

Christ's College, Guildford

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134120
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	294111
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Ramesh Kapadia HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	517
6th form	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Henry
Headteacher	Mr S Green
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Larch Avenue Guildford GU1 1JY
Telephone number	01483 537373
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Christ's College is a small secondary college in Guildford which was opened on the site of a predecessor school in 2003. Over nine-tenths of the students are white and almost a third have special educational needs, some of whom are part of the centre for speech, language and communication. A few speak English as an additional language. The college has had rapidly falling rolls over the last few years but the position is now more stable. The principal and some of his team only joined the college two years ago.

Its central mission is 'learning to serve', as part of the Christian ethos which pervades the college. There are ambitious plans to become a specialist college for sports and the performing arts this year and to move into a brand new building in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The college has had a legacy of under-achievement which is now being overcome. The overall quality of education and care in the college are now satisfactory, in line with the college's own assessment. Nevertheless, the senior leaders and governors recognise that there is still much work to be done, especially to raise standards in Key Stage 4 and in English. At Key Stage 3 there have been marked improvements in mathematics and science over the last two years, partly with the appointment of new leaders. Standards overall are approaching national averages at Key Stage 3 but are below average at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There are signs that the current Year 11 students, who started secondary education in another school, are now making better progress.

A satisfactory curriculum is offered and includes adequate provision for work-based learning in Key Stage 4 and vocational provision in the sixth form. However, there is a limited choice of academic subjects on offer in the sixth form. Teaching and learning are adequate across the college. This is because senior teachers, including the principal, have undertaken a high teaching load, as well as more stability in the teaching staff. Marking of students' work is not always consistent.

Students' enjoyment of college life has improved and is now satisfactory. There is good provision for spiritual development within a strong Christian ethos. Personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall. Whilst behaviour is adequate, there are also a high number of fixed-term exclusions. Care, support and guidance are good.

Leadership and management are good, based on systematic self-evaluation, supported by the governors. Many initiatives are in place including extensive monitoring of teaching, comprehensive data on assessment, and the use of external consultants for areas such as behaviour management. There have been improvements in the ethos of the college and rising standards at Key Stage 3 showing good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. The small sixth form is open to students whose grades are relatively low, a mark of its inclusive nature. The curriculum in Years 12 and 13 is generally satisfactory and offers a range of choices for students. The varied vocational areas attract many students while the academic subjects are less well supported. A strong ethos of care and support is appreciated by students, as well as the small groups and individualised attention, leading to good personal development and well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in Key Stage 4 and in English.
- Ensure that policies on behaviour and marking are consistently applied.
- Review the sixth form curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

In 2006, there was a marked improvement in test results at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science, though these are still not high enough. The 2007 Key Stage 3 test results are likely to reach internally set targets.

At GCSE, there was a slight improvement in overall attainment in 2006 from a low base. GCSE examination results in English and science were still low in 2006, but a number of important steps have been taken to address the underlying issues. Current data indicates that there will be a marked improvement this year. The target of over a third of students attaining five or more higher grades at GCSE is likely to be met. In terms of the foundation subjects, good results have been consistently obtained in art and physical education, but have been more variable in other foundation subjects. In the sixth form, pass rates for vocational courses have been high, but have been lower for GCE A and AS level, though the value-added for these results has been satisfactory.

The college has substantial and comprehensive data for each department with test and examination results over three years, together with strategies for raising achievement, as well as targets. It would be useful to have a more formal review and analysis of the effectiveness of the previous year. Targets are set but some of these could be more challenging. Performance of students with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is similar to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, underpinned by the strong spiritual dimension in college life and the opportunities for prayer and reflection. Cultural development is well promoted through drama, music and dance both within the curriculum and beyond, with events such as an annual musical. Students know what is right and wrong and discuss these issues in a clear and sensitive way. They contribute well to the college community and beyond, taking on a large range of roles. Students are proud of their contributions to the college and house councils. For instance, Year 10 students mentor new arrivals, while sixth formers act as prefects and take on other responsibilities, such as for sport. Many students of all age groups involve themselves in the college's performing arts activities. Regular fund-raising activities by students support local and national charities.

Behaviour is generally satisfactory. The strict discipline policy is applied by experienced teachers and senior staff who patrol the college regularly. This has led to a high number of fixed-term exclusions. Although about a third of parents expressed concern about behaviour and bullying, students confirm these aspects have improved and they feel safe in the college.

Attendance is improving and is now close to the national average. Students' high level of involvement in physical activities ranging from sports to dance contributes to their healthy lifestyles: some sports reach a high regional level. Students enjoy the healthy food and drinks offered at break times. They develop workplace and other skills through enterprise activities, but the general literacy levels are not high enough.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features. The college has monitored teaching very extensively, leading to a reasonably accurate picture of where further improvements are needed. The college has produced useful sample lesson plans, supported by guidance on effective practice in lesson observation. Most teachers plan lessons carefully and enable students to make satisfactory progress in lessons. They share good relationships with the students and are enthusiastic and committed to raising standards. They engage students by using teaching styles that involve them. Most teachers skilfully employ question and answer sessions to determine how well students have understood. In some lessons work is not well matched to students' needs.

There are good examples of how teachers mark students' work and clearly identify what is needed to improve the work. However, like many aspects of the teaching, these approaches are not fully implemented by all teachers.

The most effective teaching was seen in Years 7 to 10 where students were fully aware of the teachers' expectations and their attitudes were good, resulting in good progress. In Year 11 progress in some lessons was restricted due to the lack of students' prior knowledge that made it necessary for the teacher to modify plans in order to cover these gaps.

The relationships between teachers and students in the sixth form are generally good, with a cooperative approach to learning. The students appreciate this style and one student commented, "I think the teaching is good and I am well supported but I realise that a lot depends on me and";

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum for students, including those with LDD and in the centre for speech, language and communication, is satisfactory. The relatively low number in each year group limits the number of subjects offered. Nevertheless, the college has managed the provision so that students follow a suitable curriculum that matches their needs. In Years 10 and 11 students select option subjects and the college then organises the timetable to reflect these choices.

Students are also able to follow a variety of subjects that may include studies at a local college of further education, work experience or a young apprenticeship scheme. These choices are arranged so that students also study core subjects in the college. A new federation with other providers will enable a wider choice.

The curriculum reflects the inclusive nature of the college being flexible and student-centred. It has had a positive impact on student engagement and attendance. There are a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The pastoral support for students, especially those who are vulnerable, is good. Individual education plans are employed effectively and vocational courses have kept some students, who might otherwise have lost interest, engaged with education. There are good links with a range of external agencies to meet a wide variety of needs, including those met by the centre for speech, language and communication. Provisions to safeguard students are robust and the necessary checks and measures are properly undertaken.

The college has a strong commitment to improving academic performance, offering revision groups and guides, as well as homework clubs. Class tracking sheets include an assessment of learning styles of each student as well as prior attainment data; targets and predictions are compared with actual results. An analysis of possible discrepancies would be useful. Though students usually know their targets they do not always know how to reach them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Strong and effective leadership and management have been effective in securing demonstrable improvements in Key Stage 3 and are now having some effect in Key Stage 4. A strong governing body has been supportive of the college, whilst offering a degree of challenge.

Staffing is more stable and morale has improved from a difficult situation two years ago, where some students had ten different teachers in science or mathematics over a single year. The use of supply teachers has now been substantially reduced. New leaders have been appointed in a number of faculties and are having a positive effect, such as a rapid improvement in modular examination results for Year 10 students in science.

The college recognises that the quality of leadership at middle management varies but most have now met the internally devised quality standards in leadership. The decision taken by the leadership team to have high teaching loads has been effective in raising the quality of teaching. The governors have recognised that this needs to be seen as a short-term expedient.

An extensive book on self-evaluation usefully includes a one-page 'dashboard' of indicators of progress. A number of actions have been taken and are having some impact on achievement. Detailed teaching grades are collated together with individual suggestions for professional development. Overall, the college has extensive systems for monitoring and this had an impact on achievement. A difficult budgetary situation has been well managed and there is a secure plan, approved by the local authority, to move the college towards a balanced budget in the next two years.

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Annex A

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?	3	3
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	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
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?	3	3
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.

Annex A

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	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	3	
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

The inspection team enjoyed their time at your college and would like to thank you for the help you gave us and your courtesy towards us, demonstrating one of the aims of the college to show respect to all.

We judged that the quality of education is satisfactory overall and that your progress is now improving. You are pleased that you do not have cover teachers as often as in the past. The team noted that teaching has improved, as has behaviour in the college, though we still think that your behaviour could be better. You are in a community with a strong Christian ethos; your canteen gives you healthy choices and you participate well in a number of sporting and other activities. You get good support in the college and value the house system. The new principal and his leadership team have helped provide a strong focus on your learning. There are several areas we have suggested for improvement.

- Standards need to be improved, especially in Years 10 and 11, as well as in English.
- Marking should be more frequent and make suggestions as to how you could improve.
- The subjects in the sixth form should be reviewed to meet your current and future aspirations.

Good luck in the future.

R Kapadia HMI