



Churchdown School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115760
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279671
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Winston Road
School category	Foundation		Churchdown
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL3 2RB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01452 713340
Number on roll	1355	Fax number	01452 857367
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Chris Evans
Date of previous inspection	22 January 2001	Headteacher	Mr Simon Packer

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Churchdown is a large foundation specialist school (Visual Arts) with 1,356 students on roll, including 164 students in the sixth form. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The school is situated on the outskirts of Gloucester and recruits students from a wide range of primary schools but principally from Gloucester City. Very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds or have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Churchdown is a good school. The school's view that it is satisfactory does not sufficiently take into account the very positive impact made by a number of good and exemplary features of its provision and support. Although standards are average, achievement is good since students make good progress through the school, including the sixth form. Students generally develop into motivated, hardworking and responsible young citizens. They are encouraged to develop their own values and views about their community and the world, and they respond enthusiastically to debates on current issues. Teachers work hard to enable all students to learn well, although some lessons are less effective because of the disruptive behaviour of a few students. The curriculum is well planned to meet the different needs of students in the school and there is a good balance of academic and practical courses. Students take good advantage of the extensive range of opportunities to be involved in the wider life of the school. Learners are cared for, guided and supported outstandingly well and this is demonstrated by the positive approach to school adopted by the vast majority of students. Parents support the school well.

Leadership and management of the school are good. Leaders and managers throughout the school rigorously evaluate their performance in order to improve standards and develop their own professional expertise. The headteacher is a catalyst for change and improvement, and provides good strong leadership. He is well supported by an experienced senior team and an effective governing body. There is good capacity for improvement and this is shown in relation to recent improvements in science, where too few students attained higher grades in recent years. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school rightly judges its sixth form to be good. Places are guaranteed on appropriate courses for all those who apply for entry and provision offers good progression for students with a broad range of needs. Although standards are average by the end of Year 13, students achieve well because teaching is good. Students enjoy their time at school and value the help and support they get. Students have a mature approach to their work, although a small group does not attend school regularly enough. The sixth form is led and managed well. There is a clear understanding of its strengths and how it can improve still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure results in science continue to improve.
- Reduce the incidents of disruptive behaviour in some classes.
- Improve sixth form attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average at GCSE and in the sixth form, and students' achievement is good overall because of their starting point. The level of attainment of students on entry to the school is below the national average and many students have low levels of literacy skills. The school has focused effectively on ensuring good progress for students. Good teaching and high expectations, including challenging targets, enabled most students in Years 7 to 9 to achieve well in 2005. The more able students exceed their targets. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

Students make steady progress in Years 10 and 11. Attainment at GCSE is close to the national average but too few students attain the higher grades in science.

Underperformance in this subject has been addressed robustly and students now make better progress, which has enabled the school to set more challenging and attainable targets for 2006. Exceptionally good support enables students with learning difficulties and disabilities to make good progress. There are some variations in how well students achieve in different subjects but better school improvement measures and the use of good assessment information are leading to greater consistency. The school has only recently been designated a specialist school for the visual arts and there has not been sufficient time for it to demonstrate the impact of this on standards.

In the sixth form, standards are broadly average. The proportion gaining the highest grades of A and B rose significantly in 2005. Good, stimulating teaching enables students of all abilities to make good progress and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school rightly judges its provision for personal development and well-being to be good. Students' spiritual, moral and social education is good because the teaching programmes for these aspects, including citizenship and religious education, are comprehensive, well organised and have a positive impact on attitudes and behaviour. Most students behave courteously and considerately. This is underpinned by systematic checking on conduct and the timely involvement of parents when problems occur. A small group of students disrupt some lessons, an issue raised by students and a small number of parents. The school recognises the need to address this issue urgently. Bullying is rare and occasional incidents are dealt with effectively. Attendance in the main school is satisfactory and has improved since the introduction of better registration systems. Attendance of some students in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Students enjoy school, where they respond positively to being treated as adults, and express enthusiasm for lessons. Student adoption of healthy lifestyles is secured through outstanding provision of nourishing and attractive school meals and an extensive range of sporting and fitness activities. Students respond positively to advice about adopting safe practices.

A school parliament develops good understanding of rights and responsibilities in the community and supports well the school's promotion of equal opportunities. Students' preparation for future economic well-being is good because they benefit from well-organised work experience, helpful careers guidance and assistance from business mentors.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching is good. Most lessons demonstrate appropriately high expectations for all learners and good relationships between students and teachers. Throughout the school, there is a focus on engaging students actively in lessons and in making activities suitable for all ability levels. The best teaching is lively and stimulating and students respond with enthusiasm and interest. Where teaching fails to engage students sufficiently, lessons are less interesting and productive, and are characterised by too much direction by the teacher or poor use of resources. The school recognises this and has developed a rigorous review and monitoring process, with a high priority on improving the pace and challenge of lessons in all departments.

Teachers generally manage their classes well, although low-level disruption by a few students in some lessons limits the effectiveness of learning activities. Lesson planning is very thorough and focuses well on securing good progress for all learners. Teachers make effective use of the school's good assessment information to set appropriately challenging targets for individual students and monitor their progress. Teachers across the school use new technology imaginatively to help students develop their thinking and communication skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum and related activities meet the needs and interests of learners well. The curriculum is reviewed regularly with a view to ensuring that all students have access to courses that match their individual needs and provide good pathways into the sixth form and beyond. The school's business mentor programme and provision for work experience combine well with new vocational GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 and a good work-related learning programme to prepare students well for employment or further study. The school's recent designation as a specialist visual arts school has enabled the curriculum to focus more on related courses such as media studies and there are plans for further curriculum developments in this area. The school still does not provide sufficiently for religious education in the sixth form, although the new GCSE citizenship and philosophy and ethics courses enable some students to address some of the relevant issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school takes outstanding care of its students. The central vision of the school identifies these aspects as being key to enabling students to flourish at Churchdown. The school has placed the principles of Every Child Matters at the heart of its planning and development. Tutors and subject teachers monitor students' progress carefully, and any concerns are identified and dealt with promptly. Students say that they feel safe and well supported in achieving challenging targets. Good child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place. Students at risk are identified early and very effective arrangements are made for their support and guidance. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are extremely well supported by the school's Learning Support Department. Innovative approaches, such as the Student Support Centre, 'catch-up' literacy programme for Year 7 students, and the Year 7 Supported Group for those with a statement of special educational need, help the school to translate its inclusive vision into exemplary practice. Good liaison with parents and a range of external agencies ensure that students are well guided in making choices for careers and further study. Parents value the school's care and support of their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is deeply committed to raising achievement, and plays a key role in driving improvement forward. He is very well supported by an effective senior management team. Rigorous procedures for school self-evaluation are resulting in improvements in teaching and learning and more accurate identification of strengths and areas for development. The quality of performance management and strategic planning has been improved as a consequence.

The introduction of subject self-evaluation is beginning to enhance the role of middle managers and support strongly the school's drive to secure consistently high quality leadership and management at all levels. Procedures are monitored closely and regularly reviewed to ensure an appropriately sharp focus on learning. Parents are consulted regularly on key issues and support the school well. Senior managers' judgements about the quality of teaching are generally accurate and used well to identify professional development needs. Resources, including information and communication technology, are used well to support learning. The school provides good value for money.

The governing body is strongly supportive of the school and provides an effective level of challenge. Governors' close contact with the school enables them to have a good grasp of its strengths and the areas needing development.

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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?	2	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	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	2	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	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

Churchdown School Winston Road Churchdown Gloucester GL3 2RB

9 December 2005

Dear Students

As you know your school was inspected on 7 and 8 December 2005. Some of you met with inspectors and many of you will have seen us around the school. We are very grateful to you for telling us about how you felt about the school since this helped us to make our judgements. Churchdown is a good school with just a few weaknesses that the staff are well placed to improve.

The main strengths are:

- you make good progress through the school because there is good teaching that helps you to learn as well as you can
- your headteacher and other staff work very hard to make sure the school continues to improve for all of you
- you enjoy getting involved in a wide range of activities available
- you generally behave very well and adopt positive attitudes to work and to each other
- you appreciate the introduction of more practical and vocational courses
- you like your school, feel safe in it and are confident that you could do well there because the school's support and care for you is extremely effective
- your teachers work hard to make most lessons interesting.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements:

- ensure that more of you who are predicted C grades at GCSE in science actually secure them or do even better
- reduce incidents of disruptive behaviour in some classes
- improve attendance in the sixth form.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools