

Chesterton Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110865
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325244
Inspection dates	14 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Seath HMI

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	970
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Sanders
Headteacher	Mark Patterson
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 November 2005
School address	Gilbert Road Cambridge CB4 3NY
Telephone number	01223 712150
Fax number	01223 300786

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following areas in detail: achievements and standards, teaching and learning, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from a number of sources including lesson observations, interviews with students and staff, examination of students' work and school documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Chesterton Community College is a medium-sized school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is close to the national average. The school has a higher than average proportion of students of minority ethnic heritage. A significant minority of students arrive at times of the year other than normal starting times. These students are often in the early stages of learning to speak English fluently. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little higher than the national average. The number of unauthorised absences is slightly higher than average. The school has specialist technology college status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'I am very happy with the school. One thing that has impressed me is its constant striving to improve'. So wrote a parent, echoing the views of many. Chesterton Community College is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. It successfully serves students with a wide range of abilities and talents, from very varied backgrounds. Good care and guidance, together with an outstanding curriculum and generally good teaching combine to enable students to attain standards of education consistently above national averages. Students feel well cared for and safe. The excellent range of out-of-school and extra-curricular activities ensures they are able to pursue and develop interests. As a result, they develop into mature individuals who are well equipped to enter the next stages of education or employment. The school is ably led and managed, well taught by teachers, well supported by parents, and enjoyed by students: it has a deservedly good local reputation. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve.

Achievement and standards are good overall, though some features of progress are just satisfactory. Overall, students enter the school with attainment a little higher than the national average, though with a wide variation between individuals. At Key Stage 3 they attain standards above the national average. This represents satisfactory progress when their starting point is considered. Progress in science at Key Stage 3 has declined and in 2007 was weak. Students' progress improves as they move through the school, and is good at Key Stage 4. In English, students' progress is within the top few per cent of all schools nationally. However, lower ability girls do not make sufficient progress, although there are early indications that the school has begun to address this issue successfully. The performance of girls at GCSE improved markedly in 2008. GCSE results have been consistently good, and improved in 2008 following a small decline in 2007. The proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C remains well above the national average. Notably, the proportion of students achieving the highest grades A* and A is high, particularly in the sciences.

Students receive good care, guidance and support. Very good practices enable smooth transition from primary to secondary education and parents appreciate the support given. The school works well with outside partnerships, including parents, to improve the life chances of its students. Technology college status is also helping the school to support its students. For example, the 'I Behave' guidance system gives instant and effective feedback and encourages good behaviour and good attitudes to learning. Students receive clear and impartial guidance about options and the choices they have open to them for the next stage of their learning. Marking sometimes shows students the next steps they need to take to improve further, but it is inconsistent and not all students are clear about where they are in their learning and what they need to do to improve.

Students enjoy being in school and are well behaved and ready to learn. Younger students describe lessons as 'fun'. Students feel safe and well supported. Students arriving from other countries find the college supportive and friendly. They settle in quickly. Students know how to lead healthy lifestyles and appreciate the wide range of sporting activities on offer to them. The school listens to students' views as, for

example, at the introduction of the cashless catering system. Even though students come from a wide range of backgrounds, there is very little racism or bullying and any incidents are dealt with rapidly and effectively. Older students support younger students well, as when Year 8 act as buddies for Year 7 pupils. The school's various awards such as the 'Basic Skills Quality Mark' show how it provides students with the skills they will need to be successful in the workplace. Students are active as local, national and global citizens, benefiting from international exchange trips, for example. They take pride in their charity fund-raising activities. Although the school works hard to increase attendance, this remains just satisfactory.

The school also works hard to adapt what it does to match the personal needs and interests of all students to ensure their good personal development and achievement. Consequently, students have access to an outstanding curriculum. Working in very effective partnerships with other institutions allows the school to offer a comprehensive range of vocational and traditional courses for older students. The school's innovative approach to 'Terrific Tuesdays' and enrichment days ensure students are able to experience an exciting curriculum. Where students find literacy and numeracy difficult, the school provides appropriate opportunities that concentrate on developing their skills. The range of vocational options has improved markedly since the last inspection, with further developments planned or in the process of implementation. The provision of extracurricular activities is outstanding.

Teaching and learning are good. Older students in particular progress well during their time in the college. Teachers have good subject knowledge and convey an enthusiasm for their subjects that engages students' interest in learning. The school's technology status helps provide active learning opportunities that students enjoy. Teachers generally match resources and activities to the learning styles and needs of students, although sometimes they do not consider the needs of the most and least able fully enough. Marking is not always consistent in helping students progress further. Sometimes there are missed opportunities in class and in their written work to correct students' spelling and grammar.

Leadership and management are good overall, with some excellent features, resulting in high and improving standards, although progress at Key Stage 3 has not demonstrated sustained improvement. The headteacher gives a very clear direction to the school and is well supported by able senior and middle leaders. Communications are good, and good practice is well recognised and shared so that there is a common goal to improve. Staff feel well supported in their roles. The school has successfully addressed all the issues identified in the last inspection. It effectively monitors what it does. It has a good understanding of teaching and learning and how these need to be improved. However some aspects are inconsistent, for example, the quality of marking of student's work and adapting lessons to meet the full range of students' potential. Self-evaluations are excellent and provide an accurate basis for improvement. The school sets itself challenging targets which it has generally met or exceeded. Targets are usually sufficiently precise to enable effective monitoring. Access to and use of management information and the school's website are excellent, and developing rapidly. The website is increasingly being used to improve, for example, the consistency of homework setting and the ease with which it can be accessed by students at home.

Governors exercise their role well and challenge poor performance effectively. They bring a good mix of expertise and strengths to their role. They are well informed about the school, for example, concerning achievements of students differing ethnic backgrounds. The school complies with child protection and race relations requirements and has demonstrated good contributions to community cohesion and equality of opportunity. Value for money is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency with which all students are challenged in class and in their written work.
- Improve progress at Key Stage 3.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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

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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Annex B



15 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Chesterton Community College, Cambridge CB4 3NY

Earlier this week I visited your school for a day with another inspector. We met with some of you, visited your classes and looked at some of your work. Throughout this you were well behaved, courteous and helpful – thank you.

You told us many things. For example, that you feel safe in school and that you are well supported. You said that the extra-curricular activities available are excellent, and we agreed.

Your school is good, and improving. GCSE results are good, and the chances are that you will leave school with good grades. We found that, despite this, you are not always challenged to achieve your best in class, and in your written work. This is particularly the case for Key Stage 3. The school agrees, and is already working on improvements.

We also found that sometimes homework is not set or marked consistently across subjects, and we have asked the school to work on this. The school's new school website will make it easier for you to access your work at home.

You also told us that there is very little bullying, and that you get on well with students who have arrived at your school from other parts of the world. You can help to keep it this way by making sure that if you are affected by bullying, you talk to a member of staff immediately.

Your school has many strengths, and one of them is you. We wish you all well and hope that you will continue to succeed and enjoy your time at Chesterton.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector