

# Cheshunt School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117596
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312666
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Jones HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	978
6th form	108
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Cherry QC
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen Drake
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	College Road Cheshunt Waltham Cross Hertfordshire EN8 9LY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 624375
<b>Fax number</b>	01992 643411

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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

Cheshunt School is a specialist technology college in the south of Hertfordshire. It is part of the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership of three schools that work together to provide sixth form education in the area. Census information shows that there are far fewer homes than usual with experience of higher education. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national figure. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average and very few of these students are at the earliest stages of learning English. The school has gained the Sports Mark and has recently been re-awarded the Investors in People award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with sound capacity to improve further. After improving steadily for several years, in the last three years the school has reached a plateau, so that progress across the school is now only satisfactory. In 2007, the school did not meet its challenging targets, and GCSE results were well below national averages. Girls did not do as well as boys in their examinations, and the school has put in place intervention strategies to address this issue. These strategies are proving successful and students are on track to come closer to meeting their targets in the 2008 examinations. Students who find learning difficult achieve as well as their peers because of the good support they receive in the learning support unit, 'the Learning Zone'. The satisfactory progress seen is largely due to satisfactory teaching. There are strengths in teaching, particularly in the good relationships teachers have with their classes. However, teachers do not always plan creatively to provide challenging work to engage different ability groups or assess understanding consistently. Another negative factor affecting achievement is the curriculum in the main school, which provides a limited range of vocational or applied courses and expects most students, whatever their abilities, to study ten subjects at GCSE level.

Personal development is satisfactory. The vast majority of students behave well and show enjoyment in their learning, but a small minority of students, when they are not actively engaged in lessons, are too easily distracted and disturb others. Students understand the need for healthy lifestyles and take part in many physical activities. Preparation for adult life is satisfactory. Students participate in well-organised work experience to help them start to think about their roles as adults. They benefit from an improved personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, which includes careers education and guidance and personal finance. However, standards in English, mathematics and information communication technology (ICT) are low. The students are well cared for and the new progress tracking system has greatly improved academic monitoring.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Specialist college status has had a positive impact in providing resources, training and engagement with the community. The headteacher is dedicated and determined and leads the school well. He has built a supportive senior team and put clear management structures in place. However, initiatives taken are not always followed through and monitored with sufficient rigour. The majority of parents are positive in their views about the school and feel their views are taken into account, but a substantial minority rightly expressed concerns about behaviour and progress in lessons.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The school has a satisfactory sixth form. Students are motivated and are appreciative of the effective provision made by the partnership arrangements with two other local schools. Overall, achievement and standards in the sixth form are satisfactory, as is teaching. The curriculum is designed well to meet the aspirations of most students, with vocational options offered at different levels.

Students' personal development is satisfactory and they feel they are well supported, both on a personal level and through academic monitoring. There is good provision to help students make higher education choices.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards across the school and particularly for girls.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring better planning for different abilities and greater use of active methods.
- Review the curriculum so it more closely matches the needs and abilities of students.

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**

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Levels of achievement have improved since the last inspection but remain below what should be expected. The attainment of students on entry to the school is broadly in line with national expectations. The progress they make in Years 7 to 9 is slower than expected and, consequently, their levels of attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are below the national averages. In 2007, results in English improved slightly on 2006 and were above the national average, but in mathematics and science results went down and were significantly below average.

In GCSE examinations, there has been an improving trend in results over the last five years, although they remain well below national averages. The proportion of students achieving five or more good passes was 41% in 2007, a drop from the previous year's high of 47%, and well below the national average of 60%. One of the key features of these results was the underperformance of girls, whose levels of achievement were well below their peers nationally. The school has put in place an intensive support programme for the current Year 11 students, focused particularly on the girls, and evidence at inspection suggests that achievement levels are likely to improve. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers and sometimes better. Since gaining specialist technology college status, the school has met most of its achievement targets for the Year 9 tests. Some of the GCSE targets for design and technology were met but most of those for mathematics and science have been missed.

Students enter the sixth form with GCSE qualifications that are, on average, slightly below what would normally be expected. They make satisfactory progress and the levels of attainment they reach reflect their starting points. Pass rates improved at A and AS level in 2007 from 2006 levels, as did the points scored for each examination entry, but remain below average. Most of those intending to go on to further and higher education are able to do so.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. The provision of video conferencing equipment is allowing links to develop with schools abroad, for example, in Pakistan, and this is helping to broaden students' outlooks. The behaviour of students is satisfactory overall but closely mirrors the quality of the lesson. Girls are noticeably less inclined to answer questions, more often taking a back seat and boys

often dominate in class. Attendance is broadly average and part of a gradually improving picture. There is some lateness to lessons and assemblies. Students are happy that bullying is taken seriously and is not condoned by others. The school council gives students useful chances to express their opinions and influence practice but opportunities for them to take further responsibility as officials are missed. Students have a fair understanding of how to keep healthy and many take part in a wide range of sports. Several students have reached international standards in rugby, football and athletics. The take up of healthy school lunches is good. Students are sensible in lessons where there are risks and know how to keep themselves safe. Careers guidance is helpful and relevant and students are well briefed about option choices.

In the sixth form, students' personal development is satisfactory. Their experience is widened because of the opportunities they have to mix with students from other schools. They take responsibility by helping younger students with their reading.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory in the main school and the sixth form. No inadequate teaching was seen. Teaching and learning were best where teachers actively engaged students in their work. Good examples of students being involved in practical work were seen in experiments in science, composition in music and an exercise studying photographic evidence in history. Teachers have good relationships with students and most manage behaviour in lessons well, but where students are not involved in their learning behaviour deteriorates. Planning of lessons is a weaker aspect because teachers do not always plan to meet the learning needs of individual students. This leads to teaching which lacks imagination and is dominated by the teacher, with students as passive recipients. Often, not enough is expected of more able students, whilst lower attaining students struggle to understand the work set. Not all teachers consistently check that students have understood the work covered in the lesson.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Since the previous inspection there have been several positive changes to the curriculum, some of which have arisen as a result of gaining Specialist Technology College status.

Teaching time for religious education for students in Years 10 and 11 has increased and the school has appointed a dedicated coordinator for PSHE and citizenship.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including trips and the use of outside speakers. The curriculum has been enhanced by video conferencing, which alongside more extensive use of ICT, has resulted directly from the school gaining specialist status. The science department now provides triple science at GCSE, which provides students with better opportunities to gain access to the sixth form curriculum. The school has included some accelerated learning programmes, notably in mathematics at GCSE and there are plans to extend these. A limited range of vocational courses is offered in partnership with a number of other schools. Most students are expected to study ten academic GCSEs, including a language. This

has proved beyond the capability of many students and has been a factor in poor examination results. There are plans to review the curriculum for next year.

The quality of the sixth form curriculum is good. The students have access to a wide range of courses as a result of being part of a consortium. There is a wide range of vocational courses available to students at different levels. The partnership provides a number of enrichment opportunities for students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students are supported well and pastoral care is good. Those who find learning more difficult, or who for various reasons need extra time and adult guidance, receive good support through the various systems in the Learning Zone. In particular, those whose reading skills are below par make good progress so they quickly catch up with their peers. Students were unequivocal in their praise for staff and they are comfortable about approaching adults if they need someone to talk to. This is because relationships are good and adults helpful. All procedures to keep students safe and secure are in place and record keeping is exemplary. The guidance in terms of homework is weak, no clear homework timetable is followed and both parents and students expressed their dissatisfaction. The school's relationships with local primary schools are very strong and there are some innovative links, even extending to involving very young pupils. Work as a Specialist Technology College has been instrumental in all this and means that when students move into this school they are very well prepared and feel comfortable and secure.

There are improved and more rigorous structures which are helping create better conditions for learning. Systems for checking students' behaviour, attitudes and attendance have all improved considerably. Students' academic progress is closely monitored in order that they are helped to keep on track. For example, the work with Year 11 girls, designed to prevent last year's underperformance from becoming a pattern, has worked well and girls in this year group are much more positive and confident about what they can achieve.

Care and guidance in the sixth form is good. Systems for checking on students' progress are thorough and students benefit from the small group sizes. When they are in their own school base, they are highly supported and receive good careers guidance. As a result, numbers dropping out are low.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The headteacher has succeeded in improving the school's reputation in the community and has united the staff and senior managers with a clear focus on raising achievement. He has created a climate in which students are able to enjoy the opportunities provided for them. Substantial improvement has taken place at the school over a number of years but in the last three years progress has stalled and achievement has not risen fast enough. This has been partly as a consequence of the school's own decisions taken about the curriculum. The school recognises this and has put into place a variety of intervention strategies, of which the impact of some are yet to be realised. A new tracking system means that teachers are able to monitor students'

progress more closely and the current data shows that students are well on the way to meeting their targets in 2008.

Clear and supportive line management structures are in place. Learning Areas (departments within the school) have carried out a thorough analysis of results and produced appropriate action plans. However, the way in which these are implemented and monitored varies in quality across the Learning Areas. The school has made an accurate judgement of the quality of teaching and is engaged in a variety of initiatives to improve teaching, which remains just satisfactory. A barrier to improving the quality of teaching remains the difficulty in recruitment. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory but overestimates students' achievement. The governing body is supportive and does challenge and hold the school to account, but it is not sufficiently well informed about examination results and levels of progress. The school finances are well managed and the school has just met the Government's standard for financial management. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory and provide students with a secure learning environment. Arrangements with the consortium operate effectively for the benefit of students.



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## 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	3	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
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	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

18 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Cheshunt School, Cheshunt, EN89LY

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 16–17 April. We enjoyed talking with you. You told us you enjoy being at Cheshunt school. It is a satisfactory school. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school and how we thought it could get even better.

- You enjoy the wide range of activities that are provided for you, especially through the sixth form partnership arrangements.
- Becoming a Specialist Technology College has brought a positive dimension to your work and improved computer resources and the work you are able to do with other schools.
- You showed enjoyment in your lessons. Most of you behave well, but a minority of you are sometimes disruptive and talk while your teacher is talking and too many of you arrive late to lessons.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after. There is good guidance and support for those who need it and sound preparation for your future working lives.

Things we thought could be improved.

- You could make faster progress and achieve higher standards in your GCSE results.
- The teaching could be more stimulating and involve you in tasks that are better matched to your ability.
- The number and type of courses you study should more closely match your needs and capabilities.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Margaret Jones

HMI