



Dr Challoner's High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110495
Local Authority Buckinghamshire
Inspection number 288692
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Ramesh Kapadia HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Cokes Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Little Chalfont
Age range of pupils	11–18		Amersham HP7 9QB
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01494 763296
Number on roll (school)	1062	Fax number	01494 766023
Number on roll (6th form)	303		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Declan Salter
		Headteacher	Miss Peg Hulse
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	11–12 October 2006	288692

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of three Additional Inspectors and led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dr Challoner's High School is a large selective school for girls in the relatively affluent community surrounding the Chalfonts. About four fifths of girls are white, with a small number of Indian and other ethnic groups; a tenth speak English as an additional language, though all are fluent in English. The school is heavily over-subscribed and elicits strong support from parents, with almost 300 returns to the inspection questionnaire.

Its central aim is to provide a well-ordered, caring, stimulating and happy environment in which learning flourishes and where each girl is challenged to develop her full potential across a range of academic, creative and recreative subjects. The school acquired specialist sports status in 2001, and has recently been awarded re-designation with modern foreign languages as a second specialism and science as a second subject.

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 an effective school, complemented by outstanding personal development of girls; this is in line with the school's own judgment. Standards are high and achievement is good. Girls attain exceptionally well in both the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and at A level. Overall, a very high percentage of girls attain at least eight higher grades at GCSE and also three A level subjects. However, there is some fluctuation in results in English, where GCSE results are not as high as in mathematics.

The curriculum meets girls' needs in both the main school and the sixth form. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are orderly and generally proceed at a good pace to ensure steady progress, with good application by all girls. Inconsistent use of assessment information means that work does not always provide sufficient challenge for the highest attaining girls.

Girls clearly enjoy coming to school, where social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is seamlessly fostered both within the curriculum and via external activities. Aspects relating to the promotion of economic understanding and healthy living and contributing to the community are all outstanding in the safe environment afforded by the school. Girls routinely take responsibilities in various ways such as running some extra-curricular activities. They help pupils with severe learning difficulties from a local special school in the community, as part of the school's specialist status. Care and support from teachers are very good, but academic guidance is not as strong in the main school.

There have been some recent changes in senior leadership, leading to some limitations in self evaluation, which is nevertheless satisfactory. However, standards in examination results have been maintained via stability in middle management and good teaching. Leadership and management are good overall but there is insufficient formal monitoring of performance. For example, the monitoring of teaching is inconsistent. Governors provide good support for the school.

The school's capacity to improve is shown by the progress made on the key issues from the previous report. However, a fifth of parents expressed concerns over limited consultation of their views; the school should work harder to involve parents, some of whom expressed reservations about the lack of target setting.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. The school makes outstanding provision for the care, guidance and support of girls in the sixth form and for their personal development. Retention rates are high and the vast majority of girls go on to university. Results at A level are well above national averages; progress in relation to prior attainment is good.

The academic curriculum, with over 20 subjects at AS and A level, complemented by physical, pastoral and religious education, is sufficiently broad to meet current needs.

Girls are well prepared for higher education and future employment, being numerate, articulate and confident. There is an outstanding range of additional opportunities for enrichment. Girls play a very active role in the life of the school, as mentors, leading assemblies and running some extra-curricular activities. Girls value the respect the teachers have for them and the support they are given. Relationships are very good. The sixth form is well led and managed and academic progress is well monitored.

What the school should do to improve further

- monitor teaching and ensure high attaining girls are more consistently challenged in lessons
- use assessment information more rigorously so that girls know more explicitly their level of attainment and how they can improve
- consult parents to enable them to play a fuller part in their daughters' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are high and achievement is good. Attainment on entry is well above average as is attainment in Key Stage 3 tests, and examinations at GCSE and A level. Virtually all girls attain eight or more higher grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics and a high percentage achieve the highest grades, including about a sixth who get A* in at least eight of the nine subjects taken.

Progress during Key Stage 3 is good; progress up to GCSE is slower but still satisfactory. Progress is better in mathematics than English and science at both Key Stages. In particular, the percentage of girls getting the highest grades at GCSE is higher in mathematics than in English and science. This indicates that some higher attaining girls do not make quite as much progress as one might expect. However, all groups of girls make good progress overall. This was also confirmed in lessons where good progress was made as a whole.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Girls' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy school as shown by their excellent attendance, the high percentage staying for the sixth form, and their enthusiastic participation in the many activities in school. They are rightly proud of their school and its mission to develop the 'whole person' as well as academic aspects.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong. Girls conduct themselves well and show respect for others. They behave very well and show a mature attitude to study and contribute to the life of the school community in various ways. They

display a highly developed sense of social responsibility as prefects, sport captains or environmental captains, organising school activities and taking care of the environment. Younger girls appreciate the care and support of the older 'Befrienders' in helping them to settle quickly into school. Language leaders in Year 10 represent the school extremely well, speaking at conferences and running French workshops in a local primary school.

Girls show an outstanding understanding of the benefits of proper diet and exercise, enhanced by the school's sports specialist status. They eat healthily in the school canteen and have access to water. They participate in the wide range of physical activities. They develop strong personal and social skills, which prepares them very well for the next stage of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school accurately judges its teaching and learning to be good in both the main school and the sixth form. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and lesson planning is effective. Lessons are conducted at a reasonable pace and enable good learning. Teachers have very good relationships with the girls, who usually work with interest and enthusiasm and thereby make good progress.

In some lessons, good quality discussion was observed which helped girls gain confidence in expressing their ideas and opinions. Outstanding lessons were seen in physical education and modern languages. Good use of a video on a suitably challenging task engaged girls, enabling them to evaluate and improve their performance in physical education. In modern languages, careful checking and assessment in the target language led to very good progress.

However, assessment procedures as a whole are under-developed in the school. Though work is marked, the assessment does not always provide the girls with sufficient information on their current level of attainment or what needs to be done to improve. The school provides a range of enrichment activities but gifted and talented provision within normal lessons is less apparent, with the whole class usually being set similar or identical work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Curriculum provision across the school is good. At Key Stage 3 the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, the traditional academic curriculum covers an appropriate range of subjects that

allows the girls sufficient choice to meet their needs and aspirations and pursue a range of career options.

All students benefit from a well-constructed personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that promotes safe and healthy living. Provision for enterprise and work related learning has been identified as an area for further development within the school and is being addressed currently. Girls receive good careers advice and the staying on rate is very high.

Good and effective provision is made for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and citizenship. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a discrete subject in Key Stage 3. Girls have opportunities to develop their skills and experience in ICT in many subjects, but this aspect is not formally monitored.

A significant strength of the curriculum is the range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. These include extensive sporting opportunities, music, subject related activities and visits that enrich the curriculum and enhance girls' learning. Participation rates are good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides very good care and support, which underpins outstanding personal development and well being; academic guidance, whilst satisfactory, is less strong. Students prosper in this caring and supportive environment. Students say that they feel safe because there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem, which is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Systems for managing risks are generally robust and the school is strengthening them. Regular health and safety visits by the governing body and the caretaker ensure that any safety issues are dealt with promptly. Child protection procedures are followed rigorously.

Target setting is inconsistent across departments so that students are clearer about what they need to do to improve in some subjects than in others. Academic guidance is strong in the sixth form. A significant minority of parents feel that they could be kept better informed about their child's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good, ensuring that girls attain high standards and achieve well. Governors provide professional expertise and support and are well informed. They promote the school's ethos of educating and developing the whole student. Specialist status is well used to develop links with the community and provide a 'rounded education'.

The leadership team has been through a period of transition; the headteacher left at Easter and there was a part-time interim headteacher in the summer term. The newly appointed headteacher is developing suitable priorities for school improvement. The school is well staffed with specialist teachers, although it has a high proportion of part time staff. Formal monitoring of the school's overall performance is limited. This needs to be undertaken in a more systematic way in order to plan professional development which builds on current strengths but also adapts to new initiatives.

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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	1	1
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

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?	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.

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	3	
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
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

You are rightly proud of your good school and the rich range of opportunities it offers to enable you to become numerate, articulate and confident young women. The opportunities for personal development and well being are outstanding. Teaching is good, as are the care, support and guidance in the school. The school is well led and offers a balanced, traditional curriculum.

The inspection team thinks that the school could improve even further and enable more of you to get the highest grades in some subjects in public tests and examinations. Teachers could explain the level at which you are working and how to improve more frequently. Some of your parents would welcome more consultation and the school could do more to be alert to and assuage their concerns. But it is also down to you to challenge and extend yourselves and your teachers to achieve the high standards which you are undoubtedly capable of and often reach.

The team enjoyed inspecting your school and would like to thank you for your help and co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R Kapadia, HMI