



Chancellor's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117591
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290885
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Raymond Jardine

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Pine Grove
School category	Foundation		Brookmans Park, Hatfield
Age range of pupils	11–18		Hertfordshire AL9 7BN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01707650702
Number on roll (school)	863	Fax number	01707663204
Number on roll (6th form)	179		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Frank Maynard
		Headteacher	Mr Stuart Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	1–2 November 2006	290885

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is about average in size for a secondary school and serves the immediate area and surrounding villages midway between Potters Bar and Hatfield. The great majority of pupils are White British but a few come from a range of different minority ethnic groups. None are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Need. Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 7 is above average.

The school gained Mathematics and Computing Specialist College status from September 2003. The present headteacher took up his post in September 2004 following the death of his predecessor.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chancellor's is a good school that provides good value for money. Pupils achieve well and attain high standards. The great majority enjoy school and the opportunities that it offers. Most parents are also pleased with the school's work and their children's progress. As one parent put it, 'The school offers a well-rounded education with lots of extra-curricular activities, clubs and benefits to the local community.'

Pupils enter school with above average standards. They make good progress compared with those in other schools nationally and typically attain very high standards by Year 11. In 2005 there was a dip in GCSE results following a difficult period for the school caused by the tragic loss of its headteacher. However, recent results for 2006 show a strong recovery and standards are again very high. A key reason is the good support and guidance given to GCSE pupils through an extensive individual mentoring programme that helps them achieve their challenging targets. There are regular reviews of their progress and pupils say that they greatly appreciate this support. Teaching and learning are also good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and this is reflected in the level of challenge provided and in the effectiveness of their questioning in lessons. The good relationships and stimulating contexts for learning help ensure that pupils are interested and engaged. They behave well, both in lessons and around the school. There are now few instances of bullying or harassment as a result of the school's concerted efforts to improve the effectiveness of its response to such incidents. Pupils say that they are confident that these are dealt with effectively. Overall, the school takes good care of its pupils.

There are many opportunities for pupils to be involved in, and to influence, school life, for example, through the school council and a wide range of activities such as drama and sports. Many take advantage of these which contribute to their good personal development. Pupils acquire good skills that prepare them well for their future. The curriculum is satisfactory, though there are particular strengths in mathematics and pupils also have good access to information and communication technology (ICT), reflecting the school's Specialist College status. However, there are weaknesses in the breadth of the curriculum for 14 to 19 year-olds. Recent innovations include more vocational routes to accreditation, but more remains to be done to enable the school to meet the needs of all its pupils.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior leadership team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide clear direction for its development. The school has improved its standards since the last inspection, demonstrating its capacity to improve further. The senior leadership team is currently implementing revised and potentially robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, but these are not yet embedded in its management cycle. The monitoring role and effectiveness of subject leaders in particular vary considerably and this variation affects the pace at which the school responds to its weaknesses.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school has a good sixth form. Progress, standards and achievement are good, and retention rates are high. Students are conscientious learners, working hard to meet the challenges of post-16 courses. Their progress is well supported by thorough academic reviews and effective individual monitoring by teachers. The very good subject knowledge of teachers, and the well-structured lessons they deliver, contribute positively to good standards and achievement. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to develop their independent learning skills, for example through individual research in art and ICT. Pupils enjoy their time in the sixth form, and show a strong affinity with the school community and its aims. They support younger pupils through buddying, mentoring and prefect roles, and organise events for charitable causes.

Although the sixth form curriculum meets the needs of most current students well, it is narrow in some respects. The entry requirement excludes some pupils who could benefit from a broadened curriculum with more vocational options. The school is currently developing a prospectus with other schools in the area setting out the range of options available in local post-16 provision. Enrichment activities are available to students, although they are not timetabled, with the result that some students do not have enough breadth of experience in this respect. Students value the provision of a dedicated ICT room, but they have very limited space and seating in their common room.

The head of sixth form, and his deputy manage the sixth form well, and are acting on the key areas for sixth form development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the school's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its performance, particularly by subject leaders, so that areas for improvement are addressed quickly and best practice is more effectively disseminated.
- Broaden the curriculum for 14 to 19 year olds, particularly vocational opportunities, to ensure that routes to accreditation meet the full range of pupils' needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

In Year 9 national tests, standards in mathematics have been exceptionally high over the past five years. Science standards have improved and have also been exceptionally high in the last two years. While English standards have been consistently above average, they have lagged behind those of both the other core subjects. GCSE results were exceptionally high in both 2003 and 2004 but they dipped considerably in 2005. The most recent results showed a strong recovery and were again high. In 2006 over three quarters of all Year 11 pupils gained five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and almost as many achieved five good passes when English and mathematics were included.

Almost all pupils achieve some form of qualification by Year 11. The school was very close to meeting its challenging targets for Year 9 and Year 11 and it met its Specialist College targets in 2006. In the sixth form, GCE Advanced Level results were a little above average in 2005 but improved considerably in 2006.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well when account is taken of their above-average attainment on entry to Year 7. In Years 7 to 9, their progress is particularly good in mathematics and science, although in English it is satisfactory. The generally good progress continues in Years 10 and 11. Boys have tended to achieve better than girls in recent years. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve particularly well. In the sixth form, pupils' progress varies across subjects but is mainly good, with strengths in several such as mathematics, English and business studies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well. They show respect for each other and for adults. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure and they are confident that the school will act promptly if they have concerns because more stringent practices are now in place. Pupils like the 'buddy' system and peer-mentoring schemes. Extra-curricular opportunities are extensive and their take up by pupils is very good. This contributes much to their personal development. The school council gives pupils an effective voice and they consider that their views are taken into account, for example, in influencing the school's code of conduct and homework policy. Community involvement is good. Whole-school productions, clubs and charity fund-raising events provide pupils with opportunities to experience wider horizons and also contribute to their cultural development. Pupils are increasingly developing more healthy lifestyles; the main factors which influence this are the improved food service and the strong focus on physical exercise and sport. The many opportunities for individual and whole school responsibility offered promote pupils' confidence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. There is a positive atmosphere in lessons, and relationships between teachers and pupils are relaxed and harmonious. As a result, pupils are confident to ask questions and to express their views and ideas. Teachers know their subjects well. They help pupils to progress by using challenging questions and tasks which pupils are keen to respond to. Pupils behave well and have good

attitudes to learning because teachers make the lessons interesting and stimulating. Lessons are carefully planned around clear objectives. Tasks are well matched to the range of pupils' abilities and consequently they progress well.

There are some ways in which teaching could be improved further. The quality of the marking of pupils' work varies considerably in quality across the school, particularly the extent to which they are helped to be clear about what they need to do to improve. In a minority of lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively or independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. The curriculum as a whole is well planned to meet the needs of the majority of pupils. Many pupils take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities which are on offer such as drama, music performances and sports. The very good provision for developing pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT is preparing them well for their future working lives. The school's Specialist College designation has contributed much in this respect. All pupils benefit from the opportunity to make an early start on their GCSE courses in the final half term of Year 9 and all do GCSE statistics and ICT from Year 10. Careful consideration is given to the needs of lower ability pupils by allowing them to spend more time on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Very able pupils benefit from some additional opportunities such as visits to universities but this is an area which is not fully developed. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. Pupils develop a good understanding of what being a good citizen means.

Although almost all pupils are able to follow the available options of their choice as they get older, the range of courses from 14 to 19 years is too limited to meet all pupils' needs and aspirations. The school has recently introduced some vocational courses in Year 10 and is working in partnership with other schools and colleges to offer a wider range of vocational courses and qualifications, but this is work-in-progress and current plans extend over several years.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides a good level of care and support for all its pupils. There are appropriate arrangements in place for ensuring their safety and well-being. Teachers know their pupils well. Behaviour, personal development and pupils' academic progress are monitored both by form tutors and by heads of year. Pupils are set challenging targets throughout the school based on their prior attainment. In Years 10 and 11 the very good academic mentoring system for all pupils has been a key contributor to the school's rising standards, although the arrangements for monitoring progress are not as well developed for younger pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities

are supported very well. The staff who support and guide them are appropriately trained, are efficiently deployed and use a wide range of strategies to raise the self-confidence and attainment of the pupils in their care. There are extensive links with external agencies and the staff work closely with them to assess and plan for these pupils' needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The death two years ago of the previous long-established headteacher led to a period of interim management before the appointment of the current head in late 2004. A newly constituted and expanded senior leadership team is well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders provide clear direction and work well together. This is a key factor in promoting the good climate for learning and pupils' good progress. The school is very inclusive in its approach to learners' needs, particularly those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The school rigorously analyses and compares its academic performance with other schools nationally. A revised school self-evaluation and monitoring cycle has been put in place this year, building on existing review processes, but it is not yet fully established. Faculty and subject reviews feature within it. These and their subsequent action plans vary in quality reflecting the varying skills of their leaders. Staff performance management is systematic and guides the focus of teachers' professional development. Staff are well qualified and have very secure knowledge of their subjects.

Resources are deployed effectively, but the accommodation looks 'tired' in some areas of the school, for example in art and science. Governors know the school well, act in the best interests of pupils and parents, and give close scrutiny to the schools' performance in academic and financial matters.

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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	3	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	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	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	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	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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	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?	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

3 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Chancellor's School, Pine Grove, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. AL9 7BN

You will recall that we visited your school recently. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave inspectors and the politeness that we were shown. We spoke with some of you in lessons and in other discussions and the information you provided helped to confirm what the staff, governors and parents had to say about your school. I would like to share with you what we found out about the quality of education you receive. We were impressed with:

- Your good attitudes to learning and your behaviour around the school and in lessons
- The good progress you make in lessons and the high standards that you achieve at GCSE and in the sixth form
- The way in which many of you contribute to the school and wider community, for example, by acting as a 'buddy' to others or taking part in clubs, performances and sports
- The increasing awareness you have of how to live safe and healthy lives.

There are many good features to the school that help you to progress well. Many of you told us how much you appreciate the efforts staff make to mentor and support you in preparation for your GCSE and Post-16 examinations. Teachers are very knowledgeable and plan interesting and challenging lessons. The good relationships that you enjoy also help you to learn effectively. You show good skills in learning and researching for yourselves but you can help improve these if you do more to assess and review the quality of your work as you go along. You are acquiring good skills in mathematics and literacy and the good access you have to ICT is helping to prepare you well for your futures.

Overall, inspectors think that you go to a good school but there are things that could be even better. The range of courses leading to accreditation for 14 to 19 year olds could be wider to include more vocational options. The school needs to develop further its systems for monitoring, reviewing and improving its performance.

With all good wishes for your future at Chancellor's School.

Ray Jardine Reporting inspector