

Chiltern Edge Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123245
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	319523
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Mercer 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	685
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Beverley Dobson
Headteacher	Mr Paul Leonard
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2007
School address	Reades Lane Sonning Common Reading RG4 9LN
Telephone number	01189 721500
Fax number	01189 721501

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Chiltern Edge is a smaller than average community secondary school in a rural setting in Oxfordshire, but draws 70% of its intake from Reading. The proportion of students who come from high social class households is higher than average and a relatively small proportion is eligible for free school meals. The number of students with English as an additional language is increasing but remains lower than average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is also increasing, though is lower than average. The proportion of students identified with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, but the proportion of those with statements of special education needs is around average. The school works closely with a special school that is located on the same site. The school was awarded specialist language status in September 2007.

Chiltern Edge was last inspected in March 2007 and given a notice to improve. Areas for improvement were identified as: raising achievement at Key Stage 4; matching the teaching to the needs of all groups of learners, particularly those with learning difficulties and the more able; raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chiltern Edge Community School is now providing a good standard of education and care for its students. Managers, teachers and support staff, with strong support from Oxfordshire local authority, have worked extremely hard to improve those areas considered weak at the last inspection. Inspectors noted improvements in all major aspects of the school's work, including students' achievement and personal development, the quality of teaching, curriculum, care, guidance and support and leadership and management. There has been noticeable improvement in the quality of teaching and monitoring of students' performance and this has helped to raise achievement. Students in Years 10 and 11, and those with learning difficulties or disabilities, who were not previously making enough progress, are now making good progress.

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Senior managers and governors have set a very clear direction for the school, with a determination to raise achievement and do the best for all students. They have insisted on raising the expectations of what can be achieved and staff have risen to meet this challenge. Achievement targets are now much more demanding and staff feel well supported in their efforts to meet these higher standards. The school acknowledges that in 2007 progress was not consistent in all subjects, for example, students made relatively less progress in English and mathematics than they did in some other subjects.

The senior team has led an extensive and very well-focused programme of training and support to improve teaching and learning, bringing in new ideas to help staff to refresh their practice and plan their work to ensure that lessons meet students' differing interests and abilities. Teachers value the practical and accessible guidance which has been provided on teaching and assessment and are incorporating this into their work. The school recognises that there is more to do to ensure that all teachers are making effective use of this in their lessons to improve teaching further from satisfactory to good.

The majority of parents are supportive of the school and many recognise the improvements which have been brought about in the last year. They comment positively about the dedication of staff in helping their children to achieve their best and in building their confidence. Students' personal development is good. They are courteous and welcoming. Teachers know them well and relationships are good. Students also told inspectors that they could see how the school has improved, for example, in respect of teaching and behaviour in lessons. Most say they enjoy school and many participate in the good range of extra-curricular activities.

The school revises its curriculum regularly to ensure it meets students' needs and interests and it caters well for a wide range of different abilities. The specialist language status is providing increased opportunities for students to study languages, work with local primary and secondary schools and participate in trips and cultural exchanges abroad.

Students feel safe and well supported in school. They are confident that staff in the school will help them with any problems they may experience. They have a good understanding of their achievement, what targets they are aiming for and how to improve their work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that students make equally good progress in all subjects.
- Raise the quality of all teaching and learning to that seen in the best lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are now good. Students join the school with slightly above average prior attainment and they make good progress throughout Years 7 to 9. Results in national tests in Year 9 have been consistently above average for several years. However, students in Years 10 and 11 did not sustain this progress and this led to achievement and standards being judged inadequate at the last inspection. The proportion of students achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is above average.

Senior managers have introduced significant improvements to assessment and tracking procedures. Teachers are now using assessment data effectively to plan work to meet all students' needs and monitor their progress closely. This has ensured that the majority of students now make good progress. The few who are at risk of underachieving receive good and timely support.

In 2007, students with learning difficulties or disabilities did not always make the expected progress. The school has revised its special educational needs strategy and support for these students has improved. The school's improved tracking shows the majority are now making good progress.

Students taking modern foreign languages achieve good results in GCSE and a higher proportion of A*-A grades than seen nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. Inspectors observed good behaviour in lessons and responsible movement around the school during break and lunchtime. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about disruptive behaviour in lessons. Students say that this now happens less, especially where teachers make sure students are actively participating in their learning. Attendance has returned to the level seen in 2005, after a slight drop in 2006, and is satisfactory.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They develop this through lessons, assemblies and numerous events and charity work through the year. Students understand the benefits of adopting healthy lifestyles and the school helps them to do so through providing a healthy menu and opportunities for taking part in physical activities, not only through physical education lessons but numerous clubs and other physical activities.

Student involvement in making a positive contribution to the school and the wider community is good. Students in Years 10 and 11 act as mentors for younger students. Prefects organise and support parents' evenings as well as organising charity events for the whole school. Students also prepare and deliver assemblies. Good academic achievement, work experience and appropriate careers advice, alongside guidance from further education institutions, ensure that the vast majority of students progress to further education or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Senior leaders have worked very closely with teachers to improve teaching and learning and this is having a positive impact. Teaching is now satisfactory overall and there are many examples of good practice. Teachers have embraced new ideas and approaches and many are successfully planning good lessons to meet the needs of all students. In these lessons teachers manage the class well, the pace is good and students are actively engaged in a variety of interesting activities. They enjoy their work and make good progress. Good questioning is used to develop and extend students' thinking and to check their understanding. Teachers give good praise and encouragement and their high expectations encourage students to aspire to higher levels of achievement. The changes in the way teaching assistants work have also contributed to raising achievement.

In a few lessons observed the pace was slow and teachers did not make sufficient demands of students so they made less progress than they could. In a few cases, the teacher directed the lesson too much so there were insufficient opportunities for students to actively participate and they remained too passive. Managers have a very good understanding of where the best and weaker teaching is and are providing good support to teachers to further improve their practice.

More teachers are using information and communication technology (ICT) well to enliven their lessons and involve students actively in their learning. Most, though not yet all, teachers provide good feedback to students on how to improve their work. The best examples give clear improvement points and targets for the next piece of work, but some make few comments, or feedback is more about the presentation of work rather than its content.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which meets individual students' needs. Students are given clear guidance on their choice of courses. A well thought out curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides different pathways allowing students to choose either a course that offers 10 to 12 GCSEs, a course with fewer GCSEs or one that includes elements of vocational education. There are other courses on offer for those students at risk of underachieving. Provision for ICT has improved significantly and all students can take a qualification in ICT.

A good variety of enrichment activities with a high level of participation, adds to students' enjoyment and achievement in school. Sports, outdoor pursuits, drama and musical productions, trips and visits are all offered, as well as booster and revision classes.

The curriculum provides very good access to modern foreign languages and the school's specialist status is beginning to impact on the much needed improvements to facilities. All students study two languages during Key Stage 3 and most take a GCSE in either French or German. There are increasing opportunities for those who wish to study more than one language at GCSE.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care guidance and support are good. The programme of personal social and health education helps students to be safe, healthy and positive members of their community. Many parents commented on how well the school helps their children settle into school in Year 7. The school's good liaison with primary schools and use of detailed assessments enables them to identify student needs early and provide appropriate support.

Good work with external agencies and the use of trained school staff ensures that the specific needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities are met. The curriculum support department provides a welcome sanctuary for vulnerable students and parents spoke very positively about this aspect of the school's work. A small inclusion unit gives good support to individuals experiencing difficulties in learning or behaviour and this has helped to reduce significantly the number of exclusions.

The academic progress of students is now closely monitored and appropriate support is given when progress is not as good as it should be. Students know their targets, their current performance levels and receive appropriate guidance from most teachers on how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management have successfully brought about rapid improvement since the last inspection. This is particularly evident in the improvements in teaching and learning, which is accelerating students' progress, especially for students in Years 10 and 11 and those with special educational needs.

The senior leadership team, well supported by governors, have a very clear focus on raising achievement. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring further improvement, which is well developed through effective self-evaluation at whole school and department levels.

New systems for monitoring performance at school, department and student level are now enabling the school to monitor the quality of provision and students' achievement and performance. Teachers and middle managers are now using assessment and performance data well to set challenging targets and monitor progress closely. Managers are beginning to monitor the work of each department in detail, and while this is at an early stage, the first departmental review provided a very good model for future development.

The school meets requirements relating to disability and race equality legislation, but acknowledges that there is still more to do in promoting students' awareness of equality and diversity issues and multi-cultural understanding. Health and safety, child protection and safeguarding procedures are robust. There are productive partnerships with local schools, colleges and external agencies which extend the support and opportunities available for students. The school has improved its regular communications with parents through weekly newsletters, learning review days and parents evenings. While a few parents said they had experienced some difficulties with communications, many more commented on how well the school responded to their concerns.

Senior managers and governors have improved the financial position of the school, successfully addressing the previous budget deficit, and securing funds to invest in improved ICT equipment, specialist facilities for drama and design technology, and an on-going programme of maintenance and refurbishment of the accommodation. Governors provide good support and challenge to the school, through monitoring its performance and finances. Value for money is good, and the school demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

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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
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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 ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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
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

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
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
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

27 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Chiltern Edge Community School, Reading, RG4 9LN

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like say how much we enjoyed meeting and talking to you, in your lessons and around the school. Many of you and your parents spoke very positively about the school and the improvements which have taken place over the last year. We have taken these views in to account in arriving at our judgement that Chiltern Edge is now a good school and that the majority of you are making good progress. We are very pleased to be able to say that the school no longer needs a notice to improve.

The senior team, teachers and support staff have worked extremely hard to bring about improvements since last year. They have acted on the comments made at the last inspection and put a lot of work into improving teaching and learning and monitoring your progress. We are pleased to say that the teaching is improving and this is helping you all to achieve more.

Many of you told us that you feel safe and well supported. Your teachers and support staff know you well, and work hard to help you make as much progress as you can. Most of you enjoy school, and many of you take the opportunity to participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits. There are good opportunities for you to take traditional and vocational courses, depending on your interests and abilities.

We have asked the school to work on improving the quality of all teaching to that of the best and to make sure that your progress is consistent across all subjects.

Your headteacher and senior managers have high aspirations for the school's future. Your teachers are committed to improving the school further to give you all the best opportunities possible to do well. We have confidence that the school will continue to improve and that you will all do your bit to make it a continuing success.

With best wishes

Janet Mercer

Her Majesty's Inspector