

Churchmead Church of England (VA) School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133580
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	295504
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Maria Dawes HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	603
6th form	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr W Cooley
Headteacher	Mrs G Goodman
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2005
School address	Priory Way Datchet Slough SL3 9JQ
Telephone number	08444 772446
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Churchmead Church of England (VA) School is a smaller than average comprehensive with the majority of students coming from the borough of Slough which operates a selective secondary education system.

Students come from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of students from ethnic minority background is higher than that found nationally; the most significant numbers are from Asian British heritage. The school also has a higher than average proportion of students from Traveller, Romany or gypsy backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities including statements is below average.

The previous inspection judged the school to be providing a satisfactory standard of education although the sixth form was judged as inadequate.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Churchmead is an improving school but its overall effectiveness is unsatisfactory because too many students make insufficient progress by the end of Key Stage 4. Whilst Churchmead provides a supportive environment for students there are a number of aspects in the school that need to be improved and initiatives that need to be effectively integrated. Therefore in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress students make, particularly boys, and leadership and management. The school also requires significant improvement in relation to its sixth form.

Given their starting points significant groups of students, in particular boys of White British heritage, make too slow progress through Key Stage 3 and 4 and by the end of Year 11 attain standards that are significantly below average. The school has made some recent changes to provision resulting in some improvements in students' outcomes and, in some subjects such as Art and Drama, students achieve very well. There is however too large a variation between subjects. Leadership and management have not been rigorous enough in implementing and monitoring new initiatives in order to bring about swift progress in raising achievement. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining good teachers have not helped. There is too much inconsistency in teaching and behaviour management. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11, although improved since the last inspection, does not always meet the needs and interests of some students, in particular lower ability boys and students from traveller, Romany or gypsy heritage.

The school is faithful to part of its mission, particularly in developing a caring community that encourages and values the contribution and involvement of every individual. Most students are well supported and make satisfactory progress in their personal development. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. The majority of students have positive attitudes towards school and a strength is their enthusiasm to be involved in the school and wider community. The school encourages students to take part in a wide range of enrichment opportunities and uses its links with other schools and organisations, including schools in Africa, China and Japan, well to promote students' well-being. Parents and carers are mostly supportive of the school but a large minority of those who responded to the questionnaire sent to them before the inspection did not agree that behaviour in the school was good. Students and staff also express concern that poor behaviour by a minority of students disrupts learning in some lessons.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there is too much variation within and between subjects. Although there is some outstanding teaching, a small proportion is inadequate and not enough is good or better. Lessons frequently do not take into account students' individual needs and teachers' expectations of what students can achieve is not always accurate. There are inconsistencies in marking, monitoring of work and how guidance is given to students to help them improve. Managers are working with staff on improving the quality of teaching and learning but this is not sufficiently developed; in particular mechanisms to capitalise on some of the excellent practice are not yet embedded enough to bring about the required improvement.

Whilst the school has identified relevant areas for improvement it is not accurate in its self-evaluation, in particular in judging the achievement of its students. The effectiveness of

the headteacher and the senior staff is stretched by continuing staffing difficulties and their attention is frequently deflected by the continuing issues of the sixth form. The sixth form is inadequate and its small size has adverse resource implications for the main school. The effectiveness of middle managers is variable in bringing about improvement and strategic planning at all levels does not focus sufficiently on assessing the implementation and impact of initiatives. Actions are not always focused sufficiently on improving student achievement. This contributes to the lack of coherence and consistency inspectors found in aspects of the school's work.

Since the last inspection the school has addressed several of the inspection issues including improvements in the provision of citizenship, a greater vocational curriculum in Key Stage 4 and students' attendance and punctuality. This combined with recent changes in provision and the progress now being made in raising standards demonstrates that the school has the capacity to improve; however it does not currently provide satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is inadequate as is its leadership and management. Very few students enroll into the sixth form despite the efforts of the school to widen its provision through an arrangement with a neighbouring school. At the time of the inspection there were just nine students on roll. The sixth form provides unsatisfactory value for money.

In contrast to the above, the students make good progress and achieve well. This is due to good teaching and the individual attention that students get as a result of small group sizes. In the best lessons teachers use their good subject knowledge to draw out and extend student learning through effective group work and questioning.

The limited curriculum is unsatisfactory and does not meet the needs or interests of current and prospective students. Very few students in Year 11 talk about staying on into the Sixth form. The care, guidance and support for students is not structured and their personal development and well being are restricted. Students do not sufficiently experience being part of the wider school and have few opportunities to contribute positively. Physical education and a structured personal and social education programme are not available to the students.

The absence of someone to lead the sixth form has meant that systems for setting challenging targets and tracking progress in order to support students are not yet in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly by the end of Key Stage 4, and improve the progress all students, especially boys, make during their time at school.
- Improve the consistency and rigour of monitoring and assessing the implementation and impact of initiatives that promote higher achievement and school improvement.
- Ensure that good practice, particularly that found in Art, Drama and English, is shared across all departments so that the quality of teaching is raised to the best.
- Improve the learning ethos by a consistent and rigorous approach to behaviour management.
- Review the viability of the sixth form provision and its impact on the whole school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 2

Overall the progress students make between starting school and the end of Year 11 is inadequate. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average although the school has a lower proportion of higher attaining students than many schools. Throughout Key Stage 3 and 4 students do not make enough progress and although improving, standards at Key Stage 4 are low with the proportion of students achieving five good grades at GCSE in 2006 significantly lower than the national average. Boys standards are exceptionally low and there is a much larger than national gap between the attainment of boys and girls. Boys, and in particular boys of White British heritage, make very poor progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall due to good support from the school.

Results at the end of Key Stage 3 tests have generally improved over the last few years and standards in maths and English are now in line with the national average. Standards in science are below average.

There is significant variation between achievement in subjects with the proportion of students obtaining higher GCSE passes in English Literature, drama and art being particularly high; this shows what students are capable of when motivated by good teaching. Some students underachieve because the academic curriculum does not suit their needs.

The standard of students' work and progress made in lessons seen during the inspection was generally satisfactory although there were variations due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. The school expects to make modest improvements in examination results this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Most have a positive attitude towards learning especially when they are motivated by interesting and lively lessons. The majority of students behave well but a significant minority do not. Some behaviour can be challenging and, in lessons, disrupts learning. Parents are concerned about this aspect of the school. The response to poor behaviour is inconsistent. The high number of exclusions reflects the active use of the behaviour policy centrally and as a result students have noted that incidents of bullying have decreased. Some staff lack the skills to deal with poor behaviour and the behaviour code is not being uniformly applied. This is impeding a significant improvement in behaviour. The school has worked effectively to improve attendance which is now satisfactory. Holidays in term time, often extended to long families reunions abroad, or travelling within England, results in a number of students missing valuable learning time.

Student's spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. They are encouraged to reflect on moral issues in assembly and learn about other faiths and cultures in lessons. Students have good awareness of what constitutes a healthy life style and making sensible diet choices. They are prepared for future employment soundly through valuable work experience opportunities although achievement in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are not high enough. Through charity initiatives and projects out of school students make

a good contribution to the community and especially valuable is the extensive and imaginative range of Year 10 community projects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but inconsistent. Much of the teaching seen was good and some, notably in art, drama and citizenship, was outstanding. However, there is some unsatisfactory teaching in a number of subjects.

In the most effective lessons students are given a clear focus for what they should learn enabling them to work well independently. Teachers have good subject knowledge and students work well in groups and pairs. In most classes working relationships are positive and students respond well to praise. The most successful lessons stimulate and challenge pupils effectively. In a Year 10 citizenship lesson, for example, students were fully engaged in planning a charity event; due to the teacher's enthusiasm and effective pace of delivery, high levels of interest and concentration were maintained throughout enabling students to make excellent progress.

There are a significant number of lessons in which work is not sufficiently closely matched to students' learning needs. Lesson planning is not always focused on outcomes and lesson objectives are not always explicit. Where the level of challenge is not high enough to match students' abilities they lose focus and can misbehave. The quality and effectiveness of marking is variable. In some subjects teachers give helpful evaluation of the students' work and clear pointers for improvement but not in all. As a result teaching does not always build effectively upon what students know and as a result they are left unsure of what to do or of how to improve tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The school's curriculum is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met. The school is aware that the emphasis at Key Stage 4 on academic GCSE courses does not always motivate the lower attaining students and from September a wider more innovative curriculum will be offered building on recent changes for current Key Stage 4 students and existing links with local colleges. At Key Stage 3, the school provides a balanced range of activities that meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Provision for citizenship has improved since the last inspection.

There is an appropriate and successful programme of work experience and students enjoy a good variety of enrichment activities including a recent visit by Year 11 students to a Global Conference in New York.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Students receive good pastoral support. Year Heads and the intervention manager are effective in supporting students' personal development and fulfil a valuable role in liaising with families. Child protection, risk assessment and vetting procedures are robust, so that vulnerable students are well supported and the school can do its best to keep all of them safe. Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is mostly effective, and the school works in close partnership with outside agencies to help meet students' wide-ranging needs. The school is developing a range of extended services and although these are still in their infancy they have the potential to further support students and their parents.

Academic guidance and support is developing, but inconsistent. Where it is stronger, for example in Year 11, some groups of students receive regular mentoring from staff to motivate them and discuss their progress. However this is not yet embedded for all students and it is too early to assess its impact. Although students' academic progress is assessed and tracked, the information gained is not always used effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 4

Leaders and managers have sustained their commitment to the school through a period of considerable turbulence and are resolute in seeking to create a climate where students feel secure and cared for. The school has an evolving inclusive Christian ethos. It operates smoothly on a day to day basis and the leadership from the headteacher, with good support from her leadership team ensures that the staff work well together as a team. However, although there have been improvements in examination results at both the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 the school has not been swift or rigorous enough in implementing changes that need to take place in order to improve students' progress to a satisfactory level. Monitoring and evaluation procedures have not always been robust enough to bring about sustained and rapid improvement. Leadership and management including governance are inadequate.

Staff recruitment has proved extremely difficult in recent years, but some progress is now being made in strengthening the quality of teaching staff. Managers have worked closely with staff and external consultants to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. This has had some impact, particularly at Key Stage 3, however a lack of strategic planning and inconsistency in the way that valuable initiatives are implemented had meant that there is too much variability between departments. Governors are supportive and have a sound understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of the school. However they have not been active enough in ensuring appropriate progress over a significant period of time.

Overall the school's self-evaluation provides a useful basis for improvement, but is over-generous in its grading. The sixth form remains inadequate and in relation to its size adversely affects the main school in terms of funding, teacher and management time. The strategic plan identifies some relevant actions however these are not always rigorously structured enough or clearly focused on improving student underachievement. The senior management have recently made

changes to provision that have the potential to impact on students' outcomes. Several of the previous inspection issues have been addressed. Recent additions to the senior team, are strengthening the pace of school improvement, for example the curriculum has been broadened with good plans in place for further improvement and standards are rising. The school has the capacity to improve.

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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?	4	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	2
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	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
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	3	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	4

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?	4	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
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?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Churchmead Church of England (VA) School, Slough, SL3 9JQ

I am writing on behalf of the other inspectors and myself to thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say about your school. We hope that you take the time to look at the full report but we thought you would like a summary of our findings.

We thought there were positive things about your school. However, we found some important things that need to be improved. We have therefore put your school into 'Notice to Improve' which means that inspectors will return in a year to see what progress Churchmead has made.

It is clear that you value the support that your teachers give you and most of you try hard. We were impressed with the way that you are keen to be involved with activities in school and make a positive contribution to the local community. In particular we thought there were an extensive and imaginative range of Year 10 community projects taking place. We were also pleased to see that attendance has improved although there are still a minority of you taking holidays or prolonged absences in term time.

We saw some excellent teaching and we were particularly impressed with some of the work that some of you are doing in Drama and Art. However teaching and learning are too variable and too many of you do not make the progress needed to get the results you are capable of in Year 11. Although most of you behave very well a number of students and parents told us that the poor behaviour of a minority of students disrupts the learning of the majority.

The main thing that needs to be put right by the school is to ensure that all of you make the progress you are capable of. It can do this by:

- improving the quality of some of the teaching
- ensuring that the behaviour of a minority of students is improved to prevent learning being disrupted
- monitoring and evaluating the performance of all aspects of the school in order to plan for and make further improvements.

We have also asked the school to review the sixth form.

You have a role to play in improving the school by co-operating with staff and really getting involved in lessons. We think your school has lots of potential, and wish you all the best in working with your teachers to improve it.

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes

Her Majesty's Inspector