

# Churchfields School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126453
<b>Local Authority</b>	Swindon
<b>Inspection number</b>	315554
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rob Hubbleday 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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1002
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Su Berry
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Flavin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Salcombe Grove Swindon SN3 1HQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01793 487286
<b>Fax number</b>	01793 525466

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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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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

The school is situated in the middle of a housing estate built in the 1960s. Part of the area it serves has very significant levels of social deprivation. An above average proportion of pupils receive free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Around a quarter of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In the last two years, there has been a sharp rise in the number who are at a very early stage of learning English and 32 languages are represented in the school, mainly Konkani, Bengali, Punjabi and Portuguese. A high proportion of pupils enter the school other than at the beginning of term. Attainment at the start of Year 7 is rising, but remains below average. The school was designated a specialist college for mathematics, computing and science in September 2006. It holds Investor in People status and an Artsmark Gold award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school. Standards are below average but well judged innovations in the curriculum have underpinned significant improvements in GCSE results. The first phase of development for the school's specialist subjects has seen significant improvements in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum and in standards. Achievement is good overall, and is excellent at Key Stage 4 where so many pupils secure at least five good passes. More than might be expected also gain passes at grade C or above in English and mathematics, but this figure remains low in comparison with most schools. Low levels of literacy and numeracy hinder the pupils' progress at Key Stage 3, but it is generally satisfactory or better. The school does well by its many pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language and they make the same progress as their peers. However, the rise in the number of pupils with little English is making it harder for the school to cater effectively for the needs of these pupils and it has begun adjusting its curriculum accordingly.

The pupils' personal development is good and the school is rightly proud of the calm environment in lessons and around the school. Questionnaire responses from parents and the local community testify to sustained improvements in behaviour. Temporary exclusions were very high for several years. They have dropped significantly because of a range of effective strategies to support pupils who say they feel safe because of the clearly drawn boundaries about what is or is not acceptable. The pupils' satisfactory, and in many instances good, attendance demonstrates their commitment to education. Improvements in teaching have also made a major contribution to the way pupils feel about school. They say they enjoy lessons and most are keen to work hard. Teaching is good overall and is outstanding in some lessons and subjects. The quality varies, however, and is only satisfactory in some lessons where assessment information is not used well to match work precisely to pupils' needs or to help pupils know how to improve. Leadership and management are good and the headteacher's determination to drive the school forward has secured improvements at an impressive pace. He is ably supported by his deputy headteacher. There is a very clear understanding of the school's needs and a rigorous system for monitoring progress against measurable targets. The school is keen to develop the rigour of self-evaluation and planning at middle management level, but has been hampered by recruitment issues in some subjects. As a result, the quality of leadership varies considerably. Governance, on the other hand, is outstanding and fully complements the ambition, drive and vision of the senior leadership team. The school has shown it has good capacity to continue improving.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by improving levels of literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 3.
- Develop the way that assessment is used by teachers to plan work and provide feedback to pupils on what they need to do to improve.
- Strengthen middle management by ensuring that all subject leaders provide clear direction underpinned by rigorous monitoring of provision.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Based on the pupils' performance across the curriculum, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average, but has improved significantly since 2005 when it was exceptionally low. In 2007, the proportion of pupils gaining five passes at grades A\* to C was 62%, up from 46% in 2005 and slightly above average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes including English and mathematics, however, has risen much less markedly and stands at 30%, which is well below average. Achievement has been rising since the school's previous inspection and is good, verging on outstanding. The year group who took external examinations in 2007 made exceptional progress from their starting points in Year 7. Good pass rates in vocational courses in science and information and communication technology (ICT) made an important contribution to this success. No particular groups of pupils underachieved significantly but a small number of lower attaining pupils did not make the gains expected of them. For all pupils, achievement was better in the school's specialist subject of mathematics than in English, which has been a consistent trend for several years. Taken overall, the pupils make most progress at Key Stage 4 having, in the main, made only satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. Their attendance, which is around the national average, compares well with schools in similar contexts. They feel safe at school and are confident that incidents of bullying are tackled seriously and fairly. The number of fixed-term exclusions has been significantly reduced. The school and pupils welcome new arrivals and are helpful to those who lack fluency in English or have learning difficulties. Pupils are confident to talk to tutors and mentors if they have personal difficulties. Racist incidents are rare. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are clear about the school's expectations and its system of rewards and sanctions. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils lead healthy lifestyles and have the information to make good eating choices. Fitness, as well as enjoyment, is promoted extremely well through provision for physical education at Key Stage 3 where, for example, lessons in dance are outstanding. Pupils are prepared well for their future employment, particularly through work related learning, the development of skills in ICT, and through good guidance about option choices. There are satisfactory opportunities to contribute to the community. The student council is active and money is raised for charitable events, but more could be done to foster the willingness and confidence of other pupils to take on responsibilities.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

A small proportion of teaching is outstanding and there is much that is good, with stimulating activities and a brisk pace keeping all pupils fully engaged and enjoying their learning. The teachers' questioning is challenging and encourages pupils to think independently. Teachers have good subject knowledge, communicate well and use interactive whiteboards effectively to engage, enthuse and motivate their pupils. As a result, behaviour is good. The school accepts that the quality of teaching varies between subjects and is only satisfactory in some. Lesson

planning does not always focus enough on what the pupils need to learn and is not always matched precisely to the pupils' differing levels of ability. Although pupils know their targets, they do not necessarily know how to improve because whilst some marking is thorough and diagnostic, some is superficial. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The allocation of pupils in Years 7 to 9 by ability to 'Challenge', 'Enterprise' and 'Endeavour' teaching groups has enabled staff to focus successfully on different learning activities for each one. In addition, the 'Discovery' pathway in Years 7 and 8 is outstanding in boosting the performance of vulnerable pupils and easing their transition to secondary school. There is good provision for ICT. The recently introduced reading support programme in Years 7 to 8 has already had an impact on the pupils' ability to read short stories, but there is no additional support for numeracy. Pupils speaking English as an additional language are generally integrated into mainstream classes satisfactorily and are well supported when bilingual teaching assistants are available. However, the wide range of languages now spoken by pupils has led the school to rethink the role of its modern foreign languages faculty to match this significant change in the school's context.

The aspirations of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are met well by an increasingly flexible curriculum. In addition to a common core, which includes an i-Media certificate or diploma, they can opt for a satisfactory range of GCSE courses. The 'Learning for Life' programme for a group of vulnerable or potentially disaffected pupils helps them to gain workplace skills in employment settings. They can also attend key college courses and participate in Young Apprentices schemes. The Study Plus programme provides good support in English and mathematics. There is good provision through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) and tutorial programmes for careers and health and safety education. Provision for citizenship is satisfactory, but formal lessons are limited in frequency at Key Stage 4. There are many opportunities for enrichment activities, particularly in the performing arts and sports, which the pupils value and support.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is rightly proud of its provision and has worked hard to create an inclusive approach to enable pupils to succeed. Support for especially vulnerable pupils has some outstanding aspects. The Grove Learning Centre, based in a bungalow on the site, makes a particularly distinctive contribution to catering for the acute social and emotional needs of some pupils. There is extensive use of other agencies to complement the school's work. Pupils who speak English as an additional language say they feel well cared for and appreciate the welcome they receive, including the school's prospectus in a range of languages. The systems for safeguarding children are secure and robust. Health and safety matters are dealt with satisfactorily and risk assessments are in place. There is good guidance for pupils in choosing their options and the clear advice enables them to choose carefully the subjects that interest them. Pupils know their targets and many reach these. Academic guidance is satisfactory and the school is planning to develop this aspect of mentoring to provide much more frequent feedback to the pupils.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher's tenacious focus on priorities has continued to drive the school forward at an impressive pace. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in achievement and provision. He has recently been joined by a new and experienced deputy headteacher and they make a powerful team. They communicate clearly and consistently their ambitious vision and firm belief in the school's further improvement. There are challenging targets for all levels of attainment and a rigorous process for monitoring the school's performance. As a result, the senior team has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is able to provide support and different degrees of monitoring according to need. Systems to develop self-evaluation and improvement planning by directors of faculty are well judged, but their quality and effectiveness vary in practice and are weak in English and mathematics. The school has identified ways to improve matters but these are at an early stage. The management of the school's specialist status has been handled well and targets for the first year have been met. The school's leadership is not afraid to embrace imaginative solutions to some of the significant challenges it faces, such as the increase in pupils speaking little English. It has earmarked significant funding to remodel the curriculum to cater better for these pupils. The governing body shares the senior team's commitment to continued improvement and plays a very active role in monitoring progress and discussing options. Its members are knowledgeable and are conscientious in holding the school to account.

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	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	3
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	3
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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>	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Churchfields School, Swindon SN3 1HQ

My colleagues and I enjoyed visiting your school last week and would like to thank you for the time you spent talking to us. Your views and those of your parents are important and we were impressed by the way in which you told us quite openly about the strengths and areas of concern that you have for your school. We thought you would wish to know what we liked about your school and also how it could be even better.

- You and most of your parents think you go to a good school and we agree.
- The vast majority of you enjoy school and attend willingly.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- The results of GCSE exams have risen very well.
- Most of your teachers make your lessons interesting and varied so you can make good progress.
- The specialist school programme is giving you and your teachers good access to ICT and this will provide you with useful skills for your future careers.
- The headteacher and his senior staff have done a good job since the last inspection and are committed to making your school even better.

We have agreed with your headteacher that to do this:

- the standard of your work in English and mathematics needs to be higher
- teachers need to mark your work more consistently and provide you with sharper advice to help you to improve
- some subject leaders should check the work of their department more closely to help them plan for improvement.

You can do your bit to help by continuing to attend and behave well.

Yours sincerely Rob Hubbleday Her Majesty's Inspector