

Chenderit School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122087
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314212
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor 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	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1149
6th form	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Hoose
Headteacher	Barry Doherty
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Archery Road Middleton Cheney Banbury OX17 2QR
Telephone number	01295 711567
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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 four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chenderit School is larger than average and is a specialist college for the visual arts. It draws its students mainly from the villages in the south of the county, but approximately 15% travel from Banbury in Oxfordshire. The students represent a mixture of socio-economic backgrounds, but only a small number come from minority ethnic groups. There are fewer than the average number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and fewer whose first language is other than English. The school has achieved several awards including Sportsmark, Artsmark silver and the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chenderit School is a good school and aspects of its work are outstanding. Its specialist status in the visual arts is clear the minute you enter and are treated to the stunning display in the gallery. Here, students' work and that of professional local artists sit comfortably together and are enjoyed by the public, who regularly visit the exhibitions.

The strong team spirit amongst all members of the school community and the strength of the senior leadership team have ensured that issues from the previous inspection have been tackled with determination, and there has been improvement across all aspects of the school's work. This is most evident in the better progress students make and in the increased number of students who choose Chenderit as their preferred secondary school. There is good capacity for further improvement.

Students make good progress as a result of the good teaching they receive. This progress is better in the first three years in the school, but because of the detailed analysis of their progress that the school undertakes, teachers are able to provide more carefully targeted individual support and this is driving up standards in Key Stage 4. Current data provided by the school show that it is well placed to meet its challenging targets at the end of the current school year.

Most lessons are lively and enjoyable with opportunities for students to work independently of the teacher. Relationships between the students and with the teachers are excellent. The school has invested heavily in information and communication technology (ICT) and uses it well in many subjects to develop the students' understanding of topics. Homework is well planned and used to support work done in class. Most teachers help their students to improve their work with helpful comments in their marking. However, this is variable and they do not always provide examples for the students of what excellence in a particular task might look like. Classroom displays are bright and visually attractive, but are not always used to support learning. The school is working hard to raise the quality of teaching further through well targeted professional development and training. Difficulties in recruiting teachers in some subject areas have largely been resolved and the school has had good support in this from the local authority.

All other aspects of care, guidance and support for the students are excellent and as a result, their personal development and well-being are also outstanding, particularly in the sixth form. The school's specialist subjects contribute strongly to their spiritual development and students are exceptionally good at thinking critically about moral and cultural issues. They behave well and show consideration for each other. As a result, the atmosphere in the school is calm and purposeful.

The school evaluates its work very accurately and rigorously, and takes account of the views of all stakeholders. Students contribute to the development of the school through the school council and by expressing their views in regular school surveys. Exceptionally good use is made of the information gathered from these surveys and particular care is taken to ensure all groups are fully represented. However, some of these systems are relatively new and there is some variability in the way middle leaders use data on students' performance to raise standards. Good arrangements are in place to share the best practice across the school and support those teachers who are least experienced.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and it is heavily oversubscribed. Attendance at school events is very high. One parent commented, 'Chenderit School has provided my

daughter with an excellent standard of education. The staff take such a pride in their work and manage to treat everyone as individuals.'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is a fully integrated part of the school, which is developing and growing steadily because of good leadership. At the time of the last inspection low numbers meant that the sixth form was not cost-effective. Admissions to the sixth form have since increased dramatically, because it enjoys a reputation for caring about the academic and social development of its students. It now provides good value for money. The school retains the majority of its students into the second year of study or guides them to more appropriate education or employment opportunities. The behaviour of students in the sixth form is outstanding. The school is strengthening its procedures for monitoring attendance in the sixth form to bring it in line with attendance in the main school. Sixth form students make a significant contribution to the life of the school and their independent work is a positive example to younger students. Teaching is good and there are many opportunities in lessons for students to work on their own and in groups. Discussions are lively, because students engage in mature and thoughtful discussions with their teachers.

The school admits a wide range of students to the sixth form and attainment on entry is broadly average. Students make good progress overall and very good progress in some applied subjects, but there is variation in the progress made across other subjects. The school has implemented a range of initiatives to address these concerns that are starting to have an impact. The curriculum meets the needs of the students and continues to develop.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further increase the proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding.
- Ensure teachers consistently show students clearly how to improve their work, and particularly what to aim for in individual subjects.
- Develop the role of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating the work in their teams, so they have a greater impact on achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average. The school makes careful checks to ensure it has a clear picture of their starting points. In 2007, the percentage of students achieving the expected level at the end of Year 9 was well above average. The percentage who gained five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics was above average. This represents good achievement overall, but the school recognises that progress has been slower in Key Stage 4. Current data on progress presented by the school show a convincing picture of improvement this year that will continue the trend of the last few years. Students with LDD make good progress and no groups underachieve. There is still some variability across subjects, but there is no significant difference between the progress made by boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The promotion of personal skills, attitudes and positive approaches to life and learning is at the heart of everything the school does. As a result, the students thrive. They are enthusiastic about their learning, as demonstrated by the outstanding attendance of the majority and their keenness to get to their lessons on time. Equally, they value the chances they have to help to move their school forward. Many students make a positive contribution to the life of the school by taking up one of the many additional posts of responsibility open to them. The school offers them many opportunities to develop the skills needed to become active citizens and eventually transfer to working roles. They develop good literacy and numeracy skills and their skills in ICT are improving because of much improved provision in this area. Behaviour is good and incidents of bullying are rare, with the vast majority of students treating one another with respect and understanding. They know very clearly how to keep themselves and others safe and act accordingly. They also have a good awareness of how to stay healthy. The excellent variety of enrichment activities helps students to think critically, challenge their preconceptions and appreciate the visual world around them. As a result, students' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development is now a real strength of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

In the best lessons, the brisk pace and strong intellectual challenge engage students' interests and enable them to participate fully and make rapid progress. For example, in one of the lessons observed, there was a variety of 'bite size' activities, including a mental starter linked to the main topic, group work and students' own presentations, which the class reflected upon and evaluated. Teachers' good subject knowledge is used effectively and lessons are prepared well with objectives to suit a range of abilities. Common features of less effective lessons include a lack of challenge, overlong teacher explanation and thus some students losing interest. The majority of students are aware of their predicted levels and grades and understand what they need to do to improve. However, teachers do not routinely give practical examples of what to aim for or allow in-depth discussion of the different qualities required at different levels. In some classrooms there are few examples of students' work to celebrate success and motivate all to improve. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to aid those students with LDD, ensuring they can participate fully in lessons and make similar progress to their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's specialist status has led to improved choices, with a particular focus on the creative arts. The school has made innovative use of the visual arts to support project-based work across the curriculum, and this has been acknowledged nationally as an example of best practice. The school is introducing a diploma course in creative media for students in the sixth form.

Students are offered a good range of academic courses and a small number of vocational and work-related courses. Higher attaining students are entered for some GCSE examinations early so they can take additional academic courses. Students in Years 7 to 10 can take part each year in a week of events, which includes residential visits and work experience. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs and opportunities to travel abroad.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school displays an exceptionally high level of commitment to inclusion and to students' welfare. As a result, students feel very well cared for and know they can seek help and support whenever they need it. The new behaviour policy has helped students recognize the consequences of their actions. The school uses a very wide range of programmes and many outside professionals to help students with social, emotional or behavioural problems. Vulnerable students are recognized early and receive outstanding support, and long-term absentees are helped back in gradually. Systems for tracking the academic progress of students are relatively new, but are already good.

There are excellent arrangements to support students when they transfer from their primary school. Because of good guidance about future options, almost all students proceed directly on to further education, employment or training when they leave the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school is currently being led successfully by the deputy headteacher, before the new headteacher takes up his post next term. All leaders in the school share a common aim of raising achievement and there is a focus on self evaluation at all levels. This has meant that rigorous systems have been put in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. The senior leaders are the driving force at the moment in this process, but middle leaders are developing their skills and there are already some examples of very good practice. The views of parents and students are taken into account as part of this process and governors are increasingly taking opportunities to gather first-hand evidence of the work of the school. Governors are now better informed and are starting to share more fully in the self-evaluation processes as they benefit from the training and support they are receiving.

The school is inclusive and provides strong support for vulnerable students to achieve as well as is possible, and has comprehensive and thorough procedures for maximizing the safety of its students. Health and safety, including risk assessment, is very effectively managed. Child protection arrangements and procedures are exemplary.

The school's finances are well managed. Bids have been successfully submitted to allow further development of the sixth form provision. Many productive links exist with local schools and colleges and extended services are being developed with the local health care trust. The school is providing good value for money.

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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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	2
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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

16 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Chenderit School, Middleton Cheney, OX17 2QR

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. It is good, with some features that are excellent. We were impressed by the way in which the school has used its specialist status in the visual arts to make your surroundings so attractive and to provide you with exciting new opportunities. You told us how much you value the chance to visit other countries and this has obviously inspired many of you in your work. You behave well around the school and there is a really calm and friendly atmosphere. The discussions we observed show you have excellent attitudes and are able to think about issues and express yourselves clearly.

Many of you said that you really enjoy school, and your attendance in the main school is excellent. It is good to see the ways in which you help each other and the mature way in which you help the school to improve. Those of you in the sixth form are really positive role models for the younger students. The way the school cares for and guides you is excellent, especially those of you who need additional help in any way. You told us how safe you feel as a result.

We recognise that the progress you make is good. It is improving each year as more of you are achieving higher standards in tests. This will help you prepare well for your future working lives, as will the improvements the school is making to the curriculum. We recognise how the strong leadership of the acting headteacher and the senior team, assisted by other leaders in the school, is bringing about these improvements. We have asked the leaders in the school to work together to make sure everyone is as effective in their work as the best.

You told us that you know the level at which you are working, but some of you would appreciate more detailed help on how to improve. We want the school to give you more examples of what to aim for. You can help in this by asking about what is expected.

Thank you for your help in the inspection, for welcoming us into your school and talking to us so sensibly about the things you like and what you would like to see improved. I hope many of you will also read the full report, which has more details.

My colleagues and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely Elaine Taylor Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B



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Her Majesty's Inspector