

Chilwell School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122854
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	327811
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Clive Kempton 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1077
Sixth form	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Geoff Bagley
Headteacher	Mr Ian Brierly
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
School address	Queen's Road West Chilwell Beeston Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG9 5AL
Telephone number	0115 9252698
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Chilwell is an oversubscribed school set in impressive grounds, and has experienced significant growth in numbers over the past three years. It has specialist status in the arts, mathematics and computing and serves the local area with the aim of establishing an extended positive learning community. Students come from a range of social and economic backgrounds and attainment on entry is broadly average, but improving. The sixth form is housed in the impressive Lakeview building. The school has joint use of the local community sports centre and runs a community theatre as a business function. Strong links have been established with its feeder primary schools. The school population is predominately White British but in recent years has become more diverse in its nature. The proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals, have statements of special educational needs or who find learning difficult are below the national average. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2008 and a new headteacher in April 2009, seven weeks before this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), and the achievement of boys; and also in relation to ensuring that all safeguarding procedures meet government requirements.

When the school was last inspected in May 2006, it was judged to be good. However, improvement since the last inspection has been inadequate. While achievement and standards have been good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in the sixth form, at Key Stage 4 they have fallen each year for the last two years, and in 2008 were below the national average. This is of concern, as students start the school with standards that are broadly average and do not make enough progress by the end of compulsory school age. The biggest decline has been in mathematics and ICT. An external audit of ICT judged it to be inadequate. The new headteacher and deputy head are both fully aware of the issues and have already taken steps to improve standards. Early indication of projected Key Stage 4 results in 2009, and the outcomes of modular tests in mathematics indicate that the downward trend of standards has been halted. Standards are predicted to improve this year. However, the school in the past has not accurately predicted examination grades and as a result many published targets have been missed.

There have been many reasons for the declining standards: there has been a lack of sufficient accountability by leaders and managers at all levels; there have been staffing issues in mathematics and prolonged absences of key staff across the school; some staff are not fully aware how to access or use the thorough data analysis carried out by senior leaders; there has been insufficient focus on identifying staff in need of support or in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

However, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve because it is now in a much stronger position to tackle issues following the appointment of a substantive headteacher. He is a visionary, enthusiastic and inspirational leader who has built on the solid remedial work of the new deputy. Together, they are tackling the task of improving the school with much more impetus. Some long-established staff are being re-energised by the new leadership style. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of work to do to ensure that consistency is established with leaders and managers at all levels, and that they are all held to account for raising standards and sharing the responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning. The mathematics, computing and media college status has not had a sufficient impact on whole school attainment as there has been no leadership of the initiative, and a lack of transparency about how specialist school funding is allocated. A new assistant headteacher directing the specialism has been appointed to take up post in September 2009. The rest of the school's provision is judged to be satisfactory, albeit with too many missed opportunities for improvement. The quality of teaching, while satisfactory overall, is too variable. During the inspection, a few inadequate as well as some good lessons were observed. Students are compliant and attentive, but there is sometimes insufficient clarity in learning objectives in some lessons or not enough excitement and challenge in the range of activities planned by teachers. As a consequence the pace of learning is sometimes too slow, teachers do not always sufficiently inspire students and they are not always given sufficient opportunity to learn independently.

The personal development of students, their attendance and their behaviour are all satisfactory too, as is the care, guidance and support they receive. The curriculum is satisfactory both in the main school and in the sixth form. The school has been slower than most to develop a wider range of qualifications; for example vocational courses to meet the needs of the wide range of ability represented. However, a wider range is now planned.

Although safeguarding currently does not meet government requirements in full, the new leadership is addressing non-compliance as a matter of urgency.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students enter the sixth form with GCSE scores that are broadly in line with those nationally due to the admissions criteria employed. The largely academic curriculum of AS and A2 exams is satisfactory. A number of students study more subjects than is usually the case nationally and this results in higher performance scores per student, helping most to secure a place at university. Many take on additional studies in Year 13 and continue into Year 14. The standards reached by students are in line with national averages and they make satisfactory progress. The proportion of students in Year 12 who moved onto Year 13 is high, as is that of those completing courses.

The curriculum meets the needs of students who choose to continue their studies in school. Opportunities for students to get involved in enrichment and extra curricular activities add to their satisfactory personal development and well being. Students speak positively about their experiences in lessons and appreciate the development of their independent learning skills. Scrutiny of students' work shows effective feedback from teachers and aspects of independent learning, these are promoted across subjects.

Satisfactory leadership and management in the sixth form has developed appropriate tracking systems that monitor progress. While some use of assessment data is resulting in effective intervention, it has yet to be fully and systematically analysed and used to have a more positive impact on standards. Evidence of successful intervention in the recent past confirms the satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards particularly in mathematics and ICT and address the underachievement of boys.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all lessons promote rapid progress through more exciting and challenging activities that provide opportunities for active, independent learning.
- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels are accountable for raising standards and directing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure all safeguarding procedures meet government requirements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average. They progress well across Key Stage 3, and by the end of Year 9 reach standards in English and science that are higher than the national averages and standards which are in line for mathematics. As they move

through Year 10 and 11, the progress of many students, particularly boys, declines and standards reached by the end of Year 11 are below the national average making achievement inadequate.

In 2008, the proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics was particularly low and well below national averages, as a result of poor results in mathematics. Standards have declined over the last two years, particularly in mathematics and ICT. While targets set for individuals are adequately challenging, too many students do not reach the standards of which they are capable, making achievement unsatisfactory. This is particularly so for boys and those who find learning difficult. Specialist school targets have not been met.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of students is satisfactory, as is their spiritual moral, social and cultural development. Most students behave responsibly and safely in lessons and around the school. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. The number of student exclusions has risen recently, due to a renewed emphasis on improving standards of behaviour by the new leadership team. There are few instances of bullying, and students say when they do occur, they are dealt with effectively.

The school provides some opportunities for students to take on roles of responsibility, such as the school council, and the prefect system. Some students carry out voluntary work in the community and raise money for charities, including needy groups in the developing world. The very thorough personal social health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme provides some active learning opportunities, and is used to develop students' social awareness.

Partly as a result of the PSHCE programme, students are generally aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. There is good take-up of school meals, which are popular and offer appropriate choice and quality. A substantial number of students cycle to school. All students have at least two hours a week of physical education (PE) and there is a range of additional sporting activities. Students are enthusiastic about these opportunities. The school also works effectively with outside health promotion agencies.

Generally, students show positive attitudes to learning, and can work cooperatively in lessons. Most say that they enjoy school. The school uses a number of ways to acknowledge and reward achievement and good behaviour, and to enhance students' pride in themselves and in the school, and these are to be developed further. The postcards home to celebrate success are particularly valued by students and parents.

There is a wide range of activities which increase students' knowledge of the workplace and prepare them well for careers and working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and the new leadership is beginning to deal with the legacy of pupils' underachievement in mathematics and information communication technology, where the quality of teaching is improving. In the best lessons teachers plan effectively and have good subject knowledge. They know the requirements of the courses on

offer and what students need to do to be successful. In these lessons teachers are beginning to adapt activities to meet the needs of students. They use a range of appropriate resources to appeal to different learning styles.

However, the majority of lessons are no better than satisfactory because there is insufficient challenge for the more able with too few opportunities for students to develop independence in their learning. Students who find learning difficult are not supported well enough, and as a result do not make enough progress in their work. Some lessons are too teacher-led and directed so that students are not encouraged to think for themselves and progress is therefore slow. Lesson objectives are usually clear and explicitly shared with students to help them understand what they are learning, but sometimes they focus on what students will do rather than what they should learn. As students are generally well behaved, there are often good relationships in classrooms but many students are compliant rather than excited by their learning or actively engaged in it. The school does not have well established and robust systems for monitoring teaching and learning. Although no lessons were able to be observed in the sixth form, discussions with students confirmed the school's own view that teaching there is also satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory but somewhat mundane curriculum so that not all students, particularly boys, are fully engaged and inspired by it. Recognising the need to adapt the curriculum better to meet the needs and aspirations of a wider range of students, the school has put in place a number of initiatives. This means that students now benefit from more appropriate pathways than just a traditional route, particularly in Years 10 and 11. These pathways are currently being reviewed and developed. 'Discovery Days' are being piloted to develop a more interactive delivery of the curriculum and are resulting in additional qualifications in health and safety for some students. In order to prepare students for their future economic well-being, there is good support for developing students' literacy, although numeracy and ICT are currently insufficiently developed. Exciting opportunities to develop cross-curricular numeracy have not had time to become established. The school does not provide enhanced opportunities for students to take ICT qualifications but plans to introduce them in September 2009. Some students have an appropriately reduced timetable with a more targeted basic skills curriculum. More able students are challenged through early entry for external examinations in a few subjects such as mathematics and languages, and they are supported through a range of appropriate activities. Students have good opportunities to take part in activities beyond the classroom through a wide range of subject areas such as the arts, PE and modern languages. However, the school does not monitor take up of these activities robustly enough to ensure as many students as possible benefit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care for students, including those who have learning or behavioural difficulties or are vulnerable. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very thorough, helped by the role of the school's Inclusion Officer. The school works closely with the Education Welfare Service, there is detailed knowledge of attendance patterns of individual students, and actions are effectively targeted at those with unsatisfactory attendance.

The transition from primary school is extremely thorough and effective, including visits by Chilwell staff, parent clinics, special arrangements for the first day, and senior staff attendance at residential visits. Students and parents speak highly of these arrangements. Advice and guidance on courses and careers is thorough, and involves other agencies such as Connexions. Arrangements for behaviour support are enhanced by the work of behaviour managers, who allow for a flexible response to problems, while year leaders maintain an effective overview of the needs of students in their year group. There are some helpful arrangements for students who are vulnerable or in need of support. These include the 'By Invitation Only' (BIO) group, as well as the availability of 'drop-in' study facilities.

The school is developing an increasingly thorough tracking system to monitor the progress of all students, both in their academic progress and in their behaviour. However, the range of information is not used effectively and coherently. Progress is not rigorously reviewed, not all students are sufficiently aware of their current level of progress, intervention plans are not always specific enough and responsibility for reviewing them lacks sufficient clarity.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The good leadership of the headteacher, well supported by an able deputy, has successfully communicated the declining standards to the staff so that the initial denial by some staff has been largely eradicated. Most are now more willing to engage in the improvement agenda. The various skills of the new leadership team are complementary. They are becoming a more vibrant team. The capacity of the senior leadership team to improve standards is currently satisfactory. Early signs indicate that this capacity is improving; for example, the self evaluation of provision is accurate.

The quality of the leadership and management of other key areas is very mixed. Some middle managers are leading successful, high attaining departments, such as English while others are struggling. There is much that is underdeveloped. For example, the annual review cycle is not planned effectively enough and development points in departmental plans are not sharply focused enough nor sufficiently measurable. Furthermore, subject reviews and opportunities for paired lesson observations with the sharing of good practice do not take place regularly enough and the use of data is not developed fully. There is not enough involvement in the specialist school initiative.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are increasingly holding senior managers to account for the standards attained. The governing body is encouraged to ask more searching questions and request explanations for identified issues. However, their duty to promote community cohesion is currently only satisfactory, as the audit and resulting action plan has not yet been fully completed. Governors now have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Although safeguarding currently does not meet government requirements in full, the new leadership is addressing non-compliance as a matter of urgency and has already planned training for staff and governors.

Stakeholders involved with the school speak very positively about their involvement with staff and students. One commented, 'the school uses my skills very successfully'. In the parent questionnaires received during the inspection, some parents too have noted that the school could do better. One commented, 'the school is a sleeping giant', and another that there has been, 'a culture of underachievement in the school'.

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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?	4	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4	

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?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	3
The attendance of learners	3	3
The behaviour of learners	3	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	3

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?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes	

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

12 June 2009

Dear students,

Inspection of Chilwell School, Nottingham NG9 5AL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what you could all do as a school community to improve.

The inspection team has decided that the school needs external help to make rapid improvements. The school has been given a Notice to Improve which means an inspector will come back in about six months to see if the school is making quick enough progress. The school will then be inspected again in about one year's time. The school has had a few problems over the last few years and as a result, the standards you attain, mainly at Key Stage 4, have suffered, especially in mathematics and information communication technology. Boys are not making as much progress as they should. You make good progress in Key stage 3 and satisfactory progress in the sixth form. We think the teachers work hard for you but the quality of teaching you receive is inconsistent, and we have asked the school to make lessons more exciting and interesting, and challenge you more.

We think your new headteacher is good and along with the other senior leaders knows what has to be done quickly to help the school improve. You all have your part to play in creating a stronger culture for learning in the school. There are lots of opportunities for you to do after school clubs and activities, and lots of you take up the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, PE and arts activities. You are given good support when you arrive in the school from Year 6. Some of you are given good opportunities to take responsibility too such as the junior dance and sports leaders. More of you should try to get involved in leadership opportunities.

In order to make your school even better, we have suggested to your headteacher and senior staff that they do the following things:

- make sure you all do better in mathematics and information communication technology and make sure the boys achieve as well the girls across the school.
- make sure all your lessons are more exciting and interesting so that you are all more actively involved and make quicker progress.
- make sure that all staff know exactly what they have to do to help you reach higher standards.
- make sure that the school meets government regulations to keep you safe.

We hope you take full advantage of the opportunities you have to learn at school.

Clive Kempton HMI

Her Majesty's Inspector