

The Chafford School, A Specialist Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102342
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	323625
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	921
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ray Emmett
Headteacher	Mrs Cheryl Hassell
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Lambs Lane South Rainham RM13 9XD
Telephone number	01708 552811
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspector's and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Students mainly live in the towns of Rainham and South Hornchurch in the outer London Borough of Havering, or in the adjacent areas of Dagenham and Thurrock. The school was designated as a specialist business and enterprise college in 2003. Most students are of White British heritage, although the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average. Relatively few speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Chafford Business and Enterprise College is a good and improving school. Many areas of its work are outstanding. There have been major improvements since the last inspection in the effectiveness of middle leadership and the quality of teaching and learning. Standards have risen. This provides powerful evidence of the school's good capacity to improve further. Parents are supportive and generally happy with the school. A typical comment was 'I have no complaints at all; the school acts promptly on any problems that arise and my child is happy.' As a result, the school's popularity is growing.

Students exhibit excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes. The highly respected headteacher has, over a long period, built an ethos of success where students achieve well and demonstrate excellent personal development. She effectively enables staff to flourish. Through well-judged appointments and consistent leadership, she has improved the school culture to one where every child is expected to succeed. The leadership team are committed to ensuring that the school meets the needs and interests of all students. They have led a number of innovative developments in the school, particularly the establishment of an excellent curriculum that provides students with a wide range of choices. These developments continue to have a positive impact on students' good achievement. Business and Enterprise is the school's specialism and leads the way in raising standards in this area of the curriculum, across other subject areas and in links with other schools, including the sports leadership programme.

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. The quality of teaching is good with much that is outstanding. A parent encapsulated the key to the school's success thus, 'My daughter is doing extremely well at The Chafford. I am pleased with the progress made and encouragement given to allow my daughter to develop her knowledge and express her views constructively.'

Since the last inspection, procedures have been put in place to develop greater consistency in monitoring and evaluation across all departments. However, despite these improvements, variation in students' achievement between subjects still remains and the leadership team have rightly identified the need to improve the rigour of these procedures. Robust action has been taken to improve the leadership of major subjects but it is too soon to see the full impact in all cases. Therefore, leadership and management are good.

The care, guidance and support for students are good. Aspects of this provision are outstanding. For example, the innovation of mixed-age tutor groups is valued by teachers and students. The school works very effectively with a range of support services to promote the welfare of its students. Academic guidance is practised throughout the school. Students know their targets, but they are clearer in the best performing subjects about what they actually need to do to improve. New systems currently being introduced will enable senior leaders to identify and address potential underachievement more quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour of monitoring of students' progress to reduce the variation in performance between different subjects.
- Ensure that students not only know their target level but are consistently involved in understanding how to achieve it.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students begin Year 7 with standards that are just a little below average and by Year 11 they attain GCSE results that are above average. In many subjects, the GCSE results are very impressive and often outstanding. In 2008 and for several years, English and science results have been only satisfactory. However, results in the current Year 11 coursework and module tests in these subjects and the school's tracking system indicate that standards have improved this year, and are on track to rise above the national average. The leadership team recognise that there has been too much variation in students' achievement across subjects. Although this is an issue for very few subjects, it has affected the standards of all. The school has taken robust action to address the issue. There is evidence that variation between subjects is decreasing. The school's specialist subject of business education provides outstanding results, helping to raise overall standards.

Students now make good progress overall and exceptionally good progress in many subjects. There is no significant variation in the progress of different groups. Those students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support and this ensures they also make good progress in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding, as is students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The introduction of 'learning to learn' in the lower school is making the students more reflective in their learning. Students respond well to supporting young people with physical impairments as well those with cultural traditions other than their own. They are generally happy and feel secure. They explained the 'amazing' impact of vertical tutor grouping, saying, 'this has had a great impact on our confidence because we have friends in all years'. They reported that any bullying is dealt with quickly and students have been involved in the school's strategies on anti-bullying through the peer mentors.

Older students develop their understanding of sex and relationships through an excellent personal, social, health and economic programme, which links closely to citizenship. In addition, in Years 10 and 11 students can gain a citizenship qualification. They contribute considerably to the running of the school through the school council, the house councils and the senior prefect team. Student leaders take responsibility, for example in the very effective training programme for library assistants, run by students. Relationships are strong because students like and trust the school staff. Students enjoy talking about their achievements; after school clubs have a particularly high profile and parents made positive comments about them in their responses.

Students thrive on praise when they do things well. As a result, behaviour is excellent and the majority of pupils attend regularly. Attendance has shown an improving trend and the school officers responsible for this area maintain their drive to improve attendance further. Students are aware of national and global issues through lessons, visitors and links to other countries. Students understand the concept of healthy lifestyle but are disappointed that the space for lunch and the breakfast club is so cramped. Students use the good opportunities for physical exercise. Fundraising is a key element of students making choices for the local and wider community, and each house has its own dedicated charity. As a result of the opportunities to

develop work-related skills and the curriculum outlined below, all pupils are prepared very well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students learn well in most areas as a result of teaching that engages their interest and challenges them to think hard. In almost all lessons seen, teachers asked probing questions leading to serious but lively discussion in which students responded well to others' views. Occasionally teachers dominate discussion, constraining students' opportunities to reinforce learning by applying it to their reasoning. Well-planned lessons move students on securely from starting points that are usually, but not always, accurately identified. Teachers use a wide range and variety of activities, including effective use of information and communication technology (ICT), to maintain high levels of interest. They make learning objectives clear and refer to them throughout lessons. Students know that they are expected to support their thinking with reference to materials that have been well chosen to meet their levels of understanding and communication.

Teachers are enthusiastic about recent initiatives to share and spread good practice from effective departments. Improvements in teaching have therefore accelerated students' progress, particularly in science and English. Teachers throughout the school usually challenge the highest-attaining students by high expectations of their performance. Students with learning difficulties are well supported by teaching assistants who encourage them to think for themselves while providing the help that they need. In the best-planned lessons observed, teachers provided a range of activities to meet different levels of ability. Very good relationships between staff and students are fostered by teachers' spoken celebration of individual achievement. Teachers' growing use of students' self-evaluation and assessment of their friends' work has made students very familiar with measures of their success. However, marking of regular work does not consistently advise students about how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum provided is exceptional. The school offers a very broad range of courses at GCSE. These courses meet the needs and interests of a wide range of students. They included well-managed offsite provision at college and in businesses. Some of the academic opportunities are provided by the extensive range of extended day classes, including the very successful AS-level business studies. Additionally, there is a wide range of popular sporting and artistic activities. A parent chose to comment that, 'the after school and lunchtime clubs are excellent'. As part of the school's business specialism, ICT training is provided to the local community. All students follow a course leading to a business qualification. Well-planned provision for enterprise and financial capability education, together with work-related learning, prepare students extremely well for their future economic well-being.

The curriculum meets legal requirements. A wide range of trips and visits help to bring learning alive. There are good links with primary schools through opportunities such as the highly popular junior sports leaders' course.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is excellent. The staff show a clear sense of commitment and sensitivity to the needs of all, which builds up students' confidence and self-esteem. Links with outside agencies are very strong and the school is a champion of vulnerable students. Effective systems and procedures for care and support have an excellent impact on students' personal development and well-being. Whole-school procedures for tracking data are at an early stage of development. Personal guidance is part of the school's developing approach to more efficient and effective target setting but this is not yet consistent across the school. Pupils know their National Curriculum levels because teachers use the levels in marking and feedback. However, there are missed opportunities to use level descriptors to encourage students' involvement in the process of assessing their own work. Good practice was seen, for example in modern foreign languages and English, where students had the skills to evaluate their work against the stated criteria and could therefore identify what they needed to do to improve.

The large site is secure and well supervised. Students with physical impairment, as well as other students with learning difficulties, are well cared for through the knowledge and understanding of support staff. The small number of responses to the parental questionnaire caused some anxiety, but did indicate that a core of parents want to be recognised as valuing the school's work. The students make outstanding use of learning mentors and the school counsellor as a point of contact whenever they have academic or personal concerns. Students and parents make very good use of the many external agencies for healthcare, and use learning mentors such as the counsellor to help them solve problems. Very effective careers advice has given students good support in entering the world of work, ensuring that the proportion leaving school and not in education, employment or training remains low.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. Leaders and managers at all levels promote improvement in raising standards and achievement. High-quality teaching is improving as a result of strategic planning by senior leaders. This ensures that middle managers take responsibility for leading practice in departments and for monitoring teaching. Good professional development opportunities for middle managers mean that departments work well together. This ensures that excellent practice in management and teaching strategies is shared. Departmental self-evaluation is insufficiently focused on the progress of current students. Targets for students, so that they know the next steps for improvement, are well set up in some subject areas and result in excellent standards. However, this is not yet consistent across all subject areas.

Equality of opportunity is well promoted across the school, with provision for the most able well organised, and all students planned for in the curriculum. The development of ICT is well led and managed across the curriculum. As a result, students are able to work online and parents and students can communicate with teachers through email. Governors make an excellent contribution to school improvement and challenge and support the school well. The local community come into the school for training in ICT. This was set up as a result of a student questionnaire in the local community. Through this sort of engagement and provision,

international links and many other activities, the school makes a good contribution to local, national and international community cohesion.

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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?	1
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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

20 April 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Chafford School, A Specialist Business and Enterprise College, Rainham, RM13 9XD

Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. We believe your school is a good and improving school. Many aspects of its work are outstanding.

- The headteacher has been committed to improving the school over a long period. She and the people with responsibilities make decisions with your best interests in mind.
- You enjoy coming to school and you achieve well. In many subjects your achievement is outstanding. Subjects that have not done so well in previous years have improved this year. The quality of teaching in your school is at least good and quite often excellent.
- We know that you are cared for extremely well. You are very positive about the vertical tutoring, and older students support younger ones well. You behave in a very sensible and mature way around the school and in lessons. The behaviour we saw was excellent.
- We believe that the vast majority of you and your parents are very happy with the school and all it offers. However, very few of your parents returned the Ofsted questionnaire. You can help by ensuring that your parents always receive letters from school.
- Many of you take part in the wide range of extra activities. Becoming a business college has improved your resources and led to many opportunities for you to prepare for the world of work.
- The school council, together with the head boy and girl, play an important role in securing improvements in the school.
- Students from different backgrounds get on really well together. An excellent contribution is made to improving relations between different communities in school and in the local area.

Although much about your school is really good we have asked the school to make sure that the best features found in some subjects are found in all. For example, we found that in some subjects, although you know your levels, it had not been explained to you exactly what you needed to do to get to the next level.

Yours faithfully

Adrian Lyons

Her Majesty's Inspector