



Caroline Chisholm School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134177
LEA Northamptonshire
Inspection number 282478
Inspection dates 16 May 2006 to 17 May 2006
Reporting inspector Clive Kempton HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Wooldale Road
School category	Community		Wootton Fields
Age range of pupils	4 to 15		Northampton NN4 6TP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01604 669200
Number on roll	482	Fax number	01604 669201
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr Tony Downing

Age group 4 to 15	Inspection dates 16 May 2006 - 17 May 2006	Inspection number 282478
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Caroline Chisholm is an all-through 4–18 school for primary and secondary aged children. It opened in September 2004 in a brand new building. The school is at the heart of The Wooldale Centre for Learning, a £25m development that also incorporates a joint school and public library, nursery and extensive community facilities. There are currently students from Reception class to Year 10. When the school is full it will have approximately 1700 students. The school is a Business and Enterprise specialist school. The school's secondary phase has special provision for children with Asperger's Syndrome or autism. These children are part of the whole-school community and join in lessons with everyone else.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Caroline Chisholm is a good school with many outstanding features, a view shared by parents and reflected in the school's self-evaluation. Outstanding features such as the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage, the progress made by pupils with a statement of autism or Asperger's Syndrome, the behaviour and attitudes of all pupils, and the personal development and well-being of pupils make Caroline Chisholm a unique school. The school has only been open for twenty months and despite the turbulence of constantly admitting new pupils, enormous strides have been made in a short space of time to make the school a centrepiece for the local community. Standards of attainment are good throughout the school and all pupils achieve well. This is because teaching is good overall, with a significant proportion that is outstanding. Some lessons require an even stronger focus on what it is pupils are required to learn. The care, guidance and support provided are good.

Leadership and management are good across the school and outstanding in the Foundation Stage. The principal leads with vision and energy and the leadership team's commitment, dedication and sheer enthusiasm for the all-through concept of the school is tangible. They have done a tremendous amount in a short space of time. Self-evaluation and school development planning are developing well across the school but require a sharper focus on how the school intends to measure the impact of its plans and actions. This is the first inspection that the new school has received. Nevertheless, evidence shows that the leadership and management of the school have a very strong capacity to continue to raise standards. The Business and Enterprise specialist school status has had an immediate impact on the ethos of the school and is visible in many aspects of the curriculum, although there is still work to do in fully embedding the aims of the initiative throughout the school and its community. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop consistent self-evaluation throughout the school.
- Ensure all development planning has clear and measureable success criteria.
- Ensure that all lessons have clear learning objectives which can be assessed.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good throughout the school. Progress in the Foundation Stage is outstanding, resulting in children achieving very high levels at the end of the Reception Year. At the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level is well above the national average. Teachers' assessments show a similar proportion of pupils currently in Year 9 gaining Level 5, with nearly half at Level 6 and above. Recent assessments also show that a very high percentage of Year 10 pupils, the oldest in the school, are already working

at GCSE grades A* to C. For instance, 80% gained grades at this level in the GCSE science module tests.

Overall, pupils' attainment is broadly average on entry. They make good progress throughout the school, with some doing particularly well. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress. Those with a statement for autism or Asperger's Syndrome make outstanding progress. The school's rigorous and systematic procedures for assessment and tracking pupils' progress are very effective in setting appropriately challenging targets, which most pupils meet, and in identifying pupils who need additional support. They are also effective in identifying the learning requirements of the large number of pupils entering the school throughout the school year. The testing at half-termly points is a particular strength in checking on how well pupils are doing. The school's deep commitment to raising standards is reflected in the well-focused action taken to address specific areas of underachievement. For example, the Big Writing programme is already improving writing in the primary phase.

The school's thorough analysis of results shows that it can further improve the attainment of pupils. It fully recognises, for example, the need to improve the percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1, and in writing at Key Stage 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of the pupils is outstanding. The pupils enjoy all aspects of school, responding particularly positively to the high quality of teaching and learning resources. Few fall short of challenging targets and learning goals. Many recognise it as a privilege to be part of a school which offers so much. Behaviour in class and around the school is excellent in all phases. Good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced through close relationships with staff, who act as very good role models, and a well-conceived programme of assemblies and time with the class teacher. Oppressive behaviour and bullying is very rare. Pupils' attendance and punctuality to lessons is good. The high level of integration and acceptance of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and other groups of vulnerable students is particularly impressive. This ethos of tolerance and maturity pervades the whole-school community.

Pupils are well aware of issues concerning their health and safety. They take at least two hours of physical exercise each week and many exceed this through good participation in after-school sporting activities. Girls take healthy-eating issues more seriously than boys. Business and Enterprise initiatives present pupils with a good range of inspiring opportunity to understand the world of work and economic well-being. For example, in the Foundation Stage pupils sell vegetables they have grown themselves. Initiatives in the primary phase, such as understanding the nature of business letters, underpin a consistent policy of support.

Leadership roles are developing informally in other areas of the school. Some older pupils have led art and drama classes and organised school discos, and some Year 6

pupils have acted as buddies to younger pupils. Other pupils throughout the school have had good leadership opportunities working with the business manager to source equipment suppliers, procuring orders for goods such as badges and balloons for school events, and reconciling cash following events. However, there are currently insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles and responsibilities.

Pupils make a very good contribution to the school community. For example, teamwork in class, cross-phase arts productions, a range of student-led activities (often of a charitable nature) and through the effective school council and cross-phase ECO group. Links to outside communities in the form of Rock Challenge, trips abroad and support in primary schools are becoming increasingly established.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall, with much that is outstanding. Learning thrives in a positive environment. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations. Year 6 pupils worked with great enjoyment in developing their skills in poetry writing. Learning benefits from the teachers' confident subject knowledge and expertise in matching work to pupils' learning needs. This means that pupils of all abilities are challenged. In a humanities lesson, the teacher's excellent understanding of pupils' interests and learning styles resulted in Year 10 pupils working maturely and responsibly in their discussion of racism. Planning provides for a good range of learning activities but does not always have clear learning objectives. Skilled questioning and well-planned group work encourage all pupils to be fully involved in their learning. Teaching assistants are highly effective and resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), are well deployed. The use of interactive whiteboards and PowerPoint presentations significantly enhances learning. Pupils' work is mostly marked regularly but marking varies in the extent to which it provides guidance for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. It is outstanding in the Foundation Stage and primary phase. Planning in both of these phases is imaginative and clearly focused on enjoyable learning and high achievement. Learning is enhanced through its links to themes, which enables skills and knowledge to be transferred between subjects. Special timetable arrangements enable all pupils in the primary phase to join in the study of a particular theme for a whole week. For example, during the Big World Week, all pupils were engaged in studying geography. The school is keenly aware of the importance of matching courses to pupils' interests and needs, and plans meticulously to this end. The Key Stage 4 curriculum, currently just Year 10, provides good opportunities for personal development and work-related courses. Planning for the further development of these programmes is well advanced. Good provision is made for pupils with learning

difficulties and disabilities. The school's Specialist Business and Enterprise status enhances learning in many subjects, and provides the means for forging closer links with the community. The good provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT helps pupils to be well prepared for their future, and education for health and safety is good. Pupils appreciate the developing range of clubs and enrichment activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils throughout the school are good, with outstanding features. Pupils remark on how safe and free from harassment they feel, because of the excellent relationships they have with all staff. Arrangements for child protection and arrangements for risk assessment are also good. Care for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is particularly good, with careful record-keeping, review and collaboration with external agencies to enable a high level of integration in the mainstream. Care overall is outstanding. Robust procedures for induction and transfer of new pupils, including those entering mid-year, help pupils to settle well. Good advice is given about options courses in Year 10. Pupils' targets are challenging, yet realistic, based on effective assessment of pupils' potential. Underperformance is picked up quickly and catch-up sessions target those pupils needing extra support. A range of good contacts in industry through Business and Enterprise status secures a developing awareness of career options for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The overall quality of leadership and management across the school is good. It is outstanding in the Foundation Stage because of clarity of vision, high expectations and strong focus on monitoring and evaluation. The principal and his dedicated leadership team have worked with great enthusiasm and commitment to create a unique school, appointing high quality staff to a very well-resourced new building. The two vice principals have provided outstanding support to the principal in creating such an effective school. They are all good role models for other staff and have driven the concept of the all-through school with energy and vision. They have achieved a lot in a short space of time.

Self-evaluation strategies are developing across the school, although the middle managers and governors, whilst involved in discussions, have not yet been sufficiently involved in the whole process. School development planning is detailed and extensive as the school grows, especially as Year 11 and the sixth form are still to be phased in. However, there is insufficient focus on success criteria within the school development plan for the school to be able to gauge the impact of its actions. Middle managers are held to account for standards within their subject areas through a regular cycle of performance review. They regularly monitor the teaching of staff in their departments and use monitoring information for departmental development. For example, one

subject leader focused a departmental training session on moderating pupils' work across the department following classroom observations.

Governance is good. The dynamic chair of governors challenges the leadership of the school and holds them to account, ensuring they explain and justify their direction. Governors have been tremendously supportive throughout the setting up of the new school, although to date there has been limited involvement in the actual formulation and writing of the school's self-evaluation. They ensure the school meets statutory requirements.

Parents are positive about the new school and hold it in high esteem. The school has taken account of parents' views through a questionnaire and this has resulted in improved communication with parents of secondary aged pupils through a regular newsletter. External professional bodies and sponsors are proud to be involved with the school and speak highly of its unique vision and direction as well as the immediate impact it has had on the local community. They are impressed with the openness of the management to new ideas and their willingness to take risks.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	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?	2	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	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making my inspection team so welcome when we visited your school in May. I thought you would like to know what we liked about your school and how we think it could become even better.

Your parents think you go to a really good school and we agree.

We were very impressed with the new school buildings and the wonderful new resources you have.

Those of you who need extra help are getting good support to help you learn.

You all care for each other and show sensitivity when someone needs help.

Your behaviour in lessons and around the school was excellent. You were very willing to talk to us and give us your views of the school.

We think Mr Downing and all the staff have done a really good job in creating a unique school that we know you are proud of.

All your teachers work very hard for you and create interesting and exciting work to make your learning more enjoyable. We think you have got a lot of really good teachers.

All the support staff help your learning too and work very hard to keep the school running smoothly.

The Business and Enterprise specialist school status is giving you some good opportunities to experience the world of work.

You show that you care for others through your charity work.

Most of you look very smart in your school uniform and do your best to get all your homework in on time, but a few of you need to make more effort.

In order to make your school even better we have asked Mr Downing and the staff to do the following things:

Ensure that all lessons have clear learning objectives for you.

Make sure you all know what you have to do to improve your work.