

Cheadle High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124431
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	319886
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Cook HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	788
6th form	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Lockett
Headteacher	Keith Hollins
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2007
School address	Station Road Cheadle Stoke-on-Trent ST10 1LH
Telephone number	01538 483900
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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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In November 2005, the school was judged to require special measures. Following a period of instability in leadership, the local authority very successfully liaised between Cheadle High School and another local school, Westwood College, and arranged for both schools to be led by the same headteacher. The headteacher of Westwood College was appointed as the executive headteacher of Cheadle and Westwood in July 2007 and spends equal amounts of his time based at each school. In January 2008 an associate headteacher took up post.

The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is half that of the national average. Also below the national averages are the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is believed not to be English. The standards of students who join in the school in Year 7 are broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Cheadle High School is a rapidly improving school. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Leadership and management overall are good and it has been the outstanding strategic leadership of the headteacher that has brought about positive change. The main school is now providing a satisfactory education and the sixth form is outstanding. Students make satisfactory progress in the main school. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 are just above average and have improved year on year over the last five years. Exam results at the end of Year 11 have also improved and in 2007 were just above the national average. Students are making better progress because the quality of teaching has improved and is now satisfactory. Effective action has been taken by the senior leadership team (SLT) who have introduced a number of teaching strategies and ensured that all staff use them. Although teaching has improved, it does not always effectively help students to learn as quickly as they could.

Students' behaviour is good. Their concern for the safety and well-being of others is good. Students enjoy school and talk very positively about how the school is improving. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. There are increasing opportunities for students to take on responsibilities in school. The level of care the school provides is good. Students have noticed how the school has improved the way it helps them recognise how well they are doing in lessons. Academic guidance of this sort has improved but students still do not always know exactly what they need to do to achieve the next level or grade.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The drive to improve teaching and learning has had a positive impact on how the curriculum is delivered, but the courses it offers students are not yet fully matched to their learning needs and interests.

The associate headteacher is very effective in the day to day leadership and management of the school. Staff know what is expected of them because there are robust systems in place to constantly monitor and evaluate provision, and these have proved to be effective in terms of school improvement. However, the analysis of student progress data is not yet managed in a way that enables the school to quickly identify any groups that underachieve so that action can be taken. A sign of the school's improvement over the last two years is the growing confidence of the senior leadership team to initiate effectively and develop good practice. The governors of the school have an accurate view of the school, which puts them in a good position to challenge the school to maximise its good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is a well established and popular sixth form centre that serves the students from three partner schools. It has a very good reputation in the local community and it is highly regarded by students. Students speak enthusiastically about the level of support and encouragement they receive that enables them to achieve their personal goals and academic ambitions. As a result, Cheadle High School students make good and, frequently outstanding, progress from their different starting points. There is excellent academic support and guidance for students, built on robust monitoring of their progress and performance in examinations. Information from students and performance data are used extremely well to inform long term and day to day decisions and to plan lessons and advise students on how to improve their work.

The sixth form builds on the ethos and values that underpin the work of the main school. Students make a positive contribution to the community, for example by participating in charitable fundraising, sporting events and arts activities. In these and in other ways, students practise their own leadership skills and are excellent role models for younger pupils. Many of the improvements in teaching and learning – that have impacted positively on achievement in the main school – are used to excellent effect in the most successful lessons in the sixth form. In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge and infectious enjoyment and energy inspire and motivate students. The high expectations, prompted through lively debate and a very good range of group and individual activities, lead students to rise to the challenges they are set. Occasionally, the pace of learning is too slow and students are not encouraged to think and reason for themselves. Here, achievement is inconsistent.

The three schools working together ensure that leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective. The robust line management structure ensures swift and effective action is taken when it is needed. Whilst there are still improvements to be made, for example in making the curriculum more attractive to students who would choose vocational qualifications, there is a real desire to look ahead and to continually seek out ways that ensure students are better prepared for further study or employment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Broaden the curriculum so that it better caters for students' varying needs.
- Further improve the analysis of assessment data to identify groups of students who should make better progress.
- Increase the focus on how much students learn to further improve teaching.

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: 1

The progress pupils make has improved over the last three years and is now satisfactory. Students' progress in English in Years 7 to 9 is good. Overall standards by the end of Year 9 have improved since the last inspection in 2005, mainly due to standards in English rising sharply in 2007. In both English and mathematics, a higher proportion than average achieved the above average National Curriculum Levels 6 and 7.

Standards at the end of Year 7 are above average in English and mathematics, but average in science. The percentage of students who achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C improved by 10% in 2007 to just above the national average. Boys do less well than girls. In 2007, a small number of lower ability boys made inadequate progress when taking into account their starting points. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. The proportion of students achieving above average GCSE grades in 2007 matched the national average apart from in French, where results were well below average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school's increasingly positive ethos and effective relationships contribute significantly to students' good personal development and well-being. Most enjoy school and are keen to learn, especially when their lessons are lively and interesting. Levels of attendance are above average and unauthorised absence is low. Behaviour in lessons is good, and an increased level of adult supervision around the school has contributed to a calm and orderly atmosphere at other times.

Students say that they feel safe, and many appreciate the support of both staff and trained student mentors. Most appreciate the school's messages about healthy eating and many take advantage of the healthy food choices available to them. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their contribution to the community is good. For example, over 60 student 'buddies' are actively supporting young people with disabilities at weekends. Although there are limited opportunities for spiritual reflection, the 'Up the garden path project' involving a number of students has transformed the school's memorial garden. Many students benefit from being involved in fundraising and visits both in this country and abroad. Students develop satisfactory skills to help them prepare for their future economic well-being through a comprehensive programme of enterprise and work related activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, and they now generally include ways of matching activities better to meet students' different abilities. Students are well prepared for learning because teachers share the aim of the lesson with them. This is particularly successful when teachers also make clear to students the small learning steps they will need to make in the lesson. Students make especially good progress when they have opportunities to assess their own or others' work. In the best lessons, students make rapid progress because teachers create a positive 'can do' atmosphere and have high expectations of work and behaviour. Progress is also good when the interesting range of activities actively engages students, and teachers really challenge their thinking through astute questioning. However, too many lessons are still only satisfactory. These lessons do not focus enough on the intended learning outcomes, but rather on the tasks that students complete. Teachers often talk too much and do not give students enough opportunities to work independently. More able students are not sufficiently challenged and this slows down the rate of progress they make.

Students know their current level or grade, but do not always know how to improve. This reflects the variability in the quality of marking and feedback that students receive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

In Years 7 to 9, students follow an appropriate range of subjects including two modern foreign languages. Students in Years 7 and 8 who have experienced learning difficulties at primary school benefit from being taught by a small team of teachers. The range of vocational courses available in Years 10 and 11 is too limited. The school has correctly identified the need to increase the range of courses students can choose to study so that their needs and interests are better met. A particular curricular strength is the effective provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Students really appreciate their PSHE lessons, saying that they 'prepare us for adulthood very well'. Topics such as drugs education and learning about relationships are valued. Students spoke highly about the well organised work experience programme. They enjoy the enterprise activities and industry days, but these opportunities are not as frequent as they could be. The good range of enrichment opportunities contributes significantly to students' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Procedures for ensuring students' safety are good with efficient staff recruitment arrangements and appropriate safeguarding practices in place. Students say that the support arrangements in the school have improved markedly and that they feel valued and respected. Data is analysed and distributed to ensure that teachers can track individual students' performance but, whilst there has been significant improvements in this, there are still inconsistencies between teachers in using data as a focus for raising achievement. Consequently, most students are aware of their personal targets but many are unsure as to precisely what they have to do to achieve them in some subjects.

Support for students with learning disabilities and/or difficulties is effective and this allows these students to match the progress made by others across the school. All elements of the students' support structure, including the school's multi-agency liaison with external agencies and its sensitive transition arrangements, are good and contribute to the quality of care and support that students receive throughout their school career.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Following the school's last inspection, there was a period of time when leadership failed to drive forward improvements effectively. Things began to improve very quickly when the now executive headteacher began to work with the senior leadership team. His outstanding leadership put the school back on course to raise standards and improve teaching and learning. His leadership skills are now complemented by the drive and determination of the very effective associate headteacher. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

The SLT has benefited from the clarity of vision and purpose that the new executive headteacher and associate headteacher provide. Each SLT member is becoming increasingly effective and being held to account for their impact on improving the school. Subject leaders have also been given far more direction, which has led to a better focused effort on dealing with practice that is not good enough.

Over the past two years, the work of the governors has been revitalised. Governance is now good. Recently, a new committee structure has been introduced which has already shown that it is more focused on the quality of teaching and learning, putting governors in a much better position to offer support and hold the school to account.

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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	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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	1
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?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
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	2	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	1
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	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	1
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	1
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	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

29 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Cheadle High School, Cheadle ST10 1LH

I am writing to inform you that your school no longer requires special measures. Your school has improved and improved quickly. You yourselves should take some of the credit for the improvements that have taken place. For example, at the last inspection your behaviour was not judged favourably. This time we judged your behaviour to be good and we were impressed with the positive attitudes you have and the belief that your school is changing for the better.

The improvements in your school have come about because of the good leadership and management of senior staff and the effective way teachers ensure you make at least satisfactory progress. Your new headteachers are very effective leaders who make things happen. For example, the way your academic targets are now being used has meant that you are much clearer about what is expected of you.

I know that staff at your school now want the improvements to continue. There is still much to be done but we have left your school with three main areas to work on.

- Although the curriculum that is on offer is satisfactory, we have asked the school to find different courses for you to study so that you have a better choice. You could be involved by discussing what you would be interested to learn.
- We have asked teachers to use test and assessment results to find out if any of you are not making enough progress.
- We have asked the senior leadership team and your teachers to focus on how well you learn in lessons. Again, you could help here by assessing yourselves as to how well you think you have learnt and talking about how you could learn more quickly.

I look forward to hearing about how well your school is doing in the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook Her Majesty's Inspector

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Andrew Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector