

The Archbishop's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118898
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326923
Inspection date	10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	921
Sixth form	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Stace
Headteacher	Michael Liddicoat
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2005
School address	St Stephen's Hill Canterbury CT2 7AP
Telephone number	01227 765805
Fax number	01227 768535

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: current achievement and standards within the school; the effectiveness of the sixth form; and the impact of leadership at all levels in contributing to school improvement.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, discussions with pupils and sixth form students, staff and the chair of the governing body, the views of parents and a scrutiny of the school's documentation. 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

The school is similar in size to other secondary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are a small number from a range of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school gained specialist humanities status from the beginning of the academic year and holds a British Council international school award. There have been significant changes in school leadership since the last inspection, including a new headteacher and the majority of the leadership team.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Archbishop's School is a good school, where pupils achieve well academically. The school enjoys the support of parents, who are positive about its provision, appreciating the school's Christian ethos and the high level of care and support for pupils' well-being. For example, one parent praised the school not only for its academic achievement but also for 'filling children with confidence in their abilities and nurturing them'. As a consequence, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy welcoming visitors to it. They are enthusiastic and readily participate in the school's extra-curricular programme, covering a wide range of interests. They value adults' encouragement for them to initiate activities for themselves and take responsibility, such as in a recent musical production run entirely by pupils and sixth form students, and through the opportunities offered by the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Pupils' strong sense of community extends beyond the school and immediate locality, seen, for example, in the charitable work to improve schools in Sudan as part of the school's international work, and giving pupils an understanding of global citizenship.

Pupils' very positive attitudes to school and their learning help them to make good academic progress, which together with their personal skills prepare them well for the next stage of their education. In recent years, pupils have made good progress from their slightly below average starting points in Year 7 and by Year 11 have reached above average standards in GCSE examinations. Although progress is good in all year groups, it is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Standards have been consistently above national averages for a number of years but dipped significantly to average levels in GCSE in 2008. This was partly because pupils' progress had not been tracked closely enough for the school to realise that they were not doing as well as in previous years. This situation has now been resolved. Pupils are being set challenging targets and their progress towards these is being closely monitored. Where necessary, this information is used to plan a range of additional support for those pupils who are still not making the progress they are capable of. The school's tracking data indicate that pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making good progress and that the school is again on course to reach above average standards in national tests and examinations. However, academic guidance, including pupils' understanding of how to further improve their work, although improved, is not as consistently well developed as guidance for pupils' personal development.

Teaching approaches have been largely effective in recent years, with pupils' positive attitudes towards learning and the very good extra support offered by teachers making an important contribution to their good academic progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and much good teaching was observed during the inspection. However, this good teaching is not consistent across the school as work is not always matched closely enough to the different needs within the class so that some pupils are not challenged enough, while others find the work too difficult. These relative weaknesses have been identified by the school. A new marking policy has been introduced and a working group set up to help teachers to develop their skills by learning from the pockets of good practice already within the school, but inconsistencies are still evident. The good relationships between pupils and teachers mean that pupils are confident to ask for extra help, and they praise their teachers for the additional support they are willing to offer outside lessons.

Most pupils enjoy school, as shown in their exceptionally high attendance rates. A few parents commented on disruptive behaviour in lessons, and the school is aware that there are a few occasions when pupils' behaviour is not managed well enough and is taking action to improve this. The vast majority of pupils respond very well to the school's high expectations for behaviour and say that they feel exceptionally safe and free from harassment in school. They believe that it would be difficult to eliminate all forms of bullying but that it is not tolerated in the school, and they feel that they are supported very well should an incident occur.

The school is in a significant period of transition, being led by a new headteacher and relatively inexperienced senior leaders. The school has not managed to retain its exceptionally high performance across all aspects of its work since it was last inspected, but staff are determined to bring it back to previous levels and have already made good progress in a number of areas. The headteacher has guided the governing body, leadership team and middle managers carefully to carry out a rigorous evaluation of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the results have been brought together well into a focused plan to guide the next stage of the school's development. Significant actions taken already include the introduction of more effective systems for target setting and monitoring pupils' progress, which are already proving effective. The curriculum has been thoroughly reviewed to ensure that in future it better meets the needs of all pupils, particularly for those who find learning more difficult. Plans are in place for the next academic year to give pupils more opportunities for vocational study and to train staff to extend these further in the following years. However, some facilities are out of date and considerable upgrading is necessary before a full range of courses can be provided. The curriculum is currently satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The school is aware that its systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning have not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure that weaknesses are picked up quickly. However, monitoring systems have been started and are beginning to have an impact on raising standards. The effectiveness of the headteacher's analysis of what needs to be done, coupled with the speed with which action has already been taken to improve aspects of provision, indicates that the school has a good capacity for future development. The headteacher places a strong emphasis on ensuring that leaders at all levels are able to develop the skills necessary to carry out their roles effectively. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well and is providing the school with the necessary support and challenge during this transition phase. The school has good links with local organisations, for example involving members from them regularly in the school assembly programme. Although the school's specialist status has not yet had time to impact significantly on the school's work or in outcomes for pupils, initiatives planned to link further with the local community form an integral part of the school's approach to promoting community cohesion.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good standard of education. Although standards are above average in general at GCSE, for those starting advanced level courses they are not as high as often found. Nevertheless, students make good progress and achieve well so that standards overall are in line with national averages in advanced level examinations, although not consistently across all subjects. The curriculum comprises a range of advanced level courses but opportunities for students to take less academic courses are limited. Progress rates in the applied courses, such as information technology, are higher than those in academic courses. The recent curriculum review has included sixth form provision. Plans are in place to work more closely within a

consortium of local schools to extend the range of courses on offer to students, and enable them to follow courses more appropriately matched to their interests and aptitudes.

Students enjoy being in the sixth form, shown by the high numbers remaining in education within the school, and gain greatly from their experience. They have very positive attitudes, enjoying new friendships and the challenge of advanced level work. All students take on a level of responsibility, such as duties around the school as 'buddies' for younger classes or as peer mentors, and recognise that this helps them to develop leadership skills as well as making a major contribution to the life of the whole school. The recently introduced arrangements for leading the sixth form are proving successful. For example, students view the new system to set them targets and monitor their progress towards them as helpful and they value the support they receive from staff and the interest taken in them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce a system of monitoring teaching and learning and use it to disseminate the most effective practice so that work is matched accurately to the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that marking and assessment give pupils the information they need to improve their work.
- Implement plans to broaden the curriculum in the main school and the sixth form.

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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	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	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	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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**

11 February 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of The Archbishop's School, Canterbury, CT2 7AP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us during our recent visit and for giving up some of your time to talk to us. We were impressed by the maturity you showed in our discussions.

- Here are some of the main findings of our report and I hope that you will take the time to read the report in full as well. You are right to be proud of your school – The Archbishop's School is a good school.
- You make good progress through the school and generally achieve above average GCSE results.
- The school has good potential to help you to achieve even more.
- You appreciate the extra help that teachers are prepared to give you when you find work difficult.
- Your school's international status gives you an exceptional understanding of international issues and many of you contribute well to supporting the school's links in Sudan.
- The broad range of personal skills you acquire while at The Archbishop's School and your academic success prepare you well for your future beyond school.
- Sixth form students make an excellent contribution to the school, such as organising events and supporting younger pupils.
- The staff have drawn up clear plans for how things will develop in the future.
- The school is striving to improve further and we agree with the staff about the most important things they should do next:
- Improve teachers' skills and your learning further by observing one another's lessons to see the most effective ways you learn.
- Make sure that the work you are given is matched well to your needs so that it challenges you without being too difficult, and that marking always gives you good guidance about how your work can be improved.
- Increase the range of courses you are offered in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form to include more practically based courses.

We wish everyone at The Archbishop's School well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector