christmas meal for a local old age pensioners group. They play a strong role in charity events and raise significant amounts for a wider range of charities. The school council provides an effective forum for students to raise issues, for example, on improvements to the dining room which the school has responded to well. Students have very good opportunities to play an active role in contributing to global communities, for example, in helping an orphanage in Cambodia as part of the World Challenge. Students' views are regularly sought on specific aspects of provision, for example, on bullying and discipline policies. Students make good progress through their school careers in developing skills which prepare them for working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The inspection confirms the school's judgement that there is evidence of outstanding and good teaching but that overall teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and consistently good in the sixth form. In the effective lessons observed teachers routinely set a good pace and employed a range of teaching activities including peer group work; their lessons were designed to meet the needs of the full range of students. They showed very good subject knowledge which was used effectively for developing students' thinking skills. In these lessons students remained focused and engaged. In an outstanding Year 12 Theatre Studies lesson on Midsummer Night's Dream the teacher promoted learning through enjoyment and their active participation in the lesson. The school is aware of variations in the quality of teaching both between subjects and between teachers and correctly identifies this as an area for development. Assessment, whilst satisfactory, is a focus for improvement, especially in Years 10 and 11. Data giving attainment on entry and at the end of key stages is readily available but insufficient use is made of national comparisons. Peer assessment is being developed well in some subjects such as physical education. However, assessment is inconsistently implemented between subjects to support learning, identify underachievement or to inform students what they must do to improve. The marking of students' work is not always consistent in giving helpful feedback to students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school evaluates its curriculum as good. Inspectors judge the quality of the curriculum to be satisfactory with good features. Students have access to an appropriate

amount of time in all the subjects of the curriculum. The school responds to students' interests and needs and, for instance, extra drama and music groups have been provided in Years 10 and 11 to meet increased demand. In the sixth form, 28 subjects are offered which give students a considerable choice and flexibility. A further strength is the good range of extra-curricular activities which are valued by students as shown by the high take up for them. There is good provision within the curriculum to encourage students to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. The school does not offer vocational subjects but there is a strong work-related programme. The school is less successful in coordinating the use of ICT and opportunities are missed to develop students' skills and understanding through different subjects. The curriculum does not fully meet the needs of the highest attaining students and the school are currently devising strategies to provide more challenging work for them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of the care, guidance and support the school provides is good. Whilst the numbers of vulnerable students are low their specific needs are well monitored and addressed. Child protection procedures are fully in place. Students themselves speak very highly about the friendly staff who provide a good level of support and show a genuine interest in them. The school's approach to health and safety is good with risk assessments in place. Arrangements for safeguarding students are secure. Medical provision is outstanding with a full time matron employed in the school to provide care and give knowledgeable advice. All staff are trained in basic first aid and good use is made of external agencies. The pastoral system is well established with the form tutors and head of year providing good well informed guidance. Students are set targets satisfactorily and involved in reviews but some IT equipment is in need of upgrading to support strategies to improve the monitoring of students' progress. In the sixth form guidance and support is very good. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support appropriate to their needs. The facilities for students with physical difficulties are very good with students benefiting from a physiotherapy room and good support from external agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good aspects. In particular, a strong pastoral system results in students' good personal development and contributes to the good quality of care. There is a clear focus on attaining high standards but related initiatives are more effective in the sixth form than in the main school. For example, the monitoring of student's progress in Years 12 and 13 is very good and means that underachievement is identified at an early stage and appropriate actions taken. The school has satisfactorily identified priorities for development and has a good capacity to improve. Individual departments are monitored closely by members

of the senior management team and this is enhanced by departmental reviews in partnership with the LEA. This information is not collated centrally to underpin a cohesive whole school policy. This results in weaknesses in the coordination of initiatives that are delivered by more than one department, for instance, those to integrate ICT into the curriculum and to improve the progress made by higher attaining students. The school is well supported by the governing body but it does not challenge the school sufficiently. The school seeks to consult parents but a significant minority do not feel they are sufficiently involved in decision-making. The school has good learning resources generally. Staff are well-qualified but the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting staff in the last year. The deployment of resources and use of accommodation are good and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

On behalf of the inspectors and myself who visited your school before Christmas, I would like to thank you for the polite and helpful way you welcomed us. We enjoyed discussing the work you were doing and looking at the progress you were making in school. You talked warmly and enthusiastically about your school.

We were pleased with the way that most of you try hard in lessons, achieving considerable success. You behave well and tell us that you enjoy coming to school, which we think is shown by your good attendance. Your teachers take good care of you and guide you well. You take pride in the responsibilities that you have been given, for example, the school council and enjoy the wide range of activities that are provided outside of normal lessons. We hope that you will continue to take advantage of these good opportunities. The sixth form is thriving and is a real strength of your school; we hope you will all aspire to become members of the sixth form when the time comes.

Although there were a number of good or outstanding lessons, we have asked your teachers to set harder work for some of you who we feel could be making that bit more progress. We know that the school is looking at the use of statistical information about your progress as you move up through the school; we would like the school to continue with this work as we think it will help to raise your achievement still further. We also recommend that new technology could support your learning more across all subjects and not just in ICT lessons. We wish you all success for your studies in the future.