



# Christopher Whitehead Language College

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 116978  
**Local Authority** Worcestershire  
**Inspection number** 290690  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Bromwich Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Worcester
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		WR2 4AF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01905 423906
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1089	<b>Fax number</b>	01905 420788
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Graham Evans
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Neil Morris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 11–16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 6–7 December 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 290690
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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

Christopher Whitehead Language College is a larger than average comprehensive school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Fewer students than average are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are an increasing number of students joining the school with English as an additional language. The school gained specialist language status in September 2005.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Christopher Whitehead Language College is a good school with many features that are outstanding. Outstanding care, guidance and support promotes an environment where there is a very strong ethos of helping all students to develop academically and personally. Students feel safe, enjoy school and feel very well supported. They know where to go to for help. Staff know the students well. Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those learning English as an additional language is outstanding. Parents are very supportive of the school and comment that 'the teachers are caring and committed'.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students are enthusiastic about taking on posts of responsibility, acting as 'buddies' and mentoring younger students. They raise significant sums of money for charities. Many take part in sporting activities and after school clubs.

The school has made substantial progress since the last inspection in addressing the areas identified for improvement. It has put in place some excellent systems to monitor and improve attendance and behaviour. Attendance is good and above the national average. Good attendance is regularly celebrated. Students' behaviour is good, in and out of lessons. Vocational provision is much improved and a real strength of the school.

Standards are broadly average and students' achievement is good. The school has made significant improvements since 2003 in the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades in GCSE examinations. The school has been successful in improving achievement by the use of targets for learning. These are regularly reviewed and shared with students. Assessment is more rigorous, with very detailed tracking of academic progress. Standards in modern foreign languages are below the national average. Progress in Years 7 to 9 has been inconsistent, with lower ability boys and girls doing less well than other groups. Teaching is good. A strong focus on improving teaching and learning has led to good planning in many lessons. However, in some lessons, students are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. The good opportunities provided by the curriculum meet the diverse needs of students. Citizenship is exceptionally well integrated into the curriculum and the life of the school.

Language college status has led to increased resources and an improved learning environment but has not had a significant impact in raising standards in modern foreign languages or broadening the curriculum. Recent detailed plans are now in place to address these issues but it is too early to judge their full impact.

The headteacher provides outstanding personal leadership and is very well respected by staff and students. He is well supported by a team of skilful senior managers. Heads of department undertake detailed monitoring and evaluation of their curriculum areas and work with each other to share good practice. There is very high staff morale and staff work as a team. The school has a wide range of specialist staff who meet the needs of most students. There is a shared culture of improvement. Governors are outstanding, providing appropriate challenge to the school and bring a range of

expertise and experience which they use well for health and safety and attendance courts. The school has good capacity to improve further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the consistency of achievements and standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Extend the opportunities in lessons for students to develop as independent learners.
- Improve the impact of specialist language status throughout the school and in raising the achievement in modern foreign languages.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The results from the 2006 Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations showed that standards were broadly average. When students enter the school in Year 7 their standards are below with those found nationally although the school has an improving intake. There are an increasing number of students who join the school after September 1st. By the end of end of Year 11 students make good progress.

Standards improved in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2006 after a decline in 2005, mainly owing to the English results, and are now in line with the national average. The progress made by students is satisfactory with the lower ability boys and girls doing less well than expected.

The proportion of students attaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE has improved significantly since 2003, from 38% in 2003 to 60% in 2006. The percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to G grades has also improved. Standards are high and above national averages in science, design and technology and English. Standards are improving in mathematics. In modern foreign languages, standards in 2005 and 2006 were below the national averages.

All groups of students make good progress including those students who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

The focus on improving a combination of attendance and behaviour has been successful in ensuring students of all abilities are making good progress. Targets for learning have been very effective in raising achievement, which is good.

Statutory targets have been exceeded for GCSE but have not all been met for the national tests in Year 9. Specialist language college targets have not been met.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students develop skills for their working life through diverse curriculum opportunities. All Year 11 students receive an interview with a member of the business community to prepare them for the world of work or study, with high numbers deciding to continue their education.

The school listens to its students through the school council and, as a result, improvements have been made to seating in the canteen and to uniforms. Students understand the benefits of healthy eating and there is good participation in after school clubs.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They act as 'buddies' to develop reading skills in younger students and take on other posts of responsibility. They become aware of the effect of their actions on others through work on bullying and friendship. Their charity work is outstanding, raising significant sums of money for local, national and international charities, including a school in Mozambique and a local neo-natal unit. Students make the most of the enrichment and community activities, the range of trips and the vibrant theme days, such as spirituality and multicultural days, are both delivered through the high quality citizenship programme.

Attendance is good. It has improved significantly over the last three years because of the wide range of monitoring and intervention strategies. Students' behaviour in lessons is good and a calm, purposeful atmosphere exists around the school in which they feel safe. Students are proud of their school and their uniform and feel able to speak about a problem to an adult in school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good and enable students to make good progress as they move through the school. Managers emphasise the importance of spreading good practice across subjects and this leads to good lesson planning. As a result, students are interested, they concentrate well and make good progress.

Teachers manage their classes well, relationships are good and students enjoy lessons. Time is used well and lessons proceed briskly so that much is achieved. Students in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, made outstanding progress because of challenging tasks coupled with rigorous assessment to consolidate understanding. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress because the work is closely matched to their requirements. However, it is not effective across all subjects so that some students make slower progress than expected. Students enjoy opportunities to research topics and work with others but there are not enough opportunities for them to develop their skills as independent learners.

Teachers assess students' progress very well and they are well informed about how well they are doing and how they can improve further. They value the guidance, respond well and it leads to rising standards. Students are well trained in how to assess their own and others' work, which enables them to gain new skills. Occasionally, however, inconsistencies in marking reduce the quality of information available to students.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of all learners and underpins their good progress. A particular strength of the curriculum is the provision for vocational opportunities in Years 10 and 11, supported through work experience and links with local colleges and businesses. Students enjoy the experiences available, behaviour has improved and achievement is better. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. There are systems to identify and plan opportunities for able students through 'accelerated' learning in Years 7 and 10, but this is at an early stage of development, and not yet having an impact on achievement. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English is outstanding and this has contributed well to improving attendance. The school caters very well for citizenship, including students' personal, social and health education through the curriculum.

The curriculum is enriched with regular trips and activities outside the school day with many students involved in one or more activities. The school's modern language status has provided improved opportunities for study within and outside the school day, including experiences in other countries, but the impact is not contributing strongly to raising achievement and higher standards.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all its students. A very wide range of internal and external professionals provide comprehensive levels of support for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school addresses individual issues through a range of tailored learning support programmes. For example, students attend sessions to improve presentation skills whilst at the same time building confidence and self-esteem; other students attend sessions on anger management. The growing number of students for whom English is an additional language are very well supported through a programme in social and language skills developed by the school.

There are excellent systems for monitoring all aspects of personal development and achievement, setting and reviewing targets for all students. This process involves the whole staff team who liaise with colleagues to ensure that all students have the support they need. As a result, teachers know their students very well. The school has succeeded in involving more parents in the progress of their children; in particular, drawing upon its students and the community to act as interpreters.

Child protection requirements and procedures are clear and understood by staff. There are very effective health and safety and risk assessment procedures which ensure that students can undertake activities safely, both on and off the school premises. Students make informed choices on the various stages of their study through high quality guidance.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. An outstanding feature is the personal leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by a conscientious senior leadership team. Together they have raised staff morale and provide clear direction in their bid to 'pursue excellence by building on our successes'. A key strength is the focus on monitoring and evaluation, to which many heads of department make an excellent contribution. Governors are outstanding in their ability to hold the school to account and in supporting developments, for example strategies to improve behaviour and attendance. However, evaluation is not consistently translated into effective classroom practice, so that not all students achieve their targets. The school is very inclusive, with a high quality of care and support for all students, although academic progress amongst younger students is more uneven. The leadership ensures excellent vocational provision for older students and has established excellent links with local schools, for example through an 11 to 16 consortium. Resources are used very effectively to support learning, and the leadership team ensures that deficiencies in accommodation do not radically affect learning.

Specialist language status has had a mixed impact on the school. There are notable successes, for example foreign language support to local primary schools. The school has also successfully encouraged a wide range of cultural links abroad. However, there has been a limited impact on the development of the core languages within the school, particularly in French, where there is underachievement. The leadership and governors have rightly recognised that modern languages is a major area for continued development and improvement.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. You were mature and sensible and gave us an enthusiastic account of school life. You are right to be proud of your school.

We understand why you like your headteacher, because he is very enthusiastic and keen for you to do your best. He provides the school with very strong leadership. Both your behaviour and attendance have improved. You make good progress in most subjects. Your teachers teach you well. We also know that you feel safe in school and get excellent support for your personal needs and in meeting your targets to improve your work. As a result, you are now doing better in examinations. The way you help people outside school, for example through charities, is impressive. You get lots of opportunities to take part in interesting activities outside of lessons, such as school clubs and visits. Thank you for the work some of you provided for us to look at. The range of art work we saw was excellent and the performing arts group working on a song from 'Blood Brothers' was a delight to watch and hear!

We have asked your teachers to help you learn even better, particularly lower down the school. We feel that although you enjoy many of your lessons and like talking about your ideas, your teachers should give you even more opportunities to take part during lessons and to learn on your own. Your school has a particular interest in teaching you modern foreign languages and we have asked it to continue to develop and improve this area of the curriculum.

The headteacher and senior managers and governors make a good team. All staff at the school are highly committed to their work and know where they can make further improvements.

We encourage you to continue to support the school and to play your part in making it even better. We wish you all the very best for the future.