

Charters School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110046
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	337428
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Daniel Burton 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	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1651
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Cooper
Headteacher	Mr Martyn Parker/ Mr Richard Pilgrim
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2006
School address	Charters Road Sunningdale Ascot SL5 9QY
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies, data and analyses, records of the school's monitoring, governors' minutes and 798 questionnaires completed by parents, together with questionnaires completed by students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures
- outcomes for different groups of learners, including those with physical disabilities
- teachers' use of assessment to support learning
- the impact of revised leadership and management systems on the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Charters is a much larger secondary school than average. A very large majority of students are of White British heritage with 12% from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school makes provision for 20 students with physical disabilities. Charters has been recognised as a High Performing Specialist School, and has achieved specialist status in science in addition to its status as a specialist sports college. The headteacher retired at the end of the summer term and the school is currently being led by two co-headteachers. The school plans to become a Trust School in the Spring term, 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This outstanding school is rightly prized by the local community. Staff, students and parents are proud of their school and the education it provides. Students excel in their academic achievement and personal development. They behave impeccably and show tremendous respect to their teachers and each other. Students relish opportunities to develop their leadership skills and take on responsibility. Their outstanding conduct and appreciation of other people's needs contribute to an extremely cohesive school community.

The school's status as a specialist sports college has had a very significant impact in improving all aspects of provision. These include: driving improvements to school assessment and tracking procedures; increasing curricular choice; and leading initiatives to further develop teaching and learning. Sporting activities have an extremely high profile throughout the school and the wide range of sports-related activities continues to provide exceptional opportunities to promote students' personal development. The more recent award of a second specialism in science has already led to additional science courses and is at the forefront of the school's ambition to become a sustainable school.

The school's excellent curriculum has allowed a greater proportion of students to attain well because it is highly responsive to individual needs and includes a wide range of opportunities to undertake both vocational and academic courses. Teachers are highly organised and utterly dedicated to helping students achieve the best they can. Many run after-school 'clinics' to support learners who need extra help. However, although teaching is good overall, some lessons fail to provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop their skills as independent learners. In other lessons, teachers do not use assessment information sufficiently well to ensure that individual students receive the right levels of support and challenge.

As a result of effective provision, high standards have been maintained over a number of years with the very large majority of students making good progress in their learning. Attainment is consistently high and significantly above that seen in other schools nationally. The school's excellent provision for students with physical disabilities ensures that many make exceptional progress. School leaders are dedicated and innovative in their approach to inclusion and, as a result, disabled students fully participate in all aspects of school life.

Most aspects of care, guidance and support for students are outstanding and the school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. As a result, the school has ensured that all students, including the most vulnerable, have remained safe. However child protection procedures do not yet reflect best practice. The

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school's child protection policy is of poor quality and lines of communication are not defined with sufficient clarity. In addition, although the school provides regular opportunities for staff to receive training in child protection, systems are not rigorous enough to ensure that the school can be certain that all have received appropriate training. The school is aware of these areas for improvement and leaders and managers have been quick to plan actions to improve these aspects of provision.

The school's two co-headteachers and their colleagues on the senior leadership team are very highly regarded and valued by the school community. The skills of the co-headteachers complement each other well and staff are extremely supportive of the new leadership arrangements. The school's track record of success, its outstanding ethos, and the skills of current leaders and managers at all levels, demonstrate good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve safeguarding provision to reflect best practice by:
 - ensuring that the school's child protection policies and procedures are reviewed annually
 - improving the quality of the school's child protection policy so that lines of communication and responsibility are clearly understood by all staff
 - improving monitoring systems to ensure that all staff have received appropriate training with regard to child protection.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that a higher proportion of students make outstanding progress, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers make effective use of assessment information to devise lessons which fully meet the needs of all learners
 - ensuring that students are provided with regular opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

While a very large majority of students make good progress in lessons, some, including those who speak English as an additional language, make outstanding progress. As a result, attainment is consistently high. Students are inquisitive and enjoy acquiring knowledge. They work well together in lessons and enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers.

Outcomes for students with physical disabilities are outstanding and a key strength of the school. While these students are fully integrated into the busy life of the school, they are highly appreciative of the additional care they receive, both in the resource centre and around the school. Target-setting is rigorous and students with disabilities are subject to the same high expectations as others. Students really appreciate the school's determination that they should be self-sufficient. One describing this as 'tough love'!

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Achievement for almost all students with physical disabilities is excellent and in 2009, two-thirds of the school's physically disabled students successfully won places on higher education courses.

The school is aware that small numbers of middle-ability boys and some other students with special educational needs have not made as much progress as other students. Staff have put in place robust strategies to even out any inconsistencies. Additional support classes, together with an extremely responsive curriculum, have already had a marked impact on raising the achievement of less-able girls. An exceptional range of leadership opportunities provide superb preparation for students' future economic well-being. Many students take on responsibility, for example as sports leaders, subject leaders, eco-leaders, house representatives, or school council members. Some students delivered lessons to younger children during the summer holidays so that the children's parents and carers could receive parenting classes. Others led a visit to the school's outdoor recreation centre in Wales for students from a local special school. Activities such as these enable students to exemplify the school's stated ethos of 'unity, respect and excellence'. However, some students still lack confidence in taking responsibility for their own learning because they are given insufficient opportunities to work independently in lessons.

In the 150 questionnaires completed by students, 90% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'I enjoy school.' This is reflected in the consistently high attendance of all groups of learners. Students particularly appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available and most belong to at least one club. Provision for extra-curricular sports is exceptional, with a huge range of clubs ranging from extreme golf to kickboxing. Students benefit from expert coaching in a number of sports and, as a result, significant numbers compete at regional and national level. Students' commitment to being healthy is further demonstrated through their work to promote healthy lifestyles in local primary schools and the very high take-up of healthy lunches in the school canteen.

Students feel very safe because they are well informed about managing risks. During the inspection, students responded thoughtfully and enthusiastically to a presentation from the fire brigade on fire prevention. Students report that there is little bullying in the school and are confident that they can seek help, if ever they need it. The 'Charters Connect' confidential emailing system is valued as a mechanism to report concerns anonymously.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good; teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan lessons which equip students extremely well for the demands of GCSE examinations. Relationships are a strength and many teachers make excellent use of technology to enhance students' enjoyment and understanding. Staff are committed to developing their practice and value opportunities to discuss teaching and learning strategies through the after-school 'innovations groups'. In some lessons, teaching is outstanding. For example, in one music lesson seen, students relished opportunities to support and challenge each other as they worked on their individual compositions. The teacher made time to challenge each individual pupil with the result that every member of the class made outstanding progress. However, in other lessons, such opportunities for independent learning are not fully exploited. In these lessons, too much learning is directed by the teacher with the result that all students have to work at the same pace. Insufficient use of assessment information to inform planning means that not all lessons are suitably tailored to individual needs. This sometimes results in a lack of appropriate challenge for some or support for others. Some students become overly reliant on their teachers with the result that they find the transition to the greater demands of AS level more difficult than they should.

The curriculum is an outstanding aspect of the school's provision and makes a very significant contribution to the progress students make. A good range of GCSE courses is complemented through pathways which include BTEC courses, a Young Apprenticeship programme and opportunities to take courses at East Berkshire College or Windsor Skills Centre. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all learners. The school's gifted

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and talented programme means that some younger students benefit from courses in Latin and Mandarin Chinese. Other students benefit from additional support they receive in English, mathematics, science and personal development through the core studies group.

Many aspects of care, guidance and support are outstanding and have had a demonstrable impact in improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable learners. Initiatives such as the 'detour programme' have proved markedly effective in improving the attitudes and self-esteem of learners who were previously disaffected. The behaviour partnership with local primary schools means that students with additional behaviour needs are quickly identified so that support is put in place even before they arrive at Charters. Such an approach typifies the school's superb transition arrangements through all key stages. A wide range of strategies support students in aspects such as career choice, emotional problems or speech and language difficulties. The attendance of all groups is high because it is rigorously monitored by the school and any absence quickly chased up. As a result of such care, guidance and support, every student who left the school in 2009 secured a place in higher education, training or employment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Effective leadership and management of teaching and learning have ensured consistently outstanding outcomes for individuals and groups of learners and demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. The commitment of all staff to promoting equality and tackling discrimination is seen in the school's exemplary work to support and include students with physical disabilities in all activities. Academic monitoring of the achievement of different groups of learners is rigorous, and the school is increasingly skilful in monitoring other outcomes for groups of students. School leaders set challenging targets and, for the most part, students achieve or exceed them. Morale is high amongst staff, all of whom share the determination of the co-headteachers to enable every student to succeed. The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities designed to consolidate and build upon the school's previous successes. However, targets are not always sufficiently measurable to enable the school's highly committed team of governors to hold the school fully to account. Leadership of the school's department for special educational needs is excellent and

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school leaders have recruited and trained a highly able team of teaching assistants. The school's work in partnership with other organisations is excellent and includes valuable links with other centres of learning, such as Royal Holloway, University of London, and local employers. The school currently makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion, particularly through pastoral partnerships with local primary schools, and the newly appointed community cohesion coordinator has ambitious plans to develop further this aspect of the school's work. Governors and senior staff are now aware that safeguarding procedures need to be improved to ensure that the school's strong track record of keeping students safe is maintained, and have already begun to take action in this area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Extensive academic monitoring helps ensure that most groups of students make good progress in their learning, with the most able making outstanding progress. Retention rates are very high and the very large majority of students progress to higher education, with many securing a place at their first-choice university. Sixth form students make an extremely positive contribution to the life of the school and the local community through a well-organised community service programme.

The sixth form curriculum provides an excellent range of academic and vocational courses to meet the needs of all groups of learners. A wide range of A-level choices is complemented by provision for a number of BTEC and sports coaching awards. Partnerships are exploited well to provide additional opportunities. For example, the

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school works closely with a local independent school to ensure students receive appropriate preparation for interviews at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, although, as in the main school, opportunities to develop independent learning skills in lessons are not always fully exploited. The sixth form is well led by an ambitious team of managers.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received a high number of responses to the parental questionnaires. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the quality of education their children receive. Almost all parents say their children enjoy school, feel safe and are well prepared for the future. Most parents judge that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns and the overwhelming majority judge that the school is led and managed well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Charters School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 798 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1651 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	378	47	402	50	11	1	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	365	46	416	52	10	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	430	54	345	43	16	2	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	375	47	378	47	27	3	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	378	47	394	49	7	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	304	38	443	56	27	3	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	277	35	453	57	43	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	324	41	396	50	27	3	3	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	370	46	383	48	24	3	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	322	40	400	50	39	5	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	237	30	474	59	28	4	2	0
The school is led and managed effectively	429	59	349	44	7	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	471	59	304	38	9	1	3	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Charters School, Ascot SL5 9QY

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspection team during our recent visit to your school. It was an absolute pleasure to talk to you in lessons, around the school and in formal meetings. We enjoyed observing your work in lessons. Here are the main findings of our report.

- Charters students are fantastic ambassadors for the school. They are proud of their school, and are determined to succeed in all aspects of school life.
- The school provides students with exceptional leadership opportunities. As a result, preparation for higher education and the world of work is first class.
- The curriculum includes an excellent range of courses which allow all students to pursue their career goals and aspirations.
- The school's specialist status as a sports college has had a very significant impact in improving all aspects of school life. The more recent award of a second specialism in science has already led to a greater range of courses.
- The school's extra-curricular programme is exceptional and very high numbers of students participate. Students' commitment to sports and physical education reflects their commitment to living healthy lifestyles.
- The dedicated teachers are committed to helping everyone fulfil their potential. They ensure that all students can fully participate in all aspects of school life.

There are some things which need to improve, however. We have asked the school to improve its safeguarding procedures to ensure that it can continue to keep everyone safe. We have also asked the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning even more, by:

- ensuring that all teachers devise lessons which meet your individual needs
- providing more opportunities for you to develop your skills as independent learners.

Thank you again for your help with the inspection. We wish you every future success.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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