



Challney High School for Girls

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109682
Local Authority LUTON
Inspection number 288474
Inspection date 29 November 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Sims HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Stoneygate Road
School category	Community		Luton
Age range of pupils	11–16		Bedfordshire LU4 9TJ
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01582571427
Number on roll (school)	907	Fax number	01582578133
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Masood Akhtar
		Headteacher	Miss Mary Arthur
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Challney High is a slightly smaller than average comprehensive school close to the centre of Luton. It has been newly designated as a science college. The overwhelming majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The largest single group, representing over half the school, is Pakistani. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also very high.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average which reflects the high level of social deprivation in the area. Although the percentage of statemented pupils is lower than average there is a higher proportion than found nationally of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that cares well for its pupils and ensures that they progress well during their time in school. According to one parent:

'We feel that all the staff at the school make a real difference. From teaching staff to assistants we feel everybody plays a part in making Challney Girls' School a success.'

Pupils join the school from a very low starting point. Many are learning English as an additional language but they make good progress so that by time they leave school at the end of Key Stage 4 their attainment is close to the national average. Fewer pupils achieve the very highest grades at GCSE but at Key Stage 3 this is improving with more pupils reaching the highest levels.

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are strengths of the school. Despite reservations from a minority of parents and pupils, standards of behaviour during the visit were high. Pupils enjoy their school and their lessons, speaking warmly of their teachers. Most of the teaching in the school is good because pupils are engaged in 'fun' practical activities, from exploding jelly beans to designing their own clothes. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to achieve the next level but this information is not systematically and consistently recorded. Similarly marking in books is variable across subjects.

The curriculum has undergone improvements since the last inspection and all the subjects pupils are expected to study are now well covered. Pupils' opportunities to take vocational courses are more limited but those in place are successful and much appreciated by those who take them. Care, guidance and support are significant strengths in the school. Pupils are cared for well and kept on track by close monitoring which leads to realistic targets set for them to achieve.

The leaders and managers know their school well. Teaching is monitored far more rigorously than before and the school is taking effective action to raise the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by pupils, including those who are higher attaining and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Reporting to parents is still not as good as it could be although communications are much better. Events such as coffee mornings and consultation days have improved this aspect but there is still some way to go to ensure parents are more fully involved.

The recent changes to roles in the senior management team and training for subject leaders have ensured that the school has improved since last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a wider range of curriculum pathways for pupils particularly in vocational education.
- Share the best practice that exists in teaching to ensure greater levels of consistency in marking and recording of information.

- Ensure that reporting to parents meets all requirements and that parents are more fully involved in the life of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The attainment of pupils when they first join the school is well below the national average. Their standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 3 and close to the national average by the end of Key Stage 4 because they make good progress in their time at school. The most recent unconfirmed test results indicate further improvement at Key Stage 3, particularly in mathematics and science but a fall at Key Stage 4. Apart from last year's Year 11, pupils do very well when taking account of their starting points.

The proportion of pupils reaching the highest possible levels at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science is increasing. In mathematics over two fifths of pupils have achieved this. However, in recent years the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in English has slightly fallen back.

At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades is smaller compared to the national average although the proportion gaining five or more GCSE results at A* to C was rising up to last year. Compared to the national average pupils do well in science, business studies, religious education and home economics but less well in English, mathematics, geography and history.

Pupils for who English is an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Although in recent surveys parents and pupils expressed concerns about behaviour and safety, there were no examples of poor behaviour during visits to classrooms or around the school. Pupils also reported rowdiness on the corridors but again movement between lessons was orderly and pupils showed respect for one another and for adults. Pupils said that incidences of bullying or racism are rare but they had confidence that they would report anything if they saw or experienced any themselves.

Pupils generally showed a mature attitude to learning with only occasional low level chatter or giggling. Levels of exclusion are low and attendance is now in line with the national average. Pupils respond well to the rewards and incentives for good attendance. Pupils clearly enjoy school and the overwhelming response from parents confirms this. Pupils know the importance of healthy living in their diet and sporting activities. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.

Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities and are proud to be members of the school council or 'buddies' for younger pupils. They value the range of sporting opportunities on

offer and many take part in teams. They contribute to the community in other ways through a wide range of charity events and have contributed to improving the fabric of the building.

The small number of vocational courses provided is preparing pupils for the world of work but this aspect is under developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Although regarded as satisfactory by the school last year, current teaching and learning are good. The proportion of inadequate teaching, which was previously too high, has significantly reduced and is set to fall further following the appropriate action taken to address weaker teaching.

Typically good teaching is characterised by very good classroom management, planned opportunities for pupils to organise their own learning and work as a team with others. Direct teaching from the front of the class is kept to a minimum. Pupils enjoy and respond well to this, particularly in science and fashion and consequently relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers are 'enthusiastic' said one pupil whilst another commented:

'We like it when they treat us as young adults.'

Pupils generally know how well they are doing and how to achieve the next level but the recording of this information is not consistent. Similarly marking across departments is not consistent, ranging from brief ticks and single word comments to effort and attainment grades recorded and accompanied by constructive comments for development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has addressed the issues from the last inspection concerning the provision in Geography and Design and Technology. A wider range of courses is offered to pupils especially in science. There is a small vocational choice at Key Stage 4 although too many pupils follow a similar curriculum pathway and there is more work to do to extend the curriculum further.

Extra curricular activities are extending pupils' experiences and confidence for example in speaking activities, mathematics' quizzes, booster classes and trips to sixth form centres. A recent residential trip was organised but this aspect is underdeveloped.

There are a range of sports on offer including netball, football, cricket, swimming, and basketball and pupils have the opportunity to learn the additional language Bengali or Urdu. They can also enter for public examinations in other languages, such as Arabic, if they show the necessary skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well looked after during their time in school. They are kept safe and receive good guidance. Many pupils have high aspirations for their future careers. The additional provision for higher attaining pupils has led to improvements in the proportion achieving the highest levels at Key Stage 3 but not yet at Key Stage 4. Target setting is accurate and based on a good and detailed knowledge of individual pupils. The school predicted a fall in the most recent test results but future targets show that the school expects results to improve again.

Pupils spoke highly of the consultation days with parents and teachers when they receive their targets but information is not recorded consistently. The school has worked hard with parents and the local authority to improve attendance and it is now satisfactory and improving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very clear idea of what the school does well and what are the priorities for improvement. She is well supported by an experienced senior management team, many of whom have taken on new roles very recently. Heads of subject departments are at various stages of development. The 'leading from the middle' course is ensuring they are in a stronger position to fulfil their role. All leaders are actively involved in lesson observations and know about levels of achievement in their subjects. Monitoring of teaching is now rigorous and gives the school an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses in each department. In two joint observations senior leaders showed that they had a clear idea about the quality of teaching. The recording of their judgements was thorough.

The governing body is well informed about standards and achievement and gives the school appropriate support and challenge. The school's finances are secure and it gives good value for money. A minority of parents continue to express concern about the information they receive from school. For two years the governing body did not report to parents and statutory requirements to report to parents on learning difficulties, disability and race equality are not fully in place. Communications with parents have improved through ongoing home school liaison and the establishment of a senior post for community work.

The school's specialist science status is in early stages of development but is already having an impact through a Year 6 science club, a wider range of science courses for pupils and the more effective use of information and communication technology in the classroom.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	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	2
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

1 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Challney High School For Girls, Stoneygate Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU4 9TJ

As you will know I came to your school for an inspection visit. I enjoyed meeting and talking to some of you. Thank you for making my time in the school an enjoyable one.

I thought you would like to know what I have said in the report. You go to a good school where you are looked after and cared for well. You make good progress in your lessons and you have told me you respond well particularly to your 'enthusiastic' teachers who give you 'fun' things to do. From talking to many of you, clearly you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve but this is not written down consistently.

I was impressed with your behaviour in and out of lessons although not all parents and pupils think behaviour is good. You get on well with each other and with your teachers and show in your discussions you are very responsible in your attitudes to learning.

Your senior leaders know what are the best things about the school but importantly they also know what things need to improve and how they are going to do this. I agree with your headteacher about the three things that would help to make the school an even better place:

- giving more chances for older pupils to do vocational courses such as fashion which you so obviously enjoy
- making sure that even more of your lessons are as good as the best ones particularly in the way your work is marked
- helping your parents to get more involved in your learning and the life of the school.

I really enjoyed meeting you, your staff and some of your parents who told me how much you enjoy school. Can I take this opportunity to wish you well in your futures, particularly for those who were taking mock GCSE examinations during my visit. Have a well earned rest at Christmas.

With very best wishes

Mark Sims Her Majesty's Inspector