

The Chadwell Heath Foundation School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102863
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	308145
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Rhona Seviour HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1253
6th form	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T Stockill
Headteacher	Mr K Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Christie Gardens Chadwell Heath Romford RM6 4RS
Telephone number	020 8252 5151
Fax number	020 8252 5152

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Chadwell Heath Foundation School is a relatively large comprehensive school that is regularly over-subscribed. Nearly three-quarters of the students come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and around a half do not speak English as their first language. Approximately thirty students are refugees or asylum seekers and a small number of students are in care. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is in line with the national average. At around 12%, the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The sixth form, which has grown since the last inspection, admits students from other schools. Entry is dependent upon students having five good GCSE grades. The school was awarded media arts college status in 2002, and mathematics and computing specialist status in 2007. It holds the Artsmark Gold and the Sportsmark accreditations and works in partnership with the University of London's Institute of Education, Middlesex University, and the University of East London to provide initial teacher training.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Chadwell Heath Foundation School is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. This view is shared by parents and reflected in the school's self-evaluation. Over the last fourteen years the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A*-C has risen from 22% to 97% and, because of the outstanding progress students make from the time they enter in Year 7 to the end of Year 11, the school is ranked amongst the most successful schools in the country. Specialist status has had a very significant impact on the school and given it added momentum. Consequently, all the major aspects of the school's work are now outstanding. The school's exemplary approaches to the assessment and tracking of students' progress and to the setting of challenging targets are the main contributory factors to the excellent progress students make.

Two of the school's great virtues are its relentless drive for high standards and its strong belief in inclusion. The headteacher's unequivocal commitment to both virtues, shared by other leaders and managers and the governors, provides the school with clear direction, a strong sense of purpose and the outstanding capacity for continued improvement. Specialist status has contributed significantly to the school's improvement. High aspirations are prominent in all aspects of the school's work and to achieve these, it expects much of the staff and students. Students display an admirable determination to work hard to achieve their ambitious goals. However, the school environment is far from a 'hot house'. Although high priority is given to students' achievement in external tests and examinations, equal emphasis is placed on their personal development and well-being. Relationships amongst staff and students are very good and the school environment is calm and harmonious. Students willingly take on responsibilities and are keen for the school to provide even more opportunities for them to contribute actively to its work.

All of the teaching observed by inspectors was good or outstanding and the availability of resources on the school's website enables students to continue their studies at home. However, in most of the lessons observed, students did not have enough opportunities to develop as independent learners. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring, particularly of test and examination results, is very rigorous and the school's leadership and management take prompt action to bring about any necessary improvement. Although good attention is given to scrutinising the quality of students' work, the evaluation of teaching quality in lessons is inconsistent across the school. Not all teachers receive the detailed feedback to which they are entitled within the school's performance management policy.

In response to inspectors' questionnaire, one parent accurately reflected the inspection findings by commenting, '...I feel there is a real sense of community within the school. A very good balance of hard work, fun and concern in ensuring your child works to the best of their ability and can achieve any goal in life they wish to pursue'.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Standards in the sixth form are above average and, given their starting points and the barriers to success that many face, students make outstanding progress. Students enjoy both their studies and the sixth form environment. There is a wide range of courses, including a good

choice of advanced level subjects, which the school is prepared to adapt to so that students can take combinations of subjects and levels to meet their individual needs. There is also a very well planned extra-curricular programme, including sporting and cultural activities, as well as social events and visits that students help to organise. This is instrumental in broadening students' horizons and helping them to develop leadership and team working skills. Teaching is characterised by very secure specialist knowledge and expertise, good pace and challenge in lessons, and a willingness to provide extra assistance. As in the main school, students receive detailed feedback about their progress, comprehensive advice about future options, and very good help in addressing any personal difficulties. Leaders and managers are passionately committed to ensuring that students receive the high quality of education they need to achieve their very best.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities within lessons for students to extend their skills in independent learning.
- Ensure that the arrangements for performance management operate consistently across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' achievement and standards are outstanding. On entry to the school, students' attainment is broadly average and by the time they complete their compulsory schooling at the end of Year 11 their GCSE results are exceptionally high. Since the last inspection there has been a steady upward trend in GCSE results and, in 2007, 97% of students gained at least five grades A*-C and 78% achieved five A*-C grades including English and mathematics. This represents outstanding achievement. All groups of students achieve highly at the school and it does particularly well for those with statements of special educational need, English as an additional language and specific learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The support they receive enables them to make excellent progress and achieve results nearer to or, in many cases, better than those of other students in the school.

Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have also risen steadily for the last five years and are above average. Reflecting the school's specialist status, attainment in mathematics is consistently higher than that in English and science although in all three subjects the proportion of students achieving the highest levels is well above the average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students are very aware of the importance of their academic studies for their future lives and are motivated to work hard. They display very positive attitudes to learning and make rapid progress in literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communication (ICT). They are ambitious for themselves and the vast majority continue their studies into the sixth form and aspire to higher education. Students express much enjoyment of school life, and their attendance is excellent. They are particularly enthusiastic about the wide range of sports, media and ICT-supported activities

and the benefits of outside visits. They fully understand the need for healthy lifestyles and support the school's initiatives on fitness and healthy eating. Their behaviour is excellent. In lessons and around the school students co-operate very well and are polite and respectful towards others. The harmony and very constructive relationships that exist within the school community demonstrate the success of its inclusion policy. Students contribute positively to the life of the school and the wider community and would like even more opportunities to take on responsibilities, express their views and become actively involved in wider aspects of the school's work.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The students are exceptionally proud of the school's cultural diversity and value and respect each other's cultural backgrounds. Within the school, they feel very safe and trust the staff to deal swiftly and effectively with the rare incidents of bullying or racist behaviour.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Very positive relationships between teachers and students and highly effective management of students' behaviour contribute to the excellent learning environment. Teachers use their strong subject expertise very effectively to plan activities that quickly engage the students and prepare them well to meet the demands of external assessment. In lessons, teachers' explanations are accurate, clear and well structured and their skilful questioning challenges the students to think more deeply. They provide good opportunities for students to assess each other's work and this extends students' understanding and adds to their enjoyment of lessons. Visual aids and other technologies, which result from the school's specialist status, add significantly to the quality of students' learning in all subjects. Students are encouraged to make use at home of the wide range of online resources available through the school's website. This helps to develop their skills in independent learning but they have insufficient opportunities to extend these skills further in lessons.

The assessment and tracking of students' progress is exemplary. The assessment of both progress and effort in all subjects that takes place every eight weeks is very thorough, and the outcomes are communicated effectively to students and their parents or carers. Consequently, students know precisely how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. They are also well aware of their individual learning targets in all subjects. Students' work is thoroughly marked, sometimes online, with encouraging comments and suggestions on how to improve this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school has an outstanding curriculum that has improved significantly since the last inspection. Very good attention is given to planning the curriculum so that every student has the best possible opportunity to achieve well. There is extensive support for students who do not speak English as their first language and specific targeted provision to meet students' specific learning, emotional or behavioural needs. Linked to the school's rigorous assessment

system, there are excellent opportunities for students to attend additional academic support sessions if their rate of progress indicates that they would benefit from these. The curriculum is regularly reviewed in response to the analysis of students' attainment and feedback from staff, parents and students. The ICT diploma course offered in Years 7 to 11 is a distinctive and highly successful feature of the school's curriculum. In addition to the taught ICT lessons, there is excellent provision for students to continue their work towards the diploma during lunchtimes, after school and at home. More generally, the school's website and intranet provide valuable resources for all subject studies.

The curriculum is designed very well to prepare students for their further studies or employment. In Key Stage 4, students have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of GCSE courses, including vocational subjects, and there are clear progression routes into the sixth form. Work experience in Year 10 is very well organised and accompanied by a structured programme of careers guidance and advice. In addition, there is an excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including sports, drama, dance, music, subject-related visits and business links. Students value these sessions and they add greatly to their enjoyment of school life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its students and meets all the government requirements for safeguarding them. The setting of ambitious targets for individual students, classes, or year groups, which is firmly rooted within the culture of the school, and the exemplary systems for tracking students' progress, contribute significantly to the rapid progress students make and to the school's high standards. The regular review of each student's progress enables the school to identify students' needs and any necessary additional teaching support.

The school provides excellent support for vulnerable students, including those with specific learning or behavioural difficulties or those in care. There is very good collaboration with outside agencies, such as the social services and specialist services for students with a visual impairment, to ensure that all students have access to the full curriculum, are safeguarded, and achieve at least as well as their peers. The school sets extremely high standards for students in terms of attendance, punctuality and behaviour, and is successful in ensuring that these expectations are met, with the result, for example, that the number of students excluded from school is very low. Students receive very detailed guidance about subject and course options. Consequently, older students feel that they have made good choices which meet their needs and interests, and that they are well prepared for future study and employment. Students are very appreciative of the care and guidance they receive. They feel that staff 'look out for them' and are very effective in helping them to address any academic, social or personal problems they may face.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school accurately judges its leadership and management to be outstanding. At all levels, the school's leadership and management are very strongly focused on raising achievement and there is a shared commitment to this goal amongst all the staff. Although standards have risen steadily and are now exceptionally high, there is no sense of complacency in the school. Indeed, the determination to raise students' aspirations and ensure they all achieve their very best remains a powerful driving force. The inspiration for this drive comes from the strong conviction and determination of the headteacher and from the highly committed and loyal senior leadership team. The strength of this team, together with school's effective middle leadership and governing body, provides it with outstanding capacity to improve.

The school sets the very highest targets for all aspects of its work. Subject leaders fully understand their accountability for students' achievement and members of the senior leadership team monitor their work very closely. Subject leaders, in turn, monitor the performance of members of their department and although they do this well, there is some variation in the regularity and rigor with which they evaluate teaching. If performance in any area falls short of expectations, prompt and supportive action is invariably taken to bring about a rapid improvement.

The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. The self-evaluation carried out by subject leaders is rigorous and subject to searching scrutiny by the headteacher. In its self-evaluation, the school has increasingly sought the views of students and their parents. Although the vast majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, a significant minority of those responding to the inspectors' questionnaire indicated that they would like the school to consult them more.

Governors know the school well. They have high expectations of the senior leadership team and fulfil their role as a 'critical friend' very well. However, they have not ensured that the school's policy for performance management is operating consistently in all areas. Specialist status in media arts and, more recently, in mathematics and computing has added impetus to the school's improvement and strengthened its work to improve the quality of teaching and learning, links within the community and the visual aids to learning in all subjects. The school provides outstanding value for money and effective financial management and improvement planning have enabled it to make very significant improvements to the buildings, including the construction of a new sports centre and sixth form.

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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?	1	1
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	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

08 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Chadwell Heath Foundation School, Romford, RM6 4RS

Thank you for all the help you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and learning about your enthusiasm for Chadwell Heath and how much you appreciate all that your school has to offer. Like you, we think it is an outstanding school.

During your time at Chadwell Heath, you make outstanding progress and receive excellent support and guidance. All aspects of the school's work are outstanding and this means that Chadwell Heath is giving you the best possible opportunity to succeed. Quite rightly, the school expects a great deal of you and it was encouraging to see you rise to the challenge. We were impressed by the high quality of the relationships between staff and students, by your courtesy and by your excellent behaviour. Your ambition to gain as much as possible from school life and to continue your education in the school's sixth form or at the local college after completing the GCSE examinations was also impressive. It was particularly encouraging that so many of you are aiming for university.

Although all aspects of Chadwell Heath's education are outstanding, the school knows that there is still room for improvement. It knows, for example, that it needs to do more in lessons to help you develop the skills of independent learning you will need for further study or employment. The school assesses the quality of its work thoroughly. However, we have asked it to assess the quality of teaching more consistently. During our visit, many of you told us that you would like more opportunities to contribute actively to the life of the school. The school agrees with you and will try to provide these during the coming months.

Although the school is one of the most successful in the country, it is not complacent. Mr Wilkinson and the staff are keen to ensure that all of you achieve your best and that the school meets your individual needs. We hope you will play an active role in the school's improvement by continuing to work hard at your studies and, above all, by being ambitious for yourself. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rhona Seviour

Her Majesty's Inspector