

Chesterfield High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104952
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324134
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Haney

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1299
Sixth form	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T Battersby
Headteacher	Mr S Penney
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2006
School address	Chesterfield Road Crosby Liverpool Merseyside L23 9YB
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school was awarded specialist sports college status in September 2000 and has since been redesignated with information and communication technology (ICT) as its second specialist subject in 2005. The vast majority of students are White British with a number of minority ethnic groups represented but none of significant size. Very few students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well below average. The school gained Sportsmark Gold in 2004, Artsmark Gold in 2005, an Extended Schools Award in 2008 and a Healthy Schools Award in 2007. The headteacher has been in post since January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chesterfield High School has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is now a good school with some outstanding features. In particular, the quality of care, guidance and support it provides enable students of all abilities to do well. This, combined with good teaching, has led to its students achieving above average standards and developing outstanding personal skills and qualities.

Standards have risen and are now above average at the end of Key Stage 4 and this represents good progress from the students' starting points. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 where provisional results in 2008 indicate average standards, but students are developing the skills and ways of working to enable them to make a success of further studies. The improved use of data to monitor students' achievements and the taking of early action to provide help when they fall behind are helping to ensure standards are continuing to rise.

There has been a systematic and concerted effort to build a 'can do' culture with both students and staff. A key feature has been the development of excellent internal assessment tracking systems that are now providing good data to students, parents and teachers on the progress students are making with their studies. This has enabled more effective planning and early identification of students who are underachieving. The school has had a clear focus on improving the outcomes of students by the end of Key Stage 4 and this has been successful. However, some of the overall judgements about whole-school achievement are too high. The sixth form has not received the same level of attention and as a result, new systems and ways of working are not as well embedded, leading to slower progress in raising standards across the board. However, there are clear signs of students making better progress in lessons. Where the school has been successful is in the encouragement of students to remain in education by seeking to provide courses where they can succeed. The curriculum has been progressively widened to include more vocational courses and this has helped raise student achievement. The school is working hard to ensure that pupils have clear pathways from ages 14 to 19 and links to Key Stage 3, but these are not all established at present.

Students say they enjoy school, feel safe and know who to turn to if they have a problem. Students were enthusiastic about the way the school promotes their personal development and well-being. They demonstrated their qualities during the inspection by conducting themselves in an exemplary fashion around the school. They are courteous and polite, socialising well with each other. This excellent behaviour is also seen in most lessons, with their attention dropping only when the teaching required them to listen for too long. Much of the teaching is good or outstanding, but there is still some inconsistency in ensuring that students are actively engaged. The practice of the best teachers has not yet sufficiently permeated through the school to improve the quality for all.

Leadership and management are good overall. An important aspect in securing the improvements in the school is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. With perseverance and skill he has focused the school's developments and established effective structures and systems. He is ably supported by a strong senior team and enthusiastic heads of departments and heads of year. Governors are also playing their part by challenging and promoting change in the school. The impact of the school's specialisms is good and targets have been met or exceeded. The improvements already achieved demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Standards in the sixth form are not as high as in the main school and are below the national average. The school is a very inclusive school that encourages all young people who can benefit from further study to stay on. As a result, very few students leave the school without employment or going on to training or education. The large numbers of students in the sixth form with below average prior examination results achieve well, but some higher attaining students fail to achieve the highest grades. Overall, progress and achievement are satisfactory. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and feel that they have a part to play in the developing the school. Some take up opportunities to work with younger pupils, such as 'buddying' classes to talk about future options and encourage further study. Students know their current attainment levels and are beginning to understand what they need to do to improve. Some students lack the confidence and personal skills to use this information effectively to ensure they achieve their targets. Teaching is good in the sixth form and is now leading to many students making good progress in lessons. As a result, achievement is starting to rise. The curriculum is building on changes in the main school provision. For example, the sports specialism has led to BTEC courses in sports studies that continue on from work started in Years 10 and 11. The school is appropriately pursuing collaboration with other schools and colleges to extend the range of courses on offer to students. This will provide a challenge in ensuring that students have clear pathways from Year 10 and 11 courses. Because of the focus on improving the main school, the sixth form has only recently become a priority. However, leaders know what aspects need to be changed to improve achievement, building on good self-evaluation using the improved data available. The active target- setting and review culture is not yet fully embedded with students, but is already making an impact on student progress in lessons. The improvements in provision to encourage more students to stay on at school have been well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in the sixth form.
- Ensure that the identified good practice in teaching is effectively used to raise the number of good and outstanding lessons.
- Strengthen curriculum arrangements to ensure curricular progression for pupils aged 14–19.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, students enter the school with standards in line with the national average, but this is now rising and the standards of the latest entrants are above average. Standards in Key Stage 4 are above the national average. Provisional 2008 examination results show a high proportion of pupils (79%) at the school gained five or more GCSE grades A* to C. This represents good progress overall. Problems with the level of examination entry of some students in GCSE mathematics limited their achievement in 2008. Students have consistently achieved well in English and science over the last two years. The provisional results in 2008, together with school data indicate students in Key Stage 3, at the end of Year 9, achieved average standards. English standards were higher than those of mathematics and science. Student progress accelerates in years 10 and 11, aided by a curriculum that meets pupils' needs and allows to them to achieve their good results. Thanks to the quality of care and support they receive, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress.

Overall standards achieved by students in the sixth form are below the national average. However, given the starting points of the students, overall achievement and progress is satisfactory. The actions to secure good achievement have been less effective with the more able students, but observations and data collected during the inspection show that this is now improving. The Sports College programme has seen the development of BTEC vocational sports studies courses and the achievement of students on these courses was good in 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school community is orderly and relaxed. Behaviour and attitudes are often outstanding around the school and in the lessons where learners are engaged. The school's strategy to improve behaviour and develop students' personal skills and enjoyment has been particularly successful. This is reflected in the good rate of attendance for all students, including the most vulnerable, and a very low rate of fixed term exclusion.

Students are very proud of their school. They are appreciative of the quality and variety of academic and personal support that promotes their progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the school is outstanding. Students' relationships with each other and adults are outstanding because they have benefited from the various opportunities the school provides for furthering their sense of right and wrong. This was exemplified by the responses to the recent Holocaust awareness day, preparing them well for life beyond school.

Students have a very good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. They take full advantage of the exceptional sporting facilities on offer and make sensible choices when choosing the food they eat. The school council is well organised and highly effective in expressing the student voice. The school's specialism is contributing to the development of leadership skills through coaching awards. These and other courses are enabling students to build good skills for their later economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with no unsatisfactory lessons observed. Outstanding lessons were observed in mathematics, music and physical education, where students made significant progress. In all these lessons, the teacher's enthusiasm inspires and motivates the students. The pace is brisk, all students are engaged and there is a strong emphasis on enjoyment. In some satisfactory lessons teachers do not challenge students to develop and share their own ideas. There are fewer opportunities for students to be actively engaged and the rate of progress is not sufficiently challenging, especially for the more able. This is eloquently summarised by a Year 10 student, saying, 'When lessons are not that good, it becomes an exercise in listening'.

Students are aware of their target grades and what levels they are working at, helping to encourage higher achievement. However, teachers do not always use targets consistently in planning lessons effectively to meet the needs of differing abilities. Work is marked on a regular basis and there is some good practice where students are given clear guidance, but sharp improvement points for how students can make progress are not always present.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's specialist college status has had a huge impact on curriculum development. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is mainly traditional and meets statutory requirements. However, there are opportunities for Year 9 students to take GCSE courses in PE and to begin OCR Level 2 National units in information and communication technology. The new secondary curriculum is beginning to be addressed in Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, a wide range of GCSE and vocational courses meets the needs, interests and aspirations of students. Some students have the opportunity to be entered early for GCSEs and to follow AS courses in PE, whilst others can follow alternative pathways, including links with local colleges and training providers. The school's inclusive curriculum extends into the sixth form where BTEC Level 2 provision enables an alternative pathway for some students to progress to Level 3 and on to higher education.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, greatly enhanced by the specialist sports status. These add to students' enjoyment of school. A variety of different activities such as cheerleading and fencing are provided to engage students who are less interested in traditional sports. Links with local sports clubs and business partners ensure the interests of all students can be met if these cannot be provided in school. This wide range of activities promotes enjoyment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The arrangements for academic and pastoral care are responsive to students' individual needs and result in an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. Requirements for safeguarding students and ensuring their welfare are fully met. This is because the school is alert to its responsibilities and promotes a good understanding of health and safety issues throughout the school.

The school has developed excellent links with a wide range of external agencies to provide highly effective and flexible educational opportunities so that students can make progress. An example of excellent practice was praised by a parent whose child has made excellent progress and has secured a place in higher education to pursue further studies.

The monitoring and tracking of students is outstanding. Students know their targets and they receive guidance through regular meetings with tutors where they review their targets for improvement. The rigorous use of data is less embedded in the sixth form and the interventions to ensure that student achievement is challenged are less effective.

The quality of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent and as result, they make similar progress to their peers. Students at risk are identified early. A coordinated range of appropriate internal interventions, such as those on offer in the Chesterfield Achievement and Success Centre and the inclusion room, are then implemented. These are reducing the number of fixed term exclusions and promoting achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership with a very clear vision for the future of the school. He is an important factor in the good school progress made since the last inspection. Senior and middle managers are valued and effective. There are good procedures for self-evaluation at whole-school and department level. Strengths are celebrated and areas for improvement are identified and acted upon.

Equality of opportunity is a central philosophy of this school. There are strong support systems for the most vulnerable students and a good range of challenging activities for gifted and talented students. The close involvement with local employers enhances careers guidance via initiatives such as mock interviews. Finances are well managed. Expenditure is closely monitored and always linked with priorities identified in the school development plan. The school gives good value for money.

Provision for community cohesion is good and still developing through a wide range of extended school provisions. The school is increasingly successful in engaging the local, hard to reach, members of the immediate community. There are good links with local groups, with schools in Europe and with a school in Sierra Leone. Students are enthusiastic about their own community and keen to learn about and respect the values of other cultures.

Governors know and support the school well through the well-established committee structure. Issues identified in the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The views of parents are sought via questionnaires and discussions with teacher governors are used to inform development. The leadership of the school clearly has the good capacity and the determination to bring about further improvements.

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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	3
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?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	2
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	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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	2

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	1	
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 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	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the polite and courteous way you received us into your school. The team of inspectors and I were impressed by your enthusiasm for learning and the way you were open and responsive to our questions. It was clear from our conversations with you that you enjoy school and feel safe and well cared for. These views were supported overwhelmingly by those of your parents and carers that responded to the Ofsted survey. We agree with you that teaching is good and that you know how well you are doing, which is helping you to improve.

We found, from the evidence we collected, that the school is providing you with a good standard of education. An outstanding aspect is the way the school provides for your personal development and well-being. The standard of your work has risen significantly since the last inspection. We are also pleased to note that many more of you are now going on to further study after Year 11. Many of you are achieving well, but standards in the sixth form have not, as yet, improved as much as in the rest of the school. However, good teaching is now leading to many students making good progress in lessons. As a result, achievement in the sixth form is starting to rise. You can continue to help yourselves by taking note of the levels you are working at and seeking help to ensure you meet or exceed your targets.

Most aspects of your school were found to be good and some outstanding, and we believe with your headteacher and teachers that it can continue to get even better. We have asked your teachers to:

- improve the standards and achievement in the sixth form
- ensure that more lessons are good or outstanding
- make sure that you are well prepared for the courses you study in Years 10 and 11 and that these courses have clear links to further study in the sixth form or elsewhere.