

Churchill Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	109312
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	288351
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Nick Green HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1298
6th form	322
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Lund
Headteacher	Barry Wratten
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002
School address	Churchill Green Churchill BS25 5QN
Telephone number	01934 852771
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Age group	11–18
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

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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

The school is much larger than average. It has been a specialist performing arts school since 2002 and this is reflected strongly in many aspects of the school's curriculum and in its positive contributions to the community.

The great majority of students are White British, with a few coming from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is well below average and the overall socio-economic background of students is advantaged. Most of the students come from areas where the educational background of adults is above average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is average and the number with a formal statement of special educational need is well below average. Students' attainment on entry to the school is above average in most year groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Aiming for Excellence' is the school's motto and in many respects it is well on the way to achieving this. The quality of the education provided by the school is good, with outstanding features, including an outstanding sixth form. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have been above average for several years and in the sixth form they are well above average. In relation to students' starting points when they enter the school or the sixth form, their progress and achievement are good and in the sixth form last year were close to outstanding. No group of students under performs, boys make much better progress than is found nationally and the progress and achievement of those with learning difficulties is outstanding. There is still room for girls and the most able students to perform even better and the school is introducing well-devised initiatives to help them to do this.

Underpinning the school's success are good leadership and management. The clear vision and direction of the headteacher and the senior leadership team has set high expectations for staff and students. These are focused firmly on raising achievement, improving the curriculum and promoting the well-being of students. The key issues raised in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully. The school's accurate, high-quality self-evaluation effectively identifies its key areas for development and shows that it has a good capacity for further growth and improvement.

The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school and are complimentary about the way it is led and managed. A minority believe their and their children's views are not always listened to. Inspectors judge that the school does take good steps to gather students' and parents' views, to listen to their concerns and to act on them. As one parent wrote to inspectors, 'The response of teachers and heads of year to any concerns we have had is prompt, very proactive and constructive'.

Students' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, and outstanding in the sixth form. They very much enjoy school, are well behaved, adopt healthy lifestyles and feel safe. Many make significant contributions to the local community and beyond, particularly through a wide range of performing arts events and charitable activities. One parent wrote, 'All musical events make me burst with pride that my kids can participate at such a high level'. Students also develop good competence in workplace and enterprise skills. The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support for students; for those in the sixth form, for the most vulnerable and for those with learning difficulties, it is outstanding. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust. Academic progress is monitored extensively and challenging targets are regularly set and reviewed with students.

Teaching and learning are good across the school. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and they use it to provide clear explanations and select appropriate examples to illustrate a point. They plan lessons thoroughly and communicate the aims of lessons clearly to students. The effective structure and well-devised activities evident in the best lessons, which enable students to recognise the next steps in their learning and how to take them, are not used consistently enough. Sometimes, in both the main school and the sixth form, teachers do not give students enough opportunities to work independently, to contribute their ideas or to consolidate what they have learnt.

The school's curriculum is good, with outstanding features, and meets the full range of students' needs and capabilities very well. It is outstanding in the sixth form because of the wide range of courses offered and the quality of activities which enrich it. The recent review of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has injected more urgency, pace and challenge into students' learning. Participation rates are high in the wide variety of performing arts, sports and other subject activities provided. These make a valuable contribution to students' levels of enjoyment, to their personal development and to their achievement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The success of the sixth form is in many respects due to the outstanding way it is led and managed, evident in the drive for continuing success in all areas. Standards attained last year were well above average and are currently above average. Students make good progress and achieve well to reach challenging targets, although there are variations in quality between subjects. Their personal development is outstanding, and the high retention rate reflects the enthusiasm and pride which students take in the school. They value highly the outstanding quality of support, care and guidance which contribute to their well-being. Students are also very appreciative of their teachers, who they describe as 'always being approachable and supportive'. Teaching is good, with an increasing emphasis on developing students as confident, articulate and independent learners, although some need further encouragement to contribute fully in lessons.

The school offers an outstanding range of curriculum choices and enrichment activities and excellent opportunities for students to take responsibility, for example, through the sixth form council and peer mentoring. The sixth form has a good capacity to improve, building on the improvements already made in recent years, such as the thorough and effective use of performance data in setting targets.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the effective structure and well-devised activities evident in the best lessons are used more consistently to enable students to recognise the next steps in their learning and how to take them.
- Give students more opportunities to work independently, to contribute their ideas in lessons and to consolidate what they have learnt.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards in Year 9 at the end of the last academic year were above average and well above average in mathematics. Current standards are similarly above average and have improved in English and science. There has been an upward trend in results over the last three years. Given the starting points of the students when they join the school, their progress and achievement are good. This is due to the effective teaching and good academic guidance they receive. No groups of students in Years 7 to 9 underperform.

Standards in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 last year were well above average. Students' attainment in art and design, science, dance, English, geography, mathematics, music, PE and RE was exceptional. In relation to students' starting points when they entered the

school, their progress and achievement were good. The performance of all but one small group of students was above the national average. Boys' progress and achievement were particularly good and those of students with learning difficulties and disabilities were outstanding, reflecting the highly effective support and guidance they receive. Students' current standards in Year 11 are similarly above average. Their progress is currently better than it was at this time last year, indicating at least good achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Attendance is in line with the national average and students enjoy coming to school, indicated by the enthusiasm they show in lessons and the high numbers participating in the extra-curricular activities on offer. They are aware of maintaining a healthy lifestyle through physical exercise and a healthy diet, encouraged by the wholesome food in the school canteens. Students feel safe, well supported and able to talk with confidence to staff. They feel secure in the swift and successful resolution of any bullying issues, which are rare. Behaviour is generally good and a calm, orderly atmosphere exists around the school. In some lessons, students' negative behaviour hinders learning. The school listens to its students through the school council and the weekly meetings of different groups of students with the headteacher. As a result of consultation, students are proud to have developed a new uniform, which will be introduced next year.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Relationships between students and their teachers are very positive and students work well with each other. They contribute to many charities and are involved extensively with the community, such as assisting at a residential care home, producing music and drama events and acting as ambassadors to local primary schools. All students develop secure skills for their future economic well-being; through work experience in Year 10, through a valuable 'School to Work' day and through a number of enterprise activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use this well to give clear explanations and illustrations. Lessons are planned thoroughly and teachers generally share the aims of the lesson fully. Teachers use a variety of interesting tasks, keep students working at a swift pace and use skilful questioning to encourage them to explain their ideas. Teaching assistants provide effective support in lessons and this assists students with learning difficulties and disabilities to make exceptional progress. Sometimes, teachers do not give students enough opportunities to work independently or contribute their ideas. In a few lessons, teachers have to waste time managing low-level disruptive behaviour, which they do well.

The use of assessment for learning is embedded in most lessons; teachers' marking and feedback, and students' peer assessment, effectively informs students how well they are doing and gives them clear advice on how to improve their work. Students are taught how to identify the next steps in their learning and this is achieved through the carefully considered structure of lessons and well-devised activities. Some lessons are not planned as effectively and focus more on

students completing tasks than helping them recognise these steps and how to take them. Rigorous assessment and tracking of students' progress ensures that most students have a clear understanding of their progress and understand what they need to do to reach their targets. Homework is used well to extend and consolidate students' learning, although it is not always set as timetabled and can result in an uneven workload for some students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum meets the full range of students' needs and capabilities. As a result, students make good progress. In Years 7 to 9, the recent rigorous review of the curriculum has encouraged teachers to plan courses that avoid repetition and overlap with the curriculum in the latter years of primary school, thus ensuring smoother continuity into students' secondary studies. It has also enabled students to begin some GCSE courses early and made time for additional courses, such as one of the performing arts. The resulting increase in pace and challenge has injected more urgency into students' learning. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very well matched to the needs of students. There is a good range of GCSE and applied courses. In addition, the alternative curriculum for students who prefer more work-related learning, involving part-time college courses and work experience, has done much to improve their motivation and attendance.

The school provides students with a wide variety of activities outside the normal school day, principally in performing arts, sports and subject clubs; participation rates are high. The impact of the school's specialist status in performing arts is significant, adding greater curriculum breadth and choice. Aspects of drama, for example, have enhanced teaching in subjects across the school. Close links have been established with a range of partner schools and community groups. The strength and popularity of the curriculum are such that it is playing a major part in improving achievement and standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' academic progress is monitored well and targets are regularly reviewed and discussed with students. Termly monitoring ensures that any student's academic underperformance is quickly identified and action taken. The precision of the monitoring also enables the school to provide excellent advice and guidance in relation to curriculum choices and progression to further education or employment. A wide range of internal and external professionals provides very high quality support for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. As a result, these students make outstanding progress and they and their parents/carers speak highly of the support they receive. The school tailors learning support programmes to the needs of individual students very well. For example, some attend break and lunchtime groups to improve their social skills; others attend art therapy sessions to build self-esteem or sessions to develop literacy skills. As one parent wrote, 'The school staff have taken my child's emotional needs seriously'. The school is catering well for the small but growing number of students for whom English is an additional language.

Child protection requirements and procedures are in place, and the safeguarding of students meets requirements. Health and safety procedures are very thorough. The school has employed

a wide range of strategies to raise attendance levels and there are early signs that it is improving, particularly with vulnerable and disaffected students. However, there is limited analysis of the impact of the initiatives on attendance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The headteacher provides clear vision and strong direction for the school. On his appointment, he clearly analysed the school's performance and successfully implemented a range of effective strategies to promote high quality care and education. In conjunction with the proficient senior leadership team, he has created a common sense of purpose among all staff, particularly the heads of faculties, which underpins the school's drive to be excellent. This has led to improvements since the last inspection that have been effective in raising achievement and strengthening the care, guidance and the support for all students. Self-evaluation procedures take very good account of the views of staff, parents and other stakeholders to inform both the daily operation and the strategic direction of the school.

Extensive and effective procedures are used to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning, which have enabled the school to mostly meet the challenging targets it sets itself. Thorough, systematic observation of lessons is undertaken and students' evaluations are regularly gathered. Performance data is used very well to track the progress of students, to identify those who are underachieving and to prompt intervention to improve their performance.

The promotion of equality of opportunity and combating discrimination are central to the school's leaders' and managers' vision for the school. They have created an ethos of inclusion that has enabled all students to flourish, particularly those with learning difficulties. The school's resources are deployed well. Accommodation and facilities, particularly for performing arts, have improved since the last inspection and the poorer quality of some accommodation is managed well to ensure that it does not hinder students' progress. The school provides good value for money.

Governors are kept well informed about the school's performance and they use this information competently to both challenge and support the school. They have formal opportunities to contribute to strategic planning and closely monitor the progress of school improvement.

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Annex A

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	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	2	2
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	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	1
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 May 2007

Dear Students,

Inspection of Churchill Community School and Sixth Form Centre, Churchill, Somerset BS25 5QN

Thank you for the help you provided the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting members of year groups and we learned a great deal from our discussions with many of you in lessons and around the school.

Your school is well on the way to achieving excellence and has some outstanding features. National test and examination results show standards are above average. Last year, sixth form students' progress and achievement were close to outstanding and students at the end of Year 11 who had learning difficulties made outstanding progress. Your current progress from the time you entered school is good. There is still room for girls and the most able students to perform even better and the schools is introducing well-devised initiatives to help them to do this. Your teachers have strong subject knowledge, plan well and use effective strategies to help you learn, although these need to be planned and applied more consistently in all lessons.

Your personal development and well-being are good, and outstanding in the sixth form. You say you very much enjoy school and feel safe in the calm, orderly atmosphere that exists around the school. We clearly saw the pride you show in your roles as representatives on the school council, as peer mentors and through the significant contributions you make to the community by participating in a wide range of performing arts events and charitable activities. The quality of the care, guidance and support you receive is good, and is outstanding for sixth form students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The curriculum you receive meets the full range of students' needs and capabilities and in the sixth form there is an outstanding range of curriculum choices and enrichment activities. The range of activities arising from the school's performing arts specialist status has a significant, beneficial impact on many aspects of your school life.

The headteacher and senior teachers' clear vision, strong direction and effective leadership and management underpin the school's success. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. In order to improve further, we have asked the school to ensure that the effective structure and well-devised activities we saw in the best lessons are used more consistently to enable you to recognise the next steps in your learning and how to take them. You should also be given more opportunities to work independently, to contribute more ideas in lessons and to consolidate what you learn. The few students who cause minor disruptions in lessons can really help by ensuring no student's learning is hindered by any negative behaviour. Best wishes with your studies.

Nick Green Her Majesty's Inspector