

Chesterton Community High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124411
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314924
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	484
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M J Dolman
Headteacher	Lynn Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2006
School address	Castle Street Chesterton Newcastle ST5 7LP
Telephone number	01782 296500
Fax number	01782 561978

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school. Pupils come from mainly White British backgrounds, although there is a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. English is the main language with a very small number of pupils who speak Chinese and Polish in the early stages of learning English. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and the proportion entitled to free school meals is above average. Attainment on entry is well below average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average.

The school has recently become a specialist sports and performing arts college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is a good and improving school with a few outstanding features. Over the last year, since it was last inspected, the school has made great strides in raising the standards of all pupils and in improving their achievement. Standards are below average but, considering their low starting points, pupils' achievement is good and occasionally very good. Standards and achievement are both improving and pupils come close to fulfilling the aspiration of the school motto 'to be the best that you can be'.

The school is well led and managed. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, the excellent guidance, support and challenge from governors, and first rate support from senior staff drive improvements. Effective help from the local authority has aided these. The school has a very good view of what it needs to do to raise standards further and its capacity to improve is good. Staffing difficulties, mainly caused by illness, have held up progress a little and hamper the achievement of some pupils. Nevertheless, the situation is improving and the school does its best to deal with the situation.

The great majority of pupils do well at school. Many pupils who enter the school with low self esteem, overcome this and achieve well, but a small proportion do not readily gain the self confidence to achieve as well as they might. Teaching is good and, for the most part, provides a wide range of challenging activities and opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding, skills and knowledge. However, occasionally teachers do not engage pupils in expressing their ideas and understanding confidently enough. The curriculum is good, providing a wide range of subjects and courses that lead to different qualifications. Information and communication technology (ICT) and the many opportunities in sports and performing arts, available because of the school's sports college status, contribute significantly to pupils' self confidence and achievement. The range of vocational courses is sound and steadily improving to meet the needs of pupils.

Pupils' personal development is good and, as a result, the great majority of pupils have confidence in their ability to do well. A small number are less secure of their ability to work independently. Pupils enjoy school and take great pride in representing it, especially now that they wear the distinctive uniform that they chose. Attendance is broadly average, but improving. Pupils are aware of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Most eat wisely and take part in one or more of the wide range of physical activities available. Pupils behave well and take on responsibilities willingly and those in the school council take their responsibilities seriously.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and the school's safeguarding procedures are very good. The school has excellent links with external organisations which it uses extremely well, particularly to support vulnerable pupils. Procedures to deal with racism and bullying are good. Academic guidance is good. Pupils know how well they achieve, what their targets are, and most know what they need to do to achieve them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement by consistently providing opportunities that develop their self confidence to express and discuss their individual opinions and understanding.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below average, but pupils achieve well from low starting points. Standards and achievement are improving because of the school's success in improving teaching and helping most pupils achieve to the best of their ability. This is giving pupils the confidence to learn and is improving their achievement, which is especially noticeable in ICT.

Past variations between subjects, particularly English, mathematics and science, have largely been overcome and currently achievement in all three is good. The school's strategy to enter pupils early for GCSE examinations is effective in motivating pupils by giving them targets to aim for and opportunities to improve on their examination results. There are some pupils who do not do quite so well as they might because staffing disruption in some subjects hampers their learning. In some other instances, pupils do not express their opinions or explain their ideas confidently.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds make good, and sometimes excellent, progress. This is due to good teaching and extremely good support that successfully encourages pupils to discuss their understanding and knowledge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud to be at the school. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Whilst most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, a small minority are not confident in their learning. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and slowly improving. Pupils feel safe and are confident that any bullying is dealt with effectively. Their awareness of health and safety issues is good. Pupils appreciate the wealth of sporting facilities available in the school and enjoy extending their activity levels. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils value the range of opportunities provided for them to reflect on issues important to young adults.

The school council is very active. Pupils welcome the opportunities they have in decision making, for example choosing the new school uniform. Senior pupils take responsibility as prefects, and the majority of pupils contribute well to the school and the wider community. Careers education and work experience prepare pupils thoroughly for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most lessons are challenging. Pupils respond by working with concentration and enthusiasm. They are clear about their learning targets and work hard to achieve them. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, which motivate them to work. Teachers use praise well to support and encourage pupils in their learning. The small amount of difficult behaviour is dealt with skilfully and quietly and pupils are refocused on their work with the minimum of fuss.

Occasionally, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to express their views and develop their own ideas independently and confidently through discussion. In a very small minority of lessons the pace of learning is rather slow, which hinders pupils' achievement. In many lessons,

very clear guidance to individuals helps pupils to improve the quality of their work rapidly, for example on project work in design and technology. This is not consistent across all departments. Marking is a particular strength. It is regular, positive and usually provides good guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils of all abilities well. Older pupils choose from a reasonable range of courses that match their interests and aspirations. In science, however, there are no suitable courses for lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11, although they are planned to be in place soon. Provision for sport and the performing arts is very good and has been considerably improved through gaining specialist school status. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, music, drama and ICT. The curriculum is enhanced by purposeful and often exciting 'Extended Learning Days', when pupils focus on one area of learning for the whole day. Pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, appreciate the way in which these days focus on their individual needs and interests. Arrangements to promote pupils' personal development are good, as are careers education and guidance. Pupils benefit from well prepared experiences of the world of work from Year 7 onwards, when they experience a work shadowing day. Activities to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensure that they make good, and occasionally outstanding, progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has effective systems to support pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and meet current regulations. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils feel safe and enjoy the experience of school. However, some pupils are not guided well enough to help them gain confidence and independence. Transition procedures prepare pupils well as they join the school and for the option choices they make later. Academic target setting and checking on pupils' progress is good. This ensures a prompt intervention to help identify those pupils who need extra help so they do not fall behind. Pupils know what their targets are and most understand what they need to do to reach them. The school has an extensive range of links with the local authority, external agencies and families that it uses exceptionally well to promote pupils' well-being and progress and, in particular, to provide support for vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides outstanding direction for the school and is well supported by a strong senior leadership team. Heads of department, some new to management posts and rapidly gaining the necessary skills, help drive forward improvements well. The school's analysis of its own performance is very good. It is used effectively to improve teaching and to widen the curriculum to ensure most pupils do as well as they can. Improvements are evident in the significant gains in achievement and rise in standards reached by pupils. The impact of the school's efforts has not been fully evident yet. In addition, some staffing difficulties have not been fully resolved and these have hampered some improvements.

Governors play a key role in the school's improvement and provide excellent support. They are extremely well informed about all aspects of the school's work and heavily involved in planning the next steps of its development. They set challenging targets that are instrumental in driving up achievement. The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected and the capacity for further improvement is good.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A**Leadership and management**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Chesterton Community Sports College, Chesterton, Newcastle ST5 7LP

We thoroughly enjoyed the two days we spent in your school. You made us feel very welcome and are clearly proud to be there. You were friendly and helpful to us. We spoke to many of you in meetings, lessons and around the school and what you told us helped us gain a clear picture of your school.

These are the main things we found out about your school:

- You are at a good, and improving, school where all of the staff and governors are working really hard to make it even better.
- You make good, and sometimes very good, progress. This is especially good because a lot of you start school unsure about how well you can do.
- Teaching is good. It is challenging and interesting and you like that.
- The range of subjects you can study is good and improving and giving you ever increasing opportunities to prepare you for future life.
- Becoming a sports college has helped the school increase the range of things you can do, especially ICT, sports and performing arts subjects.
- You really enjoy being at school. Better still, you are proud of being at Chesterton and that is good. You work hard and take an active part in making important decisions in school.
- Your attendance is satisfactory and improving.
- The school is a safe place and makes sure all of you are well cared for. You behave safely. You realise how important healthy eating and exercise are and most of you do some physical activity.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- Make sure that you have many opportunities to discuss your own ideas and understanding of your work so that you are confident about how well you can do at school.

You can help by being willing to take part in discussions about your work whenever you have the chance.

With best wishes.

Ted Wheatley Lead inspector

14 December 2007

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- Becoming a sports college has helped the school increase the range of things you can do, especially ICT, sports and performing arts subjects.
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Ted Wheatley
Lead inspector