

Malvern, The Chase

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116942
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	326498
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1627
Sixth form	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian O'Connell
Headteacher	Kevin Peck
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
School address	Geraldine Road Malvern WR14 3NZ
Telephone number	01684 891961
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Chase is a large school that is oversubscribed. Students attend the school from a diverse catchment area. The proportion of the students who are entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased in recent years and is above the national average. Almost all students are White British. A very small proportion of students speak English as an additional language and a small minority are from Traveller families. The Chase is a specialist technology, science and language college. In recognition of its work, it holds several awards, including a Leading Aspect award for creativity across the curriculum.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Chase is a good school with some significant features of outstanding strength, most notably the outstanding sixth form provision. The school is a vibrant learning community. Parents recognise these qualities, and one typically commented that 'the school caters for a wide spectrum of ability and talent'. Exemplary pastoral care and good leadership and management ensure that the personal, social and emotional aspects of students' learning are outstanding. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally strong, as seen through their great consideration for and of others. They eat very healthily and take regular exercise, and are extremely proud of their many responsibilities. The school's excellent links with primary schools, other educational providers and local businesses ensure that students' involvement in the local and wider community is outstanding. Its specialist status has been used very effectively to expand the curriculum in science, language and technology. Additional funding has been used well to develop the accommodation. For example, a new science building has been added, and substantially developed resources have expanded the provision in languages and information and communication technology (ICT). This has led to a curriculum that increasingly meets students' broader learning needs. Learners are very well motivated and enthusiastic and this is reflected in the large numbers participating in the extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.

By the end of Year 11, standards are generally above average. There has been some recent variation in students' achievement but currently most groups of students, including higher attainers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are achieving well. This is because of the many additional support programmes and closer monitoring of students' progress. Teaching is good and at times outstanding, but there remains some inconsistency in how well teachers plan and teach lessons to meet the learning needs of different ability groups. Students receive outstanding pastoral support and care, as a direct result of the school's nurturing environment. Nonetheless, academic guidance is uneven in its quality. The students in Years 10 and 11 clearly know and understand what they need to do to improve their work, but the younger ones are less clear. Students in the sixth form consistently attain extremely high standards in a wide range of subjects. They achieve outstandingly well, reflecting the excellent provision.

The headteacher's dedicated leadership and the shared commitment amongst the wider senior leadership team, middle managers and governors underpin the school's determination to provide the very best for its students and ensure that it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students make excellent progress across all subjects. Attendance and retention are very good and reflect the enjoyment and commitment of students. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they use extremely effectively to develop students' abilities to investigate and learn independently. Students recognise that they are set challenging targets and appreciate the excellent systems that are in place to support them, both academically and personally. Outstanding leadership and management ensure that they feel highly valued and cared for. Students welcome the many opportunities that they are given to help within the school, and these include supporting younger students, helping to manage their own sixth form block,

acting as governors and raising substantial funds for local, national and global charities. They spoke enthusiastically about the many extra-curricular activities they participate in.

The wide range of academic subjects meets current students' needs exceptionally well and they consistently attain extremely high standards. The school is rapidly increasing the number of vocational courses to provide alternative routes for some students. The school works very effectively with local colleges and industry to provide students with vocational pathways at the end of Year 12.

What the school should do to improve further

- Spread the outstanding practice seen in teaching and ensure that planned lesson activities consistently challenge all learners to do well.
- Give students in Years 7 to 9 more support and guidance about what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Over recent years, results have been significantly above average. In 2008, the results declined slightly in Years 9 and 11, but this reflected the students' lower starting points. Students achieved well in English and mathematics and exceptionally well in science. GCSE students did especially well in a range of subjects, including at the highest level and in some of the subjects in the school's specialisms. Some took vocational courses that ensured they were motivated and provided with good skills for their future. Current work and school assessment information used to track students' progress indicate that standards are set to rise back up again to above average. Students' current achievement in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, technology and languages, is good. Standards in the sixth form are consistently very high, and students' achievement is outstanding. The school normally exceeds its specialist college targets and is set to do so again this year. Analysis of last year's results has led to a greater range of support programmes being developed to remedy any potential underachievement. Adding greater value to students' achievement remains an ongoing school priority. Reading booster work to support weaker literacy skills, master classes to challenge the more able and better-targeted support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helping to ensure all groups of students are better served.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The Chase believes every child matters, and students grow into mature, confident adults because of the strong, caring, supportive environment. Consequently, relationships are excellent. Students say bullying is rare, but any instances that do arise are firmly dealt with, so they feel very safe and well supported. The recently developed 'Beacon room' is highly valued by students, including the most vulnerable. Students show a strong commitment to healthy lifestyles, and high numbers participate in the impressive range of activities, including the 'The Malvern Hills' annual walk to improve their fitness. Students contribute significantly to school life and beyond, through the school council, working parties, negotiating with caterers to improve the menu, and in staff appointments. As mentors and 'tics' (talking in confidence counsellors), older students help younger ones. Attendance is good and improving. Behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary, though a small minority of students and parents reported that a few disrupt learning. Students show tremendous sensitivity and insightful responses during

assemblies, in personal, social and health education lessons, and in tutor time when discussing life's challenges, relationships and diversity in the world today. Their significant fundraising supports a Burundian orphanage. Students help primary school children through themed activities such as Shakespeare, science, and mathematics days and sports festivals, and teach them languages. They are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Very good relationships and teachers' secure subject knowledge, good questioning skills and well tried teaching methods ensure a positive learning environment. Teachers use praise effectively to motivate students and well trained support assistants contribute strongly to students' achievement, especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Examples of lessons that were planned and taught well were seen in a wide range of subjects. In these lessons, students made good progress and enjoyed learning, especially when the tasks were challenging and motivating. Older students know the level they are working at and understand what they need to do to improve because this has been a whole-school focus, whereas younger students are not yet always as clear about them. Assessment information and marking are used well in most subjects, especially for older students, to enable and monitor progress. Nonetheless, their effectiveness is inconsistent, especially when planning lessons and tasks to meet the needs of learners of differing ability. Teachers' expectations result in good behaviour but on occasion, when work is less stimulating or not pitched at the right level, students can become distracted and learning loses pace. Additional teaching groups in Years 7 to 9 have been introduced to help cater for the wider range of ability now being seen in students joining the school, and the new homework system is successfully developing students' independent learning skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's specialisms have especially enriched provision. Initiatives include courses in BTEC Sport, GCSE General Studies, Japanese, Italian and Latin, and a Short Course in RE. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been modified to better meet learners' changing needs. A work experience programme is embedded, though the range of vocational courses is still developing. The range and quality of enrichment activities are extensive and extremely popular, and contribute strongly to students' outstanding personal development. Sixth form students enjoy a very flexible and wide choice of academic courses and have increasingly wide-ranging vocational courses to choose from. The school works most effectively with local colleges and local industries to provide students with additional vocational pathways and work placements at the end of Year 12. Students say they really enjoy their education and feel that they can access good quality support and guidance. In recognition of its work, the school has achieved the Sportsmark, Artsmark gold and Healthy Schools awards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and support are particular strengths. Students know that if they have a problem they will be well supported. Excellent working partnerships with parents and outside agencies such as behavioural specialists promote learners' well-being. The Chase successfully nurtures its Traveller

community and those who are experiencing significant difficulties in their personal lives, so that they stay to the end of Year 11. The recently reviewed provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they make good progress. Mentoring, anger management counselling, health and well-being specialists, and extra study classes support students very well, especially those with additional needs. Good quality transition arrangements and careers and progression advice are widely available to students across the ability range. Where marking and feedback are particularly effective, they give students clear advice on how to improve, but this is inconsistent between teachers and subjects and is more effective in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form than in Years 7 to 9.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leaders and managers have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, demonstrating good self-evaluation and reflection. Where teaching weaknesses are identified, appropriate measures are taken to remedy them. Leadership is highly focused on continuing to develop what the school offers its students through effective review and monitoring procedures, which involve staff at every level of management. These processes are well supported by the governors, who undertake their roles diligently and use their visits to the school effectively, and they are still developing their role in rigorously challenging the school regarding its performance. The school's use of targets to raise achievement has until recently provided a satisfactory level of challenge. This has improved within some individual departments, where more aspirational targets are now ensuring that all students aim to fulfil their potential.

School policies to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination is eliminated are effective and are monitored appropriately. Safeguarding procedures are robust. The specialist status management committee is particularly effective in promoting the take-up of specialist subjects. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good in most respects, including its developing links with schools in other countries, although it has not yet fully developed links with those representing the cultural diversity found in Britain today.

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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	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	2	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	1
The attendance of learners	2	1
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

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

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	2	
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 eliminated	2	
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**

23 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Malvern, The Chase, Malvern, WR14 3NZ

We would like to thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We particularly enjoyed speaking with you and seeing your work. Yours is a good school that has some outstanding features.

- Students in the sixth form attain consistently high standards in a wide range of subjects. They do so well because the provision is outstanding.
- Many of you told us how much you valued the outstanding support and care given to you. You make sure you look after each other, too!
- Your headteacher, staff and governors all have your best interests at heart and are working hard to make sure you can achieve your full potential.
- Teaching is good and at times outstanding. You told us you enjoy learning best when you have work pitched at the right level and you learn through practical tasks and activities.
- You are very proud of your responsibilities, especially the older students, and you are making a positive difference for all students at The Chase.
- You attain above average standards in many subjects and all of you are achieving well.
- The school is working hard to put on a wider range of courses to better meet your changing needs.
- The school's specialist status has been used to make some significant improvements in the curriculum, resources and the building as well as securing extensive partnerships in the local and wider communities.
- Your personal development and well-being, including your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are impressive.
- You are so involved in the local community especially. Well done!

We have asked the school to do the following to make it even better.

- Plan and teach more effective lessons so that all of you, regardless of your ability, are always helped to achieve your very best.
- Check that students in Years 7 to 9 know and understand more clearly what they need to do to improve their work.

You can help, too, by letting teachers know if the work is too easy or too hard for you, and by telling them if you are unclear about how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning

Lead inspector