

Chichester High School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126063
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	328451
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

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	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	1380
Sixth form	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Carver
Headteacher	Fiona Oliver-Watkins
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2006
School address	Kingsham Road Chichester PO19 8EB
Telephone number	01243 787014
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chichester High School for Girls is above average in size, and is a specialist arts and science college. The school has Artsmark Gold accreditation. Few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school works closely with the nearby boys' school to provide joint sixth form provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Chichester High School for Girls is a satisfactory school with a good sixth form.

When the school was inspected three years ago inspectors found that the way in which leaders monitored and evaluated the school's performance lacked rigour; they identified this as a key area for improvement. This aspect has improved significantly: monitoring is now rigorous and an extensive programme of lesson observation is in place. Leaders at all levels in the school now have a clear and thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Lines of accountability have been strengthened and middle leaders are held more closely to account for the performance of their areas. Improved processes for monitoring, review, evaluation and accountability now provide the school with a stronger capacity to improve further in the coming years.

More effective monitoring of lessons is supporting improvements in the quality of teaching. A significant and increasing number of lessons are good or outstanding. The overall picture, however, is variable and a significant proportion of less effective lessons remain. In particular, too many lessons lack variety and interest. This affects students' enjoyment of school: where teaching is engaging, students respond very well and enjoy learning, but many of the large number of students spoken to by inspectors had limited enthusiasm for school. Some other aspects of students' personal development are good. For example, they make a good contribution to the school and local community, and have a good awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle. However, minor misbehaviour can be a problem in some less effective lessons. The large majority of students behave very well, but a few students sometimes cause disruption. The school's system for managing misbehaviour is rather cumbersome and not always applied consistently; as a result, many students view it as ineffectual.

Marking and guidance to students about how to improve their work are improving, although still rather variable in quality. Academic guidance has also improved. Systems to set targets for students and to collect and analyse data about their progress are now more rigorous. Although the full potential of this improved data is yet to be realised, the information is already being used to identify students likely to miss their targets so that they can be provided with additional help. More targeted support for students taking examinations, along with improvements in the overall quality of lessons, is helping to raise achievement. Students taking GCSE examinations last year achieved more than those taking them in 2006 or 2007. Students in Years 7 to 11 are now making satisfactory and improving progress.

The curriculum has developed well in the last few years. The choice of option subjects available to students in Years 10 to 13 is wide. Students are very positive about this level of choice and it helps their enjoyment of school. The school's specialist status has played its part in the development of the curriculum, for example by leading to a wider range of science courses and greater enrichment opportunities in science and the arts. Specialist status has also helped the school to forge closer links with its partner schools and with the local community.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students make good progress in the sixth form. Examination results over the last three years demonstrate consistently high levels of achievement. The sixth form is popular and an increasing number of students join each year. The sixth form is well led; close and effective consortium

arrangements are in place with Chichester High School for Boys, as well as with local colleges. Plans for the future are sensible and thorough.

Partnership arrangements enable the school to offer a wide range of sixth form courses. Well-considered plans are in place to extend this provision to include International Baccalaureate and Advanced Diploma courses next year. A number of extra-curricular opportunities are available, although students say that they would appreciate more. Students are well taught: the overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is better than in the rest of the school.

Students enjoy school and attend well, although punctuality to lessons can sometimes be an issue. Sixth form retention rates are high. A particular strength is the contribution that students make to the school and wider community. The school recently changed the arrangements for tutoring and registration in response to feedback from students. As a result, students do not always meet their tutors and many feel that communication with staff out of lessons is difficult.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all lessons are varied, interesting and engaging for students.
- Review and redevelop the systems that support the management of minor misbehaviour.
- Improve the consistency of marking and feedback so that students receive more precise information about how to improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school with standards that are slightly above average. They make satisfactory progress as they move from Year 7 to Year 11 and good progress in the sixth form. Students of all abilities and from all backgrounds make similar progress.

Whilst the attainment of students taking GCSE examinations in the last 3 years has been significantly above national averages, their progress in 2006 and 2007 was below average. Results improved in 2008. In particular, the proportion of students attaining 5 or more higher grades (and those attaining them including English and mathematics) increased by several percent. Given their starting points and capabilities, students taking GCSE examinations in 2008 made satisfactory progress. There is clear evidence to indicate that students are increasingly achieving more, although they are not yet making good progress. The school has met or exceeded the vast majority of its specialist college targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' attitudes to school and their behaviour is satisfactory overall, although some aspects of their personal development such as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Students work closely with the local community and get involved in many activities, for example the Chichester Festival. The school council is supplemented by separate year

councils. This is leading to more extensive opportunities for consultation with students, although some students feel that these opportunities are still rather limited.

Students generally show a strong commitment to healthy eating. Participation rates in physical education and sport are high. Students feel safe in school. Bullying incidents, which are almost always very minor, are treated seriously by staff, although some students report that they are not always resolved quickly enough. Students benefit from a good range of opportunities to develop workplace skills. Attendance is slightly below the national average, but improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers use their subject-specific skills well to plan lessons that enable students to develop key aspects of subject knowledge and understanding. They increasingly make use of ICT in their lessons. Where teachers plan lessons that interest students and include varied activities, students respond very well, showing real excitement in their learning. Weaker lessons typically have a limited range of activities, move at a slow pace and fail to challenge all students sufficiently. This can lead to frustration, off-task behaviour and low-level disruption.

Leaders have done much to improve the quality of marking and feedback to students. This area is improving and in some cases students are given precise and useful information about what to do next. In other cases, marking is infrequent and feedback too imprecise to be helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is developing well and now includes a wide range of courses in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. Students appreciate the range of choice available to them. Extra-curricular and enrichment activities are varied and popular with students. Opportunities include a range of clubs, many sporting opportunities and a range of trips and visits. Alternative curricular provision for students at risk of disaffection is good.

Leaders regularly review the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of students as closely as possible. A recent development has been the introduction of 'super learning days', where students work for extended periods on one subject. Senior leaders recognise the need to review the effectiveness of this development carefully, as some students, staff and parents have expressed concerns about how well it is working at the moment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Students are provided with a range of care and support. Vulnerable learners are identified early and supported well. Students generally feel well supported by the school, although some students spoken to by inspectors felt that the quality of this support was variable, depending on the staff involved. A range of strategies have been put in place to improve attendance, for example additional education welfare support. These are helping to reduce absence. There is good provision for careers guidance for students.

The way in which the school sets targets for students, collects and uses information about their academic progress has improved significantly. Staff now have much better access to information about students' targets and current achievement. There is now some good practice in the use

of assessment data to raise achievement. However, developments are still at a relatively early stage and staff across the school do not yet make full, consistent use of the information when they plan their lessons or provide academic support to students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders have done much to strengthen leadership and management across the school. Self-evaluation is now strong at all levels. Subject departments produce detailed, accurate and thorough evaluations of their work which identify clearly key areas for future development. Improvements in leadership and management are already having an impact on key aspects of the school's performance. However, these improvements and developments are still at a relatively early stage and the full impact on outcomes for students is yet to be seen. Governors provide useful support to the school and an appropriate level of challenge.

The performance management of staff has improved. Systems are now tighter, and teachers' objectives and targets are more closely aligned with school priorities. Leaders now regularly observe lessons and provide feedback to teachers about how to develop and improve their teaching. Teachers spoken to during the inspection were very positive about this development. Senior leaders now have a thorough and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school, although they occasionally slightly overestimate the quality of teaching and learning in individual classrooms.

The school does much to contribute to community cohesion. Leaders have analysed the local context and the needs of their students carefully, written a clear plan to guide their activities, and developed a range of provision; the impact of this provision is monitored carefully by the school. Students across the school, for example, are able to visit a wide range of countries, including Sri Lanka, Thailand and Costa Rica. Good use has been made of the school's specialist status to forge closer links with partner schools and the wider community. For example, the school recently organised a creative open day at four locations in Chichester which was well attended by members of the local community.

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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?	3	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?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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	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?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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	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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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**

14 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Chichester High School for Girls, Chichester PO19 8EB

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings. We found the school to be satisfactory overall with a good sixth form.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. While we saw many good lessons, we found that the quality of lessons is still too variable. Some do not move at a rapid enough pace and lesson activities do not always match your particular needs or challenge you sufficiently. Minor misbehaviour can sometimes disrupt learning in these lessons. This variability limits the progress that you are able to make and also means that many of you do not enjoy school as much as you should. We also found marking and feedback to be variable: while some is good, some does not give you specific enough advice about how to improve your work. We have asked the school to work on these areas.

Improvements in teaching and learning, and better individual support to students are helping students to achieve more. Students taking GCSE examinations last year made more progress than those who took them in 2006 and 2007. The school's examination results are above average. The curriculum is developing well. Students in Year 10 in particular told us how much they appreciated the range of available courses. Students' attendance is lower than it should be, but improving. Some other aspects of personal development are already good, including students' awareness of how to live healthy lifestyles and the contribution they make to the school and local communities, although some feel that they are not always given enough opportunity to have their say on school matters.

The way in which the school's leaders monitor the school's performance has improved a lot recently. Leaders now have a much better understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They know what to do next to help the school to improve further.

Yours faithfully

Chris Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector