

# Churston Ferrers Grammar School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113525
<b>Local Authority</b>	Torbay
<b>Inspection number</b>	325835
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Pyner 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>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	888
Sixth form	258
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anne Tully
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert Owers
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 April 2006
<b>School address</b>	Greenway Road Churston Ferrers Brixham TQ5 0LN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01803 842289
<b>Fax number</b>	01803 846007

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve the performance of weaker subjects at the highest grades in GCSE
- the impact of the school's progress in developing students as more effective learners through the improvement of the curriculum
- how well leadership and management at all levels support improvement.

Evidence was collected from performance data, external monitoring, school documents, observations of teaching and the work produced by students. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with students, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Churston Ferrers Grammar is an oversubscribed, selective, co-educational 11–18 school of average size. Situated outside Brixham, Devon, the majority of students live within a five-mile radius of the school. Since 2005, the school has been a specialist college for the humanities. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is low, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The overwhelming majority of students are from a White British heritage and the percentage of young people from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English is much lower than that found nationally. Students' attainment on entry to the school is exceptionally high. The school has a number of links with schools in Europe and Peru, with a focus on environmental issues. In 2007 it was designated as a Lead School in south-west England for sustainability. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months.

The school has gained the Sportsmark, Healthy School and Investors in People awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Churston Ferrers Grammar is an outstanding school. Its aspirations to attain the highest standards and achievement as well as developing a supportive community are apparent throughout the work of the school. Not content just to continue to attain exceptionally high standards, the leadership of the school is driving forward improvements to develop more challenging learning activities undertaken by the students. This has been supported through the considerable impact of the school's specialism in humanities. Not surprisingly, students are rightly proud of the school and most parents are extremely happy with all that it provides. One parent expressed the views of many when she commented, 'We are very happy with the education our daughter is having at Churston Ferrers Grammar School. The school is supportive, challenging and has a superb work ethic.' However, a few parents, despite being very positive about the work of the school overall, commented that the school could do more to seek their views. The calm and friendly atmosphere is underpinned by excellent relationships throughout the whole-school community. Students are articulate and confident. There is a strong sense of purpose and students of all ages say how much they value the support they receive in the drive for excellence throughout the school.

Standards are exceptionally high and well above national averages. This represents outstanding progress from students' starting points, even though these are well above the national average. At Key Stage 3, students make exceptional progress and the school builds on this very effectively at Key Stage 4. The proportion of students who achieve five GCSE A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has increased year on year and is exceptionally high. In 2008, almost all students attained this level. In most subjects, students achieved significantly above the national average for passes at the highest GCSE grades and where this is not the case there is effective intervention to bring about improvement. Since the last inspection, focused work on English has been very successful at both Key Stages 3 and 4, with excellent results in the English GCSE double award in 2008. The school takes great care to analyse thoroughly the achievement of all groups of students, to ensure that support is provided where needed. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they, too, make very good progress.

Students' achievement is outstanding because the quality of teaching is, overall, excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is outstanding and the best lessons challenge students by moving along at a brisk pace, providing very effective opportunities for learners to broaden and test their knowledge and understanding. Effective working in pairs and groups, together with challenging practical activities, reinforce learning well. Work is carefully matched to students' needs and teachers are enthusiastic about the further development of learning strategies, which is the focus of the current curriculum review. Parents and students describe the commitment of staff, who they say are concerned for the success of each individual, in identifying those who are underachieving and then putting extra support in place.

The impact of the humanities specialist status permeates the rich curriculum that is being further enhanced by developing extra challenge for students, and particularly for those who are more able. The impact of the 'Learning to Learn' programmes in Key Stage 3 shows in the development high-level skills and attributes to reinforce independent learning. The curriculum develops community cohesion very effectively in a number of ways. An excellent audit of provision has led to a plan which maps faith, ethnicity and culture and the socio-economic dimension to develop a strong sense of common values and respect for others' differences. The school's specialism underpins this work, and European and global links with other schools

focusing on aspects of the environment and sustainability are a real strength of the school. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is available, with a particularly high take-up rate.

Parents and students praise the level of care the school displays for every student and how they are supported at academic and pastoral levels. The school meets all the current safeguarding requirements. Students of all ages feel safe at school, believe that any bullying issues will be dealt with effectively, and know that there is always someone available to go to if they have a problem. They note that their contribution to school life, in whatever form this takes, is valued. They appreciate the work of student 'Listeners' who are able to support and guide others. Student services are a strength and provide rapid, effective support for individuals. Students understand about healthy living and praise the improved menu in the canteen. There are many occasions when students are able to make positive contribution to the wider community, through fund raising, sporting and performing activities. The students appreciate the opportunities provided for them to make a contribution to the school community through the school forum and school parliament, members of which report regularly to the governing body. Despite these very good practices, they say they could play an even greater role in the development of the school and, given the ability and maturity of the students, this is indeed possible. The outstanding outcomes of the school, together with the more recent development of skills to promote independent learning, means that the students are prepared excellently for higher education or employment.

The school is led very effectively by the headteacher and leadership team. In particular, the headteacher has skilfully used the experience and talents of the senior leaders to develop a strong team of managers. Together, they have effective plans to improve the learning skills of the students even further and in this project they have utilised the considerable enthusiasm of the staff and guidance by the very experienced governing body. Thorough analysis of performance and regular management meetings, where heads of department are held to account for any underachievement by students, mean that the school knows its strengths and weaknesses very well. Based on this analysis of performance, intervention to improve subjects is swift and extensive and is carefully monitored. There is an excellent system in place for monitoring and supporting learning through lesson observations. The school's consistently excellent achievement and effective focus on improvement indicates an outstanding capacity to improve further. Governors are well led by a very experienced chair and offer a range of skills and experience which support the school very well. They are committed to the maintenance of the exceptionally high standards as well as being fully focused on improvement across the school. They offer valuable guidance to senior leaders.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

High quality teaching, support and extensive curriculum opportunities mean that a high proportion of students in Year 11 choose to join the sixth form at Churston Ferrers. They are joined each year by students from other schools, who report that they are supported very well and settle in quickly. Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress and achieve results in a range of academic courses that are well above the national average.

The care, guidance and support students receive are outstanding. Many students note with appreciation the high quality of academic support and individual guidance from teachers for the subjects they study. They describe the atmosphere of constant encouragement and belief in their ability to do well. They also note the very effective support for them through student services, and guidance in the Well Being programme that prepares them for the challenges of

adult life, including relationships, health, finance, and housing. Guidance provided for future careers or education beyond the sixth form is personalised and well informed. Students play an important part in the school through the school parliament and support younger students through the 'Listeners' programme.

The sixth form is led and managed very well. Effective analysis of performance and cohesive planning within the senior management team lead to constantly improving provision.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Harness more effectively the views of parents and students in planning developments.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

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<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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	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	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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**

12 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Churston Ferrers Grammar School, Brixham TQ5 0LN

Thank you for welcoming me to Churston Ferrers when I inspected the school recently and for talking with me so openly. I was delighted to see that you enjoy being at the school and agree with your comments and the views of your parents that Churston Ferrers is an outstanding school. I was very impressed by your test and examination results and noted how well you make progress through the school. You develop excellent working relationships with school staff and make a positive contribution to school life. The school is working very hard to make sure that you all have the best education possible and achieve the highest standards. Staff at the school really know you well and take very good care of you.

Many aspects of your school are outstanding but your teachers are keen to improve it even more, particularly in developing the ways you learn. You and your parents are very positive about the work of the school but some from both groups feel that they could play a larger part in the way the school plans for improvement. Therefore, we have asked your headteacher, senior leaders and governors to develop ways to use the views of students and parents more effectively in planning developments.

There are many excellent opportunities for you at Churston Ferrers Grammar School. I am sure that that you will continue to make the most of them.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Robert Pyner

Her Majesty's Inspector