

Christ's College Finchley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101350
Local Authority	
Inspection number	354988
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Gill Close 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	960
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bowra
Headteacher	Garry Tucker
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
School address	East End Road London N2 0SE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 35 lessons taught by 34 teachers, and held meetings with students, staff, governors and one of the school's partners. Their observations of the school's work included registration, assembly and lunchtime. They looked at records of students' attainment and progress, improvement planning, self-evaluation, lesson monitoring documents, policies, minutes of governing body meetings, exclusion data and attendance figures. They also evaluated questionnaire responses from 104 parents and carers, 82 students and 51 staff.

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

- progress, learning and teaching, especially in subjects where previous achievement had been weaker and for students known to be eligible for free school meals or with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in improving performance for subjects and groups for which achievement had previously been weaker
- the breadth and support provided by the curriculum to meet students' needs
- achievement and provision in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Students at Christ's College Finchley have a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Two thirds of them speak a first language other than English, a very few of whom are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is average, as is the percentage who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, of which the main ones are moderate learning difficulties. The number of students is average, and includes 40 girls in the sixth form. Since 2003, the school has held specialist status in mathematics and computing.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Christ's College Finchley is a good school. Since the last inspection, attainment and progress have risen, and behaviour and attendance have improved. Students make good progress and reach above average standards in GCSE. Attainment has risen from average, and achievement has gone up from satisfactory to good. Through good tracking and support, the school has improved performance in subjects where there were previously relative weaknesses and closed the gap between groups of students. It is this good quality of care for each student that enables them to make good progress, even though teaching is satisfactory. While some lessons engage and challenge students, others do not involve them actively enough in discussions or self-assessment, or concentrate sufficiently on developing their understanding and independence.

Students enjoy school and have above average attendance. They get on well with each other, celebrating their diversity of ethnicity and religion, and forming a friendly and cohesive community. They are polite, considerate and help others, for example as peer mentors. They feel safe and confident that any bullying is dealt with effectively.

In the sixth form, students make good progress in most subjects at A level, but at AS level too many have underachieved. Sometimes they have taken courses that were not suitable for them or found difficulty in developing the degree of independence required. Leaders have put in place new admission requirements, guidance and development plans to match provision more closely to students' needs.

Senior leaders make accurate evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have identified appropriate priorities that have led to improvement, although criteria for success are not always measurable and the impact of initiatives and involvement in activities are not consistently evaluated. The extent of improvement and quality of systems in place provide good capacity for continued improvement. Through outstanding partnership working, the specialism contributes to consistently high achievement in mathematics and a range of provision that has improved the transition from primary school and to higher education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase students' learning and development of independence in lessons through raising the quality of teaching to consistently at least good by:
 - creating an environment that involves students more actively in learning
 - providing activities that better meet the differing needs of students and challenge them

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- developing understanding, reasoning and explaining, particularly through routine involvement in speaking and listening activities
- enabling students to take greater initiative in assessing their progress, through a shared understanding of assessment criteria and guidance for improvement.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form, particularly at AS level, through:
 - matching courses and curriculum more closely to students' needs
 - increasing the monitoring of provision, including lessons
 - sharpening the focus in planning for improvement.
- Tighten systems and increase consistency in monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives, including the impact on groups of students, against measurable success criteria.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Thorough monitoring of students' attainment across all year groups, followed by intervention for any who are at risk of falling behind their targets, ensures that students make good progress. The good quality care helps students to develop a strong drive for success and the habits to achieve this, such as completing homework. In most lessons, students work hard and are keen to do well. They respect their teachers' good subject knowledge and say that teachers explain work well in lessons or afterwards if they are stuck. This enables them to complete the work set, although sometimes they do not understand it well.

Students join the school with average attainment. In recent years, they have consistently made good progress during Key Stage 3 and outstanding progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4. In 2010, improved results in English, information and communication technology (ICT) and overall for five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics indicate a return to good progress after a dip in 2009. The school has successfully raised progress and attainment in previously lower-performing subjects, although they remain weaker than other subjects in geography, religious education (RE) and science. The school's targeted support has contributed to the improved performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals, who made good progress in 2010. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and, in recent years, those with a statement of special educational needs have consistently attained more highly than similar students nationally.

Students have a strong sense of moral values and contribute willingly to local charities, which they choose. Some develop important skills for their future through acting as buddies or membership of the thriving cadet corps. Students have made an impact on the food served at lunchtime and expressed views on provision in some subjects, but there is room for them to take a more active role in bringing about improvements in the school and local community. Behaviour is good in most lessons, but there are occasions when it is not managed well and students lose concentration. The number of exclusions

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is low and has fallen substantially since the last inspection.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory. It has improved since the last inspection, but its quality still varies. In the stronger lessons, students are actively involved in demanding work and then assess how well they are doing. In the satisfactory lessons, teachers give clear explanations that enable students to carry out the required tasks correctly, but do not develop their understanding or reasoning enough. They use probing questions and support individuals effectively, but do not consistently draw in all students or monitor their progress. Teachers promote literacy soundly, for example through use of written keywords and text. Students often spend a long time listening or writing notes, instead of discussing, explaining, working in groups or learning how to study independently. For some students such reliance on their teacher stifles the development of initiative and contributes to difficulties they experience in the sixth form when they commence AS level courses, in which independence is needed. At times, the work does not challenge students, particularly high attainers, well enough or include tailored support for those

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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with individual needs. Students know their current and target levels, and sometimes what they need to do to improve, but they do not always understand the criteria for assessment or have opportunities to use them to assess their own attainment.

The curriculum matches students' needs well and gives students good quality, numeracy, literacy and ICT provision. All students study an ICT examination course. One third of students study three separate sciences, of whom some take GCSE early and continue to AS level in Year 11. High attainers take GCSE mathematics early then, after completing A level, have the opportunity to study an Open University module. There is a BTEC vocational route. As a result of regular monitoring of their progress, effective support is provided for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at early stages of learning English. The specialism has contributed to the development of the school's virtual learning environment which enables students to study further and revise at home. Students enjoy the range of enrichment activities, particularly in sport, and the school plans to extend them.

Students settle in well, aided by strong links with primary schools. They are given good guidance on Key Stage 4 courses. Staff know them well and use close monitoring of their effort and behaviour to inform well-targeted support. This thorough approach has markedly improved attendance and behaviour, although records of involvement in activities and contributions to the community are not centrally analysed. Students commend the support from their form tutors and learning managers. It plays an important part in helping them set high expectations and overcome any barriers to making progress. Learning mentors effectively raise the social and emotional skills of vulnerable students. Students at early stages of learning English are assessed and supported well, including as they prepare for English examinations at Key Stage 4. Staff monitor progress well and update the support provided for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities who have individual education plans, although the impact of interventions is not evaluated systematically. The work of mentors with targeted students in Years 10 and 11 has contributed to their success.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders share and communicate a commitment to improvement. Plans focus on key areas for development and link effectively across the school, although measurable criteria for success are not always identified. Changes to the senior leadership and line

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management system have increased the consistency of middle leadership in monitoring and evaluation, which follows a well-structured programme throughout the year. Through a focus on improving weaker teaching, the quality has risen, although it is not consistently at least good. Areas of underachievement have been targeted with success, notably English and ICT; the school is still working on weaknesses at AS level and variation in science, geography and RE.

Governors know the school's main strengths and weaknesses and discharge their safeguarding duties effectively. They review policies, although arrangements for assessing the impact of equality policies are not fully in place. To obtain information to help them hold the school to account more effectively, they are increasing their direct links with subject leaders, but they do not have clear systems for gathering and acting on views from parents and students.

The school shows tenacity in the active way it pursues safeguarding issues and works with other agencies. Staff training is thorough, as are appointment procedures. Students learn well how to keep themselves safe, for example when handling knives in design and technology lessons. The school supports targeted groups conscientiously and has effectively raised attendance, improved behaviour and narrowed gaps in attainment. Students report the successful impact of the strong emphasis on eliminating discrimination. The very cohesive school community is developed through opportunities to learn about and celebrate different faiths and cultures. Links with a South African school and local charities broaden students' understanding of other contexts, but there is room for sharper evaluation of socio-economic aspects and of impact on the wider community.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Sixth form

The majority of students follow AS and A level courses. Since the last inspection, students have made good progress at A level, in particular in mathematics and ICT, the specialist subjects. In 2010, girls' progress improved, having previously been below that of boys', but students known to be eligible for free school meals made less progress than their peers. Students make satisfactory progress on applied business courses. At AS level, there are few subjects in which students make good progress. Too often, results do not meet targets and students do not continue to complete the A level course. Leadership of the sixth form has recently changed and new action plans, guidance and criteria for admission have already improved the match of subjects to students' needs, although there are few vocational options. Plans for monitoring the quality of provision, including teaching, and its impact lack a sharp focus on frequent evaluation against measurable success criteria. Staff provide good pastoral support and intervention that contributes to the high completion rate for the second year of the A level course and the large number progressing to higher education. Teaching is satisfactory. It conveys subject knowledge effectively, but students are often too passive so do not develop independence or initiative. Students keenly help others, such as through running an anti-bullying campaign in the school and partner primary schools.

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

A small proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaire. Most of them are happy with the school and say that their children enjoy attending. They consider that the school keeps their children safe and helps them to make enough progress. A small minority disagree that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found that the school works effectively with parents and carers, and particularly closely where students might be vulnerable. It has recently gathered their views and begun to act on them, but there is room for clearer feedback on consequent actions taken and increased consistency in responding to queries, including through student planners. While most parents and carers consider that they are well informed about their child's progress, for example through the portal, a small minority disagree that the school helps them to support their child's learning. Inspectors found that this is an area for improvement in which the school is working towards greater consistency in

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the setting of homework, the provision of advice to students about how to improve and the use of student planners. A small minority of parents and carers disagree that the school helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors found that there is good involvement in physical activity, that school lunches are healthy but the take-up is affected by queuing time and some prices, and that students are concerned about the condition of the toilets.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Christ's College Finchley 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 104 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 960 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	49	48	46	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	38	60	58	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	37	55	53	6	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	38	52	50	5	5	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	33	32	57	55	9	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	28	49	47	15	14	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	19	61	59	14	13	1	1
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)	26	25	58	56	6	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	29	56	54	8	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	35	51	49	7	7	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	22	50	48	12	12	5	5
The school is led and managed effectively	43	41	50	48	4	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	46	48	46	6	6	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



20 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Christ's College Finchley, London N2 0SE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us and for telling us about your school. We found that it is a good school. Your attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour have improved. You get on well with each other in a friendly environment and behave well.

You make good progress and obtain GCSE results that are above average. Teachers help you to do this by checking carefully how you are getting on and supporting you if you are falling behind. You told us about good lessons that you enjoy, but that teaching was not consistent and sometimes behaviour slipped. We found that teaching is satisfactory, because many lessons do not challenge you enough, involve you in collaborating on activities or discussions, or make sure that you understand the work and develop independence. We have asked the school to improve these aspects of teaching and to involve you more in assessing your progress and knowing how to improve. You can help out by thinking hard, asking if you do not understand, and making sure you know what the assessment criteria mean.

In the sixth form, you do well in most A level subjects, but not at AS level. We have asked the school to help you make better progress by matching courses more closely to your needs and checking teaching more often.

Senior leaders know how to continue to make improvements to the school. We have asked them to measure the impact of their actions more precisely and to keep better records of the optional activities you do, such as being peer mentors.

I wish you success in school and in helping it to improve.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close Her Majesty's Inspector

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