



Charlton School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123597
LEA Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number 281518
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector John Evans HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Severn Drive
School category	Foundation		Wellington
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Telford, Shropshire TF1 3LE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01952 223257
Number on roll	1174	Fax number	01952 222117
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev. Malcolm Potter
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Gwen Kelsey

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	8 March 2006 - 9 March 2006	281518

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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

Charlton is a large comprehensive school with 1,174 students in Wellington on the edge of Telford. It has recently been designated a specialist science college. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with special educational needs, is broadly in line with the national average. Attainment on entry is also broadly average. The school serves a community with a mix of affluent households and homes experiencing economic hardship.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's own assessment that it is a good school. This is because it has developed its teaching so that it is strongly focused on enabling students to learn what they need to succeed in examinations, and curriculum managers monitor the progress of students very carefully and intervene well to support students at risk of underachieving. The result is that the large majority of students make excellent progress and achieve standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 which are well above average. Performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is exceptionally strong.

The quality of provision is good. Teaching is effective in enabling students to learn well and make very good progress in most subjects. Teachers make particularly good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to make lessons more interesting for students. The majority of students have positive attitudes to learning and attend well. Curriculum innovation is enabling students to complete Key Stage 3 in two years rather than three, providing the time for new approaches and additional qualifications to be taken in Key Stage 4. These changes have been sufficiently well-managed to maintain the high standards of achievement. Many students participate in a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities.

Students' personal development and well-being are no better than satisfactory. The school pays too little attention to extending students' emotional development, preparing them for the world of work and involving them in decision-making and the external community. The care, guidance and support that students receive are also satisfactory. Despite the school taking steps to tackle verbal bullying, it still remains part of its culture.

Good leadership and management ensure that standards of teaching and achievement are continually and rigorously monitored. Resources are deployed efficiently and the school makes the best of buildings which are now over-crowded. It provides good value for money. Poor communication with parents is a weakness in the school's performance. Governors could be more challenging of managers about all aspects of the students' experience. The school has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase students' personal development by paying closer attention to: -eliminating factors which cause students to feel unsafe -their emotional development and awareness of cultural diversity -opportunities for them to influence school developments and contribute to the wider community outside school -guidance on career pathways and the world of work.
- Improve communications with parents and take more account of their views.
- Develop the confidence of the governing body to be the critical friend of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards are outstanding. From entering the school with broadly average levels of attainment, the majority of students make excellent progress and achieve high standards by the time they leave. In 2005, for example, 75% of students achieved at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, compared to 57% nationally. Up to 2003, standards achieved in the core subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average and were rising much faster than the national rate of improvement. Since then, the school's practice of entering students for the Key Stage 3 tests at the end of Year 8 rather than Year 9 has made it more difficult to compare the school's performance with the national picture. However, it is clear that students achieve almost as well in the core subjects at the end of Year 8, and sometimes better in the case of mathematics, as they previously did at the end of Year 9. The average points score at the end of Key Stage 3 remains above the national average despite Charlton students taking their tests a year earlier. Performance in core subjects is a real strength of the school. The standards achieved in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3, and in mathematics and science at GCSE, are outstanding.

Students make exceptional progress. All ability groups, including students with learning difficulties, make at least good progress. Recently, boys have been making even more progress than girls. The evidence suggests that the formula which enables students to make so much progress and achieve as well as they do is a combination of well-focused teaching, very effective target setting and tracking of individual students' progress, and the positive attitudes to learning most of them display.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school judges the personal development and well-being of the students to be good but inspectors found them to be satisfactory. Most students are enthusiastic learners and are keen to participate in lessons, but a minority show little interest in their work. Levels of attendance are good. Behaviour in lessons is usually good. Permanent exclusions are rare as the school works hard to keep its students. Students generally move around the school's congested corridors safely, but occasionally, when unsupervised, there is some boisterous and potentially dangerous behaviour. Quite a lot of students say that they do not always feel safe as they move around the school because of verbal bullying by groups of students. They have become too resigned to having to endure this anti-social behaviour. Members of school council are working with caterers to provide more healthy options in the dining hall and students participate in a good range of sporting activities. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are developed very well but their preparedness for economic well-being is limited by the lack of opportunities for them to experience the world of work.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and provide good role models. Students are willing to make contributions to the community life, for example through fundraising and organising

a party for senior citizens, but very few students are given opportunities to improve school life or contribute to the outside community. There are too few planned opportunities for students to reflect on their lives, express their feelings or increase their awareness of a culturally-diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students respond co-operatively to their lessons which are generally well taught; therefore, teaching and learning are good. Good lessons are characterised by clear aims shared with students, a range of varied tasks, interesting instruction and careful management of time to secure a memorable conclusion. In these situations, most students work hard, they are enthusiastic and enjoy their lessons. In one science lesson observed, pupils were keen to use chemical equations; in a modern foreign languages lesson there was evident pleasure in being able to use new words and expressions. The generally good teaching enables students to succeed and occasionally lessons are outstanding, where teachers make inspirational use a full range of techniques to inspire learning. Some lessons are less effective. These have insufficient learning activity and teachers do not give enough support to all students in the class - both those who are gifted and others needing more basic help. The pace of learning then slows.

Setting of homework and the quality of marking students' work are inconsistent, depriving some students of feedback either on what standard they have reached in a specific task or showing them how to improve. Teachers are making good use of ICT to improve presentation. Concepts of inequality were expertly introduced in one observed mathematics lesson using computer generated diagrams. An on-line video of iron production was used well in a science lesson. ICT is also used to provide additional learning tasks for students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum and other activities are good. The curriculum offers students the full range of subjects required by the national curriculum and has contributed greatly to their achievement. The school is now modifying it significantly in order to boost students' success by enabling them to take national tests and GCSE examinations earlier. The vision is that students will increasingly take their examinations when they are ready and the school is providing the opportunity for more subjects to be studied, including separate sciences, advanced mathematics, and additional arts and physical education GCSEs. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities have their needs met and a small number are offered special provision in Years 10 and 11.

The curriculum serves most students well but the school has limited vocational provision. There is no general programme of work experience. Opportunities for college study are currently limited to engineering. The taught curriculum is enriched with

many possibilities for students to join in a wide range of additional sporting activities. Voluntary participation in music making is growing and there are opportunities for students to demonstrate initiative and take responsibility, particularly for charity fund raising. Over half of the students participate in extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is satisfactory, whereas the school judges them to be good. Students say they can turn to adults if they have personal difficulties. Appropriate arrangements for child protection are in place and key staff are becoming more vigilant of the needs of vulnerable students. Most students respond well to the support offered if they have particular problems such as behaviour and disaffection. When incidents are reported, the school deals with the perpetrators of bullying. However, some parents and students have concerns about the lack of support for victims. Teachers pay due attention to health and safety in lessons, but at the time of inspection the facilities in the boys' toilets were inadequate.

Teachers closely track students' academic progress and underachieving students are encouraged to get up to speed through beneficial guidance and support. Support is carefully targeted at those students with learning difficulties and disabilities and this enables them to progress at a similar rate to other students. Careers advice is limited and not always effective, especially when students are now making important choices at the age of thirteen. Some parents are frustrated by not having access to their child's subject teachers on consultation days.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The interim headteacher provides good direction to the school, especially in the promotion and maintenance of high standards of achievement. The new leadership team and middle managers provide the headteacher with sound support. Regular monitoring of lessons and continuous close review of students' academic progress give the school an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses in these areas. However, the school's perception of students' personal development and the quality of care and support it provides is inflated because these aspects have not been monitored closely enough.

The ambitious curriculum is well managed. Performance management has recently been overhauled and individual staff targets are now linked well to school improvement plans. There are good opportunities for teachers and other staff to be involved in policy making through management groups. These provide valuable on-going professional development and also encourage the sharing of good practice that leads to further improvements. Thorough and detailed analysis of all available data provides curriculum managers with good information about students' progress in their subjects and they are encouraged to develop approaches for supporting student achievement which are best suited to their own subjects.

Many parents feel poorly informed about aspects of their children's education such as the rationale behind the curriculum changes, which sets their children are in, the option choices in Key Stage 4 and the homework requirements of different subjects. The school recognises that it needs to do more to gather and respond to parents' views of the school.

Financial management is robust. Governors are very supportive of the school and have an accurate view of its strengths but are not so well aware of its weaknesses. The governors are not providing enough challenge to the school across all aspects of the students' experience. The school improvement plan lacks sufficient detail to inform in-depth planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

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	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

A few weeks ago a small team of Ofsted inspectors visited your school. We met and talked with many of you and observed several of your lessons. We also met teachers and had many letters from parents. Throughout this process you were helpful, friendly and open with us. We would like to thank you for that. Here are our main findings:

What is good about your school?

The school helps the large majority of you to make excellent progress, particularly in the first few years, and achieve very good standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and in your GCSEs. There are a number of things which we think contributes to this.

- Firstly, there is a lot of good teaching which ensures you learn what you need in order to well in your tests and examinations. We think teachers are using ICT well to make your lessons more interesting.
- Secondly, your progress is very carefully monitored and teachers give good support to those of you who are not doing as well as you could.
- Thirdly, you make very good progress because you attend well and most of you have a very positive attitude to learning. You do extremely well in English, maths and science.
- Your school has taken an interesting approach to organising the curriculum so that you take your Key Stage tests a year earlier and can take a wider range of options in Years 9, 10 and 11. You have continued to achieve the same high standards as before.
- The school's leaders and managers are very committed to helping you achieve as well as you possibly can.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements:

- Help increase your personal development and well-being by doing more to eliminate verbal bullying in the school; by providing more opportunities for you to reflect on your own feelings, explore other cultures, participate in decision-making in school and contribute to the outside community; and by providing more careers guidance and opportunities to explore the world of work.
- Improve communications with parents and take more account of their views.
- Develop the confidence of the governors to be the critical friend of the school, for example by being a champion of its students.

We wish you well for the future and thank you again for your company during those two days.