



Church Stretton School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 123565
Local Authority Shropshire
Inspection number 292714
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector John Evans HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Shrewsbury Road
School category	Community		Church Stretton
Age range of pupils	11–16		SY6 6EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01694 722209
Number on roll (school)	743	Fax number	01694 722417
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Carmen Culliss
		Headteacher	John Allin
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2006		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	20–21 September 2006	292714

Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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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

This is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving the market town of Church Stretton and surrounding rural areas of Shropshire. This catchment area combines relative affluence and characteristics of rural disadvantage, which are under-represented in the below average proportion of students eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but a higher proportion than usual have a statement of special educational need. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. The school has recently gained specialist technology college status.

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 with some outstanding features. It is well placed to develop into an outstanding school. Achievement is good and standards are above average. Both have improved strongly in the last two years. The standards attained at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average and students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make good, and in some instances outstanding, progress, especially in Key Stage 3.

This is because the school provides good teaching, students are very keen to learn and their progress is carefully monitored against their individual targets. This all takes place in an environment which provides the highest standards of care, guidance and support, enhanced by the school's engagement with a wide range of external agencies. The school has an inclusive approach and strongly focuses on helping students develop important personal qualities. As a result, students' personal development is good. They feel safe and secure, increasingly adopt healthy lifestyles and make very positive contributions within and beyond the school community. Their attendance, enjoyment of school and spiritual development are excellent.

Most teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and have adopted many of the initiatives designed to raise the standards of teaching and learning; but this is not always the case. The school has not yet done enough to ensure greater consistency and provide more variation in learning activities to meet the full range of abilities in lessons. The curriculum is good and students in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities to follow vocational, including work-based, alternatives to GCSE courses.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior colleagues are leading very tangible improvements and their evaluation of the school is extremely accurate. Subjects are generally well managed, but improvement plans and lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on the quality of learning taking place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the school's approach to the planning and evaluation of lessons to focus more strongly on learning and ensure that the needs of all students are more consistently met.
- Ensure that departmental self-evaluations are more sharply focused and rigorous so that they have greater impact on the students' experience.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards are mostly well above average and continuing to improve. Students' attainment upon entry to Year 7 is slightly above average. The national test results in 2005 showed that standards attained at the end of Year 9 were well above average in each of the core subjects. The 2005 GCSE results reflect standards which were also well above average, although there had been a decline in 2004. The

proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades was 64% compared with 57% nationally and every student achieved at least one GCSE pass.

This is a greatly improving picture on previous recent years, particularly in the tests in Year 9 where results showed very good progress being made during Key Stage 3, especially in English. The provisional 2006 results show continued improvement in the Year 9 test results and a very significant rise in the proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades. This provides considerable confidence that at least good progress is being sustained across the school.

Assessment information is used systematically to set challenging targets for individual students, subjects and the school. These targets are now beginning to be more consistently met as a result of improvements introduced in the recent past. Students' progress is rigorously monitored. These approaches, together with good teaching and learning, are responsible for the rising levels of achievement across the school.

The gap between boys and girls is much narrower than it is nationally. Both make good progress, but boys do not achieve as many higher grades at GCSE. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make at least as much progress as other students and some make outstanding progress, including considerable gains in their literacy skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Very positive attitudes to work and very good attendance are significant contributors to students' good achievement and progress. Students enjoy school. They behave well in lessons and around the school, and show good consideration for others.

Students' sense of responsibility is extremely well developed. The school council provides good opportunities to raise and discuss issues concerning them. Students take full responsibility for chairing and running the meetings. Students assist at school functions such as open evenings and events for the local community. A significant proportion of Year 11 students make important contributions to the school community through mentoring and paired reading with younger students. About two thirds of Year 11 act as 'senior pupils', helping to supervise the school at breaks.

Students' spiritual development is excellent. They have a good sense of the wonders of nature, music and art, of the value of life and of human emotions. Their moral and social development is strong, and cultural development is good. Students show considerable respect for one another, and for others' views and opinions. They respond positively to any opportunities to reflect on and consider their own lives and those of others.

Most students enjoy the healthy food options on offer in the school dining room. They are well aware of the need to eat healthily. They participate in two hours of sport each week during lessons and a large number are involved in extra-curricular sport. Students make considered decisions about their education post-16 and develop well skills likely

to be of use in their working life, such as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and working as part of a team.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are mostly good with some examples of outstanding practice. For example, in art and drama, the very positive ethos in lessons promoted effective independent learning in a structured and well-supported environment which enabled students to make outstanding progress. Generally, when teaching is good, students' attitudes are very positive and they respond well. They particularly enjoy lessons which are sufficiently structured but not over-directed, provide a variety of activities and methods which actively involve them and where their needs and abilities are effectively taken into account. Usually, there are also very good relationships between staff and students which promote learning in a friendly and secure environment.

Initiatives to raise the standards of teaching and learning have promoted the sharing of lesson objectives, the need to match learning activities to the range of abilities in each class and the importance of reviewing learning at the end of a lesson. Many teachers incorporate these elements well into their lessons, but it is not always the case. Some teaching also promotes students' ability to learn more independently and takes account of students' preferred learning styles; however, this is insufficiently widespread. Not all teachers integrate systematically all these good practices into their lesson planning.

Sufficient homework is regularly set and marked but the thoroughness and helpfulness of the marking is variable. Teachers also sometimes miss opportunities for assessment in lessons which would help students make more progress.

The school is aware of this and is in the process of extending its range and methods of assessment. All students have individual targets which they generally know well. The school assigns great importance to this and carefully monitors and tracks students' progress. This approach complements the good teaching and learning and contributes significantly to the good progress that students make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which meets statutory requirements. The range of academic and vocational programmes is sufficiently broad and appropriate to meet the needs and interests of the large majority of students. In each year all students study a modern foreign language, primarily French, and have two hours each week of physical education. Aspects of health, citizenship and careers education are well integrated into a weekly period of personal and social education. In several subjects there are opportunities for students to take shorter qualifications and entry level qualifications where appropriate.

Constructive relationships with colleges and other local schools have helped the school to broaden the curriculum to meet the work-related interests of many students more effectively and good use is made of the increasing flexibility programme. As a result, a good number of Years 10 and 11 students take up opportunities to follow applied and vocational courses, including work-based learning opportunities which reflect the rural environment and local employment opportunities. Apart from the applied GCSE in ICT, the school does not offer a mainstream vocational course of its own in Key Stage 4.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities have some opportunities to develop their skills through non-accredited alternatives to GCSE courses, including life skills and community care activities. The curriculum is kept under review and the school has plans to develop more alternatives for these students and to provide a course in construction. There is an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, which spans a wide range of sports and performing arts, clubs, visits, including overseas residentials, and opportunities for older students to contribute in the community. These activities are valued and enjoyed by a large number of students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school has the welfare of its students at the heart of all it does. It provides an outstandingly caring and supportive environment. Students rate the care that the school gives very highly and feel secure and valued. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well, so that they make at least as good progress as other students.

Students' academic and personal development is carefully monitored and assessed by tutors and heads of year. This enables staff to set appropriate academic targets and to identify, and deal with, potential underachievement. As a result, students make good progress.

The school's procedures for child protection meet current requirements. The two staff with oversight have had appropriate, recent training and all staff receive clear guidance on how to deal with any issues which arise. The school has good measures to deal effectively with the very few occurrences of bullying or racist incidents. The school makes excellent use of outside agencies to help support students who may need expert guidance.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) course ensures that students are aware of the dangers of the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and of the advisability of a healthy diet and lifestyle. Outside speakers are used well to provide expertise that school staff may not have. Guidance on subject choices for Years 10 and 11, and study or employment beyond Year 11 is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and his senior colleagues provide effective leadership which, harnessed to the commitment of teachers and other staff, has led to significant improvements in achievement and standards over the last two years. Their vision of a school which is excellent in all respects, which helps all its students to achieve as well as they can, and which is a valuable community resource is a realistic aspiration. The school's self-evaluation provides a detailed and accurate view of its strengths and areas for further improvement and clearly identifies the specific actions needed to continue to take the school forward. The inspection evidence supports the school's own view of itself. The pace of change is well managed through the setting of key priorities each year. Firm action is taken when a subject is identified as underperforming.

Governors demonstrate their support for the school energetically and give detailed consideration to many aspects of the school's performance. They provide appropriate challenge for the school's senior team. Resources are deployed efficiently and effectively, although aspects of the school environment, including the toilet facilities and social space for students, need improving and the school has plans to do this.

Leadership and management of subjects have been improved. Subject leaders use data well to gain a better insight into performance in their subject and to target improvements more precisely. However, departmental self-evaluations are insufficiently self-critical, particularly in relation to teaching and learning, and improvement plans lack measurable outcomes. Lesson observations do not provide sufficient evaluation of the learning taking place.

The school has developed good partnerships with local primary schools, colleges and care agencies which have enhanced the curriculum and the support available to students. Such attributes and the high and rising levels of achievement are evidence that the school has good capacity to improve further.

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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
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	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
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	2
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

A few weeks ago a small team of Ofsted inspectors visited your school. We met and talked with many of you and observed several of your lessons. We also met teachers and had many letters from parents. We want to thank you for being so friendly and helpful towards us. Here are our main findings:

What is good about your school

- You are at a good school which is going the right way towards becoming an outstanding one. It has many strengths and one of its key strengths is you. We were very impressed by how much you enjoy going to school, your attendance, behaviour and positive attitude to learning.
- The standards you reach at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average and continuing to get better as you are helped to make even more progress.
- The majority of lessons help you to learn well and make good progress. Teachers know you well and have an accurate idea of what each of you is capable of; some teachers are very good at planning lessons in which all of you feel sufficiently challenged.
- The range and quality of care, guidance and support the school provides you with are outstanding and there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. These features make a strong contribution to your personal development, which we felt was good.
- The provision and support the school provides for those of you with learning difficulties and disabilities are very good and, as a result, you make very good progress.
- The school is well led and this, together with the hard work of your teachers and other staff, is helping you to achieve better results year on year.

Improvements we would like the school to make

- Ensure that all lessons have clear objectives and a range of learning activities to match the mix of abilities and learning styles in the class – so that lessons are sufficiently interesting and challenging for everyone.
- Make sure that departmental improvement plans pay closer attention to how well each of you is learning, so they have a bigger impact on your experiences in lessons.
- Improve the quality of some aspects of the school environment, including the toilet facilities and the social space available to students (we understand the school already has plans to do this).

We wish you all well in your future.