

Christ's College Finchley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101350
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307663
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Samantha Morgan-Price HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	919
6th form	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Bowra
Headteacher	Mr Gary Tucker
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2004
School address	East End Road East Finchley London N2 0SE
Telephone number	020 8349 3581
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Age group	11-18
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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 average sized school serves a diverse community where a high proportion of students come from different minority ethnic groups. The number of students, who have additional educational needs, including those with statements for special educational needs, is about as expected. The sixth form admits girls. In 2003, the school gained a specialist status for mathematics and computing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Christ's College provides a satisfactory standard of education. Boys enter the school with average attainment and make good progress to achieve standards that are above average in national tests in Year 9. The satisfactory progress they make between Years 9 and 11 means that they achieve average standards at the end of Year 11. The school has taken action to stem the decline in rates of achievement over the last two years and there is now evidence from their own data that all students make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 11. Rigorous monitoring processes are now in place to identify pockets of underachievement and the school is now rectifying under performance in science, geography, religious education and psychology.

Teaching and learning is satisfactory. The best learning takes place when there is a good rapport between staff and students and the activities planned are fully engaging. However, not all lessons meet the needs of individual students and teacher feedback does not always provide the necessary guidance required to improve their work and performance.

Good personal development enables students to display good behaviour in lessons and around the school. This is a harmonious school, where students make a good contribution to their community and develop effective workplace skills. For example, one student has recently won a district final of a Young Chef competition. The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support. Working with many outside agencies the school supports many students well who are at risk of underachieving.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides purposeful leadership and with the assistance of senior leaders sets a clear direction for the school. There is an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas requiring further development and this has guided the school through a difficult period. However, inconsistencies remain in the performance of middle managers in carrying out school improvement priorities and actions to address under performance in some subjects have been slow. Senior leaders are aware that there is a need for a sharper focus on teaching and learning in order to raise achievement further throughout the school.

The school has made good progress against its specialist status targets. The range of courses has increased in information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow an examinable course in ICT. Higher attaining students follow statistics in Year 11 mathematics and attain above average standards. Standards are improving in both subjects and attainment in mathematics has been consistently above average for the past three years. The use of ICT in lessons and outside school has improved and, in 2006, the school received a national award for making best use of ICT to promote the learning community. This reflects the very good impact of the virtual learning environment website to support independent learning by pupils in lessons and at home. Within this, the school has fostered very good links with other local and international schools, including one in South Africa.

The school has maintained the good achievement of students up to the end of Year 9, and improved the achievement of students by the end of Year 11. Along with clear identification of the key priorities needed to improve the school's performance and the tackling of many of the issues identified at the previous inspection, the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education. Students enter the sixth form with below average attainment. All make satisfactory progress and achieve below average standards in advanced level examinations. Challenging targets are set with students and these are monitored well through small tutor group sessions. The curriculum provides students with opportunities to take a range of GCE advanced, advanced subsidiary and applied advanced courses. Opportunities for students to take courses other than academic are limited.

Care guidance and support is satisfactory. Students are cared for and supported well with individuals receiving careful support and guidance in their choice of higher education. A programme involving university registrars provides students with effective guidance on university applications and important aspects of student life.

Sixth formers play a positive role in supporting the internal community through taking on the role of prefects and mentors as well as organising events for younger students. They are involved with the external community through support for junior schools and being part of the Barnet volunteers. All of this contributes to their good personal development and well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of good or better lessons by focusing more closely on student learning outcomes and ensure that lessons consistently challenge all learners to achieve well.
- Make better use of assessment so that students know what they need to do to improve.
- Bring the underperforming subjects up to the level of the best by ensuring that middle leaders are consistently effective.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the school with standards that are in line with national averages. They make good progress in Key Stage 3 to attain above average standards in national tests by the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science. In 2007, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at A*-C is in line with the national average and above it when English and mathematics are included. Achievement in mathematics, one of the school's specialist subjects, is good at all levels.

Students' progress between Key Stage 3 and 4 in 2007 was inadequate due to the significant underperformance of most students in their national tests at GCSE. This issue has now been addressed and evidence provided to inspectors suggests that progress overall is now at least satisfactory for this key stage. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve as well as other students. Students achieve well in design and technology, mathematics, chemistry, statistics, and art and design. Achievement in French, geography, English literature, physics and religious education was not as good as other subjects.

The school sets challenging targets and monitors these regularly. For underachieving students in Year 10 and 11 groups, monitoring is more rigorous. There is evidence to show that some intervention strategies are having a positive impact on the achievement of all students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is good. In the majority of lessons, relationships are good and students respond positively to their teachers and work effectively together. Attendance at school is satisfactory. Around the school, students behave responsibly and are respectful towards each other and the school environment. Positive achievement and behaviour is celebrated and rewards include residential trips and visits. Students who have recently arrived at the school say it is welcoming and friendly. Overall, students report that they feel safe and have confidence in the adults working in the school.

Students' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is good. They are mindful of each other's needs and can talk reflectively about how they relate to each other. The school provides good opportunities for students to learn about a range of cultures through faith-based assemblies and whole-school events.

Students display positive attitudes towards health issues and are developing an understanding of how a healthy diet contributes to their well-being. They are yet to fully adopt healthy eating habits. Well over half of students take part in extra-curricular sports activities and some join local clubs to further develop their skills.

Students make a positive contribution to both the school and wider community. For example, sixth formers help younger pupils with their reading and volunteer to work in local primary schools. Students develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being through employer-led events and activities designed to develop their presentation, interview and communication skills. A high proportion of students go on to further education and training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

In the majority of lessons, a positive relationship between staff and students underpins good attitudes to learning. Teachers share clearly identified learning outcomes with the students and lesson content is accurate. Effective use is made of interactive white boards to introduce and develop tasks in an interesting manner. Students make the best progress when they are engaged in activities that encourage them to think and work independently. Not all sessions are challenging for the most able students nor sufficiently well structured for the less able. Teacher expectations are not always high enough. This results in the acceptance of superficial responses to questions, which means that the students' thinking is not probed or extended. The quality of marking is variable and does not consistently help students to know what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school has responded to its limited number of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form by increasing the range on offer, made possible through its specialist status. All students in Years 10 and 11 now follow an examination course in ICT and higher attaining students have the opportunity to study statistics in Year 11. The school does not presently offer courses that are suitable for all students in Years 11 and 12. Consequently, some choose to follow courses elsewhere, thus affecting the progression from Year 11 to Year 12.

Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the provision for religious education and, although the school is reviewing the time spent on this subject, it is now satisfactory. The curriculum in personal, social, health and emotional education (PSHE) and citizenship is good. This enables students to gain good personal skills and enjoy school.

Students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, especially in sport, ICT and the arts. A small group have successfully completed Duke of Edinburgh awards, and 25 Years 7 and 8 students enhance their studies through a Latin course. Students in the sixth form benefit from a programme of visits and visitors, which enhance their learning. These include visits to the United States and a small number complete work experience in Europe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Staff are committed to creating a harmonious school community and quickly build positive relationships with students. Students talk positively about the support they receive from staff and specialist visitors who help them make choices and decisions, such as, when applying to universities.

Arrangements for ensuring the safety of the school community are robust.

The inclusion team works in a variety of ways to support students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with a range of other specific needs. Learning mentors have had a positive impact on the progress of students identified at risk of underachieving. The school works well with outside agencies, for example, the 'Keep Safe' project has reduced the number of reported incidents of phone theft.

Support for refugees and those for whom English is an additional language is good with the result that many of these individuals make good progress. The school draws well on parents and community groups to support families and help students settle quickly into the school.

The tracking of academic progress of students has improved since the last inspection and most students are aware of how well they are doing. However, they are not always clear enough about what they need to do to improve. The quality of guidance on how students should improve their work is variable and does not always enable students to meet their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher, assisted by senior leaders, is providing strong leadership and has taken effective action to address significant student underachievement in Years 10 to 11. Senior leaders have rightly focused on improving literacy levels of all students. They have also focused on the use and availability of data within the school, to ensure that staff accurately assesses students' performance. Current tracking indicates that previously underachieving students are now making at least satisfactory progress towards challenging targets. New initiatives are leading to improved student achievement and senior leaders understand the role that better teaching and learning will play in raising performance further.

Although a shared sense of responsibility for school improvement has developed amongst all managers, the quality of management in departments is variable and this negatively affects the progress made by students in some subjects. The school has had trouble in recruiting suitable staff and this has affected the pace of improvement in some subjects. However, the appointment of learning managers has started to provide further support for underachieving students.

Although not all governors are aware of the key priorities of the school, the governing body provides satisfactory challenge to the school's performance. The school has developed some highly productive partnerships through their mathematics and computing specialist status. This is having a positive impact upon students' curriculum choices and their work within the community. The specialist college is well led and the school is making good progress against its targets.

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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	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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?	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?	3	3

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?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

29 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Christ's College Finchley, London, N2 0SE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much 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 thought you would like a summary of our findings.

Overall, we judged that the school offers you a satisfactory education. The inspection team recognises that the headteacher and the senior leadership team are making improvements. We know that you do well in your assessments at the end of Year 9 and attain above average standards. However, you do not achieve as well as you could at the end of Year 11 or in the sixth form.

We were impressed with your friendliness and the relationships that most of you have with each other and your teachers. You behave well around school and in lessons. You also have many opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities that include overseas trips. We judged your personal development to be good. We feel you are well looked after and given effective support. A particular strength of the school is the range of partners it works with to provide better choices and opportunities for you.

In order to bring about further improvements we have asked your leaders and managers to focus on the following.

- Improve the progress you make between Years 10, 11 and the sixth form by ensuring that all lessons are sufficiently challenging and enable you to achieve your full potential.
- Ensure that the marking of your homework and assessments help you understand what you need to do to improve your work.
- Help all heads of departments rectify any underachievement in their subjects.

Your headteacher and teachers are committed to getting things right for you and we are sure you will continue to support them in this. Thank you again for helping us with our work and making our visit to your school enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price

Her Majesty's Inspector