

Chancellor's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117591
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339039
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Mark Phillips HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	1041
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Holm
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
School address	Pine Grove Brookmans Park Hertfordshire
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of available inspection time observing learning. This included observing 34 teachers in 34 lessons, a form tutorial and a year assembly. Four of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher and three other school leaders. Her Majesty's Inspector and the headteacher also made a series of short visits to another seven lessons. Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. They also met with panels of students from Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, and the sixth form. Inspectors looked at achievement data, systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and tracking students' progress, and teachers' lesson plans. They also considered records on exclusions, attendance, racist incidents and bullying, as well as strategies for promoting, monitoring and evaluating equality of opportunity and community cohesion. In addition to the survey of parents' and carers' views, to which 181 replies were received, a sample of students completed a written questionnaire and a staff survey was also conducted. The headteacher helped to plan aspects of the inspection and accepted Her Majesty's Inspector's invitation to observe inspection team meetings, including the final meeting where judgements were discussed and made.

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

- How well do boys achieve?
- How has the curriculum developed since the last inspection, including in the sixth form?
- How effective is the support for the most vulnerable students?
- How effectively do middle managers evaluate and drive improvements?
- How well do sixth form students achieve, particularly in their A Level exams?

Information about the school

Chancellor's is an average-sized school and sixth form. It has been a specialist mathematics and computing college since September 2004; it has had a second specialism in languages since April 2008. There are around four boys to every three girls on roll, a significant difference compared to the national picture for mixed schools. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds and most speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is also below average and the school is located in an area of relative social and economic advantage.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Chancellor's School provides a satisfactory standard of education and care. Students attain above-average standards in their GCSE examinations, particularly in the specialist college subjects. However, as they also join the school with above-average standards, this represents satisfactory progress. There are no significant differences between the overall progress made between boys and girls. Progress in English and mathematics is better than that in science, in which students have underperformed for the past two years. This is partly because of weaknesses in the curriculum offer at GCSE. Teaching is adequate; teachers have good subject knowledge which they use effectively to instruct students and prepare them for examinations. However, wider aspects of students' learning such as independent thinking skills and responding creatively are less well developed. This is because the needs, abilities or interests of students are not given enough consideration in lesson planning. Consequently, while they appear generally attentive and willing to apply themselves diligently, students often show limited enthusiasm and enjoyment in their work. Occasionally this leads to inappropriate behaviour; while inspectors met many well-behaved and well-mannered students and saw good behaviour in classes during the inspection, exclusion records together with comments from parents and students revealed that this is not always the case. Systems for supporting the most vulnerable students are sufficient to help them make satisfactory progress. Day-to-day pastoral support is good, as is support for the most vulnerable students when they join the school. However, long-term systems for managing the care, guidance and support offered to students are not as effective, and this is another factor that prevents overall student outcomes from being better than satisfactory.

The senior leadership team is experienced and well-established. Adequate systems are in place for monitoring students' academic progress and personal development. Since the last inspection, greater responsibility has been given to middle managers for monitoring and driving improvement in their subject areas, including through subject self-evaluation. Inspection evidence showed this to be an emerging strength. The school's view of itself is broadly correct, judging that overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Inspectors agreed with all judgements made by school leaders in the joint lesson observations. However there are other aspects of self-evaluation and leadership, including the school's ongoing programme of observing teaching, that are not sharp enough to keep pace with current developments. Overall, management systems do not promote and sustain any better than satisfactory progress in students' examination results or personal development, or give any better than satisfactory value for money. This includes the statutory requirements for promoting equalities and community

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cohesion. In practice, there is satisfactory attention paid to ensuring that all members of the school community are treated equally and with respect. The school makes noteworthy efforts to reach out to its local communities, and students themselves make good contributions to their own communities. However management systems for these important aspects, which are the legal duty of the governing body to maintain, are inadequate. Consequently, students only make satisfactory progress in their wider spiritual and cultural development, and coverage of citizenship issues in the curriculum is only just adequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standard of teaching across the school by:
- ensuring that there is an equal emphasis on student-led application and enquiry as well as teacher-led instruction, with appropriate opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills and creative responses, and consequently improve their enjoyment of lessons
- ensuring that lessons are planned according to the interests and abilities of all students, as well as the requirements of the programmes of study
- in particular, ensuring that the students with particular learning needs or difficulties are well supported in all classes through better liaison between learning support staff and class teachers and better provision of appropriately differentiated work.
- Significantly improve the proportion of students achieving good GCSE passes in at least two science courses and ensure that, by September 2011, standards achieved in all science courses are at least in line with those achieved by similar students nationally.
- For September 2010, review the structure, content, and assessment of the citizenship curriculum in Key Stage 4 and the religious education curriculum in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, in parallel with the development of an appropriate community cohesion strategy and improvement of students' spiritual and cultural development.
- By 1 July 2010 ensure that the governing body has in place, and has ratified, the necessary policies and action plans to ensure that all statutory requirements for promoting equalities and community cohesion are met. These strategies should be subject to an interim review by the governing body in October 2010 with a full evaluation in July 2011.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics by the end of Year 11 has been significantly higher than the national average for the past three years. Standards in English, and the specialist subjects of mathematics,

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computing and modern languages, have also been above average. However the school recognises that, in comparison to results nationally, these results have declined since the last inspection, when achievement was good. Moreover, the proportion of students gaining two good science GCSEs has been below average for the past two years, partly because not enough students have taken an additional science qualification. Standards in other GCSE subjects vary; in 2009, they were high in history and music, but were below average in art and drama. Overall, examination results show that students make satisfactory progress; this was confirmed by the observation of learning during the inspection, where students were also seen to be making satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress equal to that of their peers.

Students told inspectors that they feel safe in school, a view confirmed by the vast majority of parents in the inspection survey. A very good proportion participates in regular sporting activities, including those with physical disabilities, and they have a good understanding about how to live healthily. Many make valued contributions to their school and local communities, including through the school council; students also act as observers on the governing body. Students have good basic literacy and numeracy skills, and a higher-than average proportion earns a qualification in a modern foreign language. These are good assets to take on to further education or employment. However their attendance is only average and the development of wider working skills such as collaborative working is only satisfactory. Overall, therefore, their preparation for further studies or working life is also satisfactory.

In aspects of their artistic and sporting development, students at Chancellor's perform well. Musical and dramatic productions are popular and well attended; a good number of individual students have won national and international recognition in the fields of music, drama, sport, and endeavour. However their wider cultural development is more limited because the school does not plan sufficiently to provide an appropriately wide and diverse range of cultural experiences. Similarly, because opportunities for reflection are missed or not provided, including in lessons and in assemblies, students' spiritual development is also restricted.

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers throughout the school have good subject knowledge. This is used to give clear, authoritative presentations that help students acquire the knowledge necessary for their examinations. However, in too many cases, lessons do not give students enough opportunities to apply this knowledge creatively or develop their own thinking. Similarly, lesson planning is typically focused on what the teacher is going to present rather than what the students are going to learn. Too many lessons consist of extended presentations by the teacher, with students sitting attentively but passively. The better examples- for example, a well-managed Year 9 mathematics lesson - make good use of teachers' subject knowledge but also give equal opportunities for challenging tasks and collaborative work that challenge students to the limits of their ability.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, a number of vocational qualifications have been introduced in Key Stage 4 which has widened the choices available to students. However, also since the last inspection, changes in the curriculum have also restricted the numbers passing at least two good science GCSEs. Coverage of citizenship issues is only just adequate, being subsumed within an overarching personal and social education programme. Similarly, while students make satisfactory progress in English, not enough is done across curriculum subjects to promote the better development of their literacy skills.

The pastoral centre and school counselling service are well used and regarded highly by students. There is good attention paid to supporting vulnerable students when they transfer from their primary schools, including a 'buddying' system that involves older students. However, as they progress through the school, support for students who

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encounter learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not as well organised. While there are systems in place for monitoring these students' progress, this information is not used as effectively as it should, for example in helping teachers to plan lessons that meet students' needs and raise expectations about what they might achieve or by targeting improved behaviour and attendance of particular groups. Consequently, their academic and personal progress is only satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a realistic understanding and throughout the inspection gave an honest appraisal of the school's performance. Senior leaders have clearly defined areas of responsibility for student outcomes and the day-to-day running of the school. Within the next year a number of experienced senior and middle managers, who have given a great deal of loyalty to the school, will be stepping down from their roles. The headteacher recognises that this will provide opportunities to renew the school's management systems which, whilst generally appropriate, require updating and are not promoting better than satisfactory outcomes for students. One area that has improved since the last inspection is the involvement of middle managers in driving improvement; inspectors worked closely with middle managers during this inspection and they too presented an accurate view of key issues for their departments.

All requirements for safeguarding students through the required employment and vetting checks are in place. Senior staff and governors have attended appropriate child protection training. Governors have an adequate understanding of the school's performance, although more consideration is given in relation to the school's examination results in comparison with other local schools than against the national picture. Nevertheless, while governors are commendably proud of the school, the effectiveness of the governing body is inadequate because it has failed to ensure that statutory requirements are met for promoting equalities and community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	3

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

While AS Level results have been above average for the past two years, standards in the 2009 A Level examinations were just above the national averages. These were an improvement on the 2008 results but nevertheless they represented only satisfactory progress, considering students' prior attainment in their GCSE examinations. Attendance is average. Other outcomes are good; inspectors met with articulate, personable and well-presented students who make good contributions to their school community.

There are some strong features to sixth form teaching, not least teachers' very good subject knowledge. As in the main school, however, there is a tendency for teachers to dominate and restrict opportunities for students to develop their independent thinking and learning skills in lessons, skills which are particularly important for working at the highest levels. There have been some improvements to the sixth form curriculum through consortium arrangements, but these are still in the early stages of impact. There is limited provision for the wider curriculum, such as religious studies and physical education for all. The monitoring of students' progress is improving and the overall care, guidance and support offered to sixth formers is good. However, the overall leadership and management of the sixth form is just satisfactory. The headteacher recognises that the head of sixth form, who has only been in this post since September 2009, is constricted by the other responsibilities that he holds. At present, sixth form self-evaluation processes are included within whole-school and departments, and there is no overarching sixth-form development plan. This is another reason why outcomes and provision in the sixth form are only satisfactory.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

While the majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed general satisfaction with the school's work, a significant minority raised concerns about particular issues. Inspectors agree with parents that the quality of teaching, and the progress made by students, is variable and could be better. The number of parents expressing concerns about behaviour is a reflection of their understandably high expectations; inspectors also agree that these students are capable of much better than satisfactory behaviour.

A number of parents also raised concerns about the effectiveness of communication between school and home, both in terms of day-to-day administration and reporting on students' progress. The school meets all requirements for reporting; the school website and weekly newsletter provide up-to-date information, and inspectors found some good examples of homework planners being used for dialogue between parents and teachers. Nevertheless, the views articulated in the parental survey indicate that partnerships with parents to promote students' learning and well-being could and should be much stronger.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chancellor's 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 181 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1041 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	29	90	58	13	8	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	42	27	106	69	3	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	14	91	59	27	18	12	8
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	17	80	52	32	21	8	5
The teaching is good at this school	21	14	88	57	31	20	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	10	83	54	42	27	8	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	12	97	63	27	18	3	2
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)	23	15	89	58	19	12	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	18	90	58	23	15	8	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	14	91	59	24	16	7	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	12	80	52	30	19	9	6
The school is led and managed effectively	24	16	85	55	25	16	11	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	26	83	55	19	13	8	5

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 pupils' 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.



12 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Chancellor's School, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, AL9 7BN

Following our recent visit to your school, I am writing to inform students in Years 7 to 11 of the inspection outcomes. Information about the sixth form is contained in the full inspection report, which I encourage Years 12 and 13 students to read.

Thank you for the part that you played in the inspection. We spoke to a good number of you and visited over forty lessons during the two days. Our judgement is that Chancellor's is a satisfactory school, which means that it provides adequately for your education and well-being. We are glad that it is a school where you and your parents told us you feel safe. Although your examination results are above average, your progress is satisfactory rather than good because you achieved above average results in your primary schools before joining Year 7. We were very pleased to note that so many of you take an interest in living healthily, and thank you for the good contribution you make to your school and local communities. Other aspects of your personal development are satisfactory, including your attendance and your behaviour.

To promote your better achievement and personal progress, we have made four recommendations. One of these is to improve the quality of your lessons. You are fortunate to have teachers with very good subject knowledge, and this helps you a great deal when preparing for examinations. However, there are not enough opportunities for you to think for yourselves and develop your own ideas - in other words, too much is done for you. We have also asked the school to review aspects of the curriculum to ensure that more of you achieve two good passes in science subjects and that you are given opportunities to develop a better understanding of our society, particularly the key cultural and faith issues that characterise Britain today. The school governors are responsible by law for ensuring that the school has a strategy for promoting community cohesion, and we have asked them to make sure that this and the school's equality policy are completely up-to-date.

Thank you once again for your help with the inspection, and best wishes for your future studies.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector

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