

The Charles Read High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120638
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	302341
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lady Willoughby d'Ersby
Headteacher	Mr D Airey
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Bourne Road Corby Glen Grantham NG33 4NT
Telephone number	01476 550333
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Charles Read High School is a well below average sized mixed secondary school which operates in an area where there is a selective system of education. As a result, most higher-attaining students attend local grammar schools. The school serves a wide area with many students coming from small rural communities. The number of students on roll has risen over recent years and the school is now oversubscribed. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds, with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average as is the percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is about average. Student mobility is very high with about 25% of students starting or leaving the school at times other than the start or end of each school year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school judges its effectiveness as good. Inspectors consider it to be outstanding. Excellent care, guidance and support are provided for students, including exceptionally strong support for the many students who have learning difficulties or disabilities, and those entering the school at other than the usual times. All students are really well known by staff and this ensures that every student matters. As one parent wrote, 'The school has a way of making each child feel important the staff really do care about the success of all pupils.' The vast majority of students respond very well to this environment. They enjoy their education, appreciating their classroom lessons and extra-curricular activities in equal measure. The school provides excellent value for money.

Achievement is outstanding. From standards on entry that, taken overall, are well below average, students make good progress through Years 7 to 9. Standards are rising, although they remain below average at the end of Year 9. Progress accelerates in Years 10 and 11 and the 2006 GCSE examination results were above average. These results represent excellent achievement in relation to standards on entry and place the school in the top five percent of schools nationally in terms of adding value, a position the school has held for the last three years. Although the results are below average when English and mathematics are taken into account, results in these key subjects show a rising trend and reflect the rapid improvement in the school's performance. Central to this improvement are outstanding leadership and management. The key issues identified in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully. Rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school ensure that the school knows very well where more work is needed and its recent history of improvement shows it has excellent potential to improve further.

Teaching and learning are good with some examples of outstanding practice. Effective use is made of new technology and the benefits of this can be seen in lessons across the whole school. In most lessons, students are managed well and teachers ensure that students are actively involved. However, in some lessons, activities do not promote the development of independent learning skills. In these lessons students are too passive and some become inattentive. The school has done much to ensure that assessment is used effectively to promote students' learning. The beneficial impact of this is seen in many lessons. This is a real strength in teaching and learning and contributes significantly to students' progress. However, in some subjects there is too much reliance on verbal feedback on the strengths and weaknesses in students' work and not enough written guidance on the standard of the work and how to improve.

The outstanding curriculum promotes students' achievement exceptionally well. One of the strengths of the curriculum is the flexible way in which the school attempts to meet the needs of students of all abilities, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The wide range of GCSE and vocational opportunities the school offers are very well suited to students' interests. These make a significant contribution to the rapid progress students make in these years. Progress is carefully monitored so that underperformance can be tackled at an early stage. The school works exceptionally well with other schools, agencies and with the community to enrich students' education and ensure their well-being.

Students' personal development is good. They appreciate how to live healthily and keep safe and they are well prepared for further study or employment.

Students have many opportunities to demonstrate leadership and their self-confidence increases as they progress through the school. As one parent wrote, 'Charles Read has helped our daughter in so many ways that we will be forever grateful'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by ensuring that all teaching promotes independence and allows students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Ensure that students are provided with clear written guidance on how to improve the quality of their work in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The achievement of students is outstanding and the school sets and reaches challenging targets. Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly in mathematics, and this is reflected in a rising trend in the Year 9 National Curriculum test results. These results, although below average, represent good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. Progress accelerates in Years 10 and 11, and students achieve exceptionally well. This is reflected in the above average proportion of students who gain five or more A* to C grades. Outstanding results in information and communication technology (ICT) make a significant contribution to this performance. However, when English and mathematics are included, the proportion of five or more A* to C grades drops to below average. Nevertheless, the proportion of students gaining these grades has trebled over the last three years. Particularly good progress is made in mathematics, and the school is working hard to raise standards further in English. Noteworthy is the excellent progress made by the substantial number of students who have learning difficulties or disabilities, whose performance is above that of similar students nationally. The achievement of the large number of students who enter the school at other than the usual times is comparable to that of their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They enjoy coming to school and this is demonstrated by their above average attendance. Students' attitudes to learning are good and they appreciate the work that their teachers do for them. Because the school's expectations of students' moral and social behaviour are very clear, the behaviour of the vast majority is good. This results in a welcoming and safe community. A small number of students present challenging behaviour. Although the school works hard to ensure that these students remain in full-time education, the number of fixed-term exclusions is above that in schools of similar size. These exclusions are all for good reasons and permanent exclusions are rare. Spiritual and cultural development is good, and students develop a good awareness of different beliefs and cultures.

Students understand how to ensure their own safety and the importance of developing healthy lifestyles. They are willing to take on responsibility and make a good contribution to the school community. Through peer mentoring, the school council and various charitable activities, students develop an understanding of social interdependence. This helps to prepare them for responsible citizenship. Students' basic and work-related skills, and in particular their ICT skills, provide a good base for their future working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school has developed a consistent approach to planning lessons and this, together with the effective use of electronic whiteboards, is having a positive impact on the quality of lessons. Most lessons begin with lively questioning that forces students to think and then proceed at a good pace. In these lessons there is a high level of challenge and teachers use their subject expertise well to extend students' knowledge and understanding. In many lessons, teachers take every opportunity to ensure that students are actively involved and share ideas. This promotes independence and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Students say that they particularly enjoy these lessons. In a few lessons teachers provide too much information or instruction. This restricts opportunities for students to develop an independent approach to learning. In a small number of lessons, students' interest and productivity wane because teaching is not challenging enough. Very good support by teaching assistants makes a significant contribution to the progress of students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The school has very effective procedures for assessing students' attainment and this information is used exceptionally well, particularly in English, mathematics and science. This makes a significant contribution to students' progress. However, in some subjects, verbal feedback on the quality of a students' work is not reinforced by clear written guidance on the standard of the work and what students should do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Excellent curriculum provision makes a major contribution to students' achievement. There is a strong emphasis on the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, which underpin preparation for students' future economic well-being. Careful planning provides a clear structure for the teaching of each subject. The needs of students with learning difficulties or disabilities are very carefully planned for. This has a major impact on the progress that all groups of students make. A key feature of the curriculum is the way it enables students' learning to accelerate, particularly in Years 10 and 11. In these years the curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of vocational courses, including opportunities for apprenticeships and work related learning. This provision is particularly well suited to students' needs and aspirations, and contributes to their enjoyment of school.

The curriculum is complemented by a very good range of enrichment activities, including a variety of stimulating activities for gifted and talented students, and booster classes.

Students of all abilities take advantage of the various sporting activities, clubs, educational visits and residential opportunities offered. As a direct result, students' aspirations are being raised and some are now asking for additional experiences to broaden their horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for students is outstanding because staff work very hard to create a unique blend of personal, academic and mentoring support for all students. The school motto 'Caring for Success' is no idle aspiration. As one parent wrote, 'This school never gives up on its students'. Because there is a genuine concern for the needs of individuals,

relationships are very good and students feel that they are respected and valued. Staff know students very well and provide them with excellent personal support. As a result, students trust adults and feel very secure in school. This makes a significant contribution to their outstanding progress. The school makes all the required checks to ensure the safety and protection of students. Support and guidance for students' academic development are highly effective. Their progress towards their targets is monitored carefully to identify and act on potential underachievement. Students say that they receive clear guidance on the options available to them in Year 10 and at the end of Year 11. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities, vulnerable students and those who are gifted and talented are particularly well supported, as are students entering the school at other than the usual times. The school works extremely closely with parents, carers and a range of external agencies to maximise students' learning at school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team has guided the school through a period of significant improvement. Together they provide a very clear direction, high expectations and a determination to raise standards further in all areas. The inclusive nature of the school is acknowledged by parents and students alike and the significant strength of the management of provision for students with learning difficulties results in their excellent progress. As one parent wrote 'We believe that the school values individuals and recognises that all children can achieve something worthwhile'. Very effective subject reviews, together with rigorous evaluation procedures, provide an accurate view of the school's performance. These enable attention to be sharply focused on areas where improvement is needed most and have underpinned the efforts to raise standards. For example, detailed analyses of examination performance in English led to successful action to improve students' writing skills. Middle managers and other staff contribute extremely well to school improvement because they receive very clear guidance on their roles and accurate feedback on their performance. Staff training is valued and used well to continually develop the quality of provision and in particular to enhance the effectiveness of middle managers. Governance is good. Governors play a strategic role in guiding the school and are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating the work of the school. Financial management is secure and resources are managed well. Provision is enhanced by extremely strong links with other schools, colleges, and businesses.

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Annex A

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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	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	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?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	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

24 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Charles Read High School, Corby Glen, NG33 4NT

Following our visit to inspect your school, I am now writing to tell you what we found out. Before I do, I would like to say thank you for making us feel so welcome. We have told your teachers how helpful you all were and that, through our discussions with you, it was good to hear how much you enjoy school and the many extra activities that are available for you.

Our main finding is that this is an outstanding school and one that is helping you to make exceptionally good progress. Because of this your results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in the GCSE examinations are rising. You told us how you find your lessons challenging, but enjoyable, and how this helps you to make such good progress. The care and support the school provides are excellent and this is particularly true for those of you who may be experiencing difficulties. There is a really friendly and positive atmosphere in the school and relationships between students and staff are exceptionally good. The vast majority of you behave well in lessons and this is a considerable help to your teachers because it enables them to concentrate on helping you to learn.

The staff and governors are united in their commitment to improve the school's work still further and we have suggested two ways in which this can be achieved. In many lessons you are given opportunities to learn without having to rely too much on your teachers. We have asked the headteacher as well as your teachers to give you more opportunities like this, and they are keen to do so. Of course, you in turn will have to behave in a very responsible way if this is to be successful. We have also asked that the very clear guidance you receive through the marking of your work in many subjects can be extended across the school. This will also mean you taking even more notice of the advice that teachers give you!

Thank you very much once again for the important part that you played in this inspection, and the very best of luck with your future studies and career plans.

Yours sincerely Dr Kenneth C Thomas Lead Inspector