

Churchfields Academy

Salcombe Grove, Swindon SN3 1ER

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently strong progress across year groups and subjects. As a result they do not develop sufficiently secure knowledge, understanding and skills.
- In particular boys make slower progress than girls over time, whatever their starting points.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability is inconsistent across the school, partly as a result of ineffective planning to meet their needs.
- Some pupils do not display sufficient awareness of how to be successful learners or possess the skills to do so. This is particularly true of some boys, notably those from White British backgrounds.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been strong enough to ensure that pupils make consistent progress. The level of challenge in lessons is often insufficient or inappropriate.
- Monitoring of teaching does not put sufficient emphasis on assessing pupils' progress.
- School leaders do not yet have a comprehensive and accurate picture of pupils' attainment and achievement across all year groups.
- The school's marking and feedback policy is not used consistently by teachers. This limits its impact on improving pupils' progress.
- Governors do not provide the school's leaders with effective levels of support or challenge.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly formed leadership team are beginning to demonstrate a capacity to improve the school. They have made a number of important changes to the school's work but many of these have yet to reveal their full impact.
- The school's work to improve attendance has been successful.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has declined markedly. The school is working hard to keep children with behavioural problems in school.
- Attainment and progress in English for the current Year 11 show clear improvement.
- Some of the gaps between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and others are beginning to close.
- Those pupils whose first language is not English make good progress.
- Many girls display very positive attitudes to learning and are making good progress, particularly those who are most able.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan teaching which takes sufficient account of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs so that they make more consistent progress
 - encourage pupils to work with positive attitudes so that they apply themselves well and make better progress
 - set tasks that are challenging and inspiring enough to promote better progress, especially for boys.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - recent initiatives are consistently implemented across the school and that their impact is accurately monitored
 - accurate evaluation of assessment information is used more effectively to inform strategic planning
 - the monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment focuses more closely on the progress pupils make over time
 - governors provide a thorough level of challenge and support to the school's leadership
 - teachers improve the consistency and effectiveness with which they use the school's marking and feedback policy to help pupils make better progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Leaders and managers do not have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education provided by the school. This is particularly the case in relation to the progress that pupils make and the quality of teaching they receive.
- Historically, school leaders have had an over-inflated view of the quality of teaching, largely as a result of poor monitoring procedures. They now recognise this and are taking steps to improve the way teachers' performance is assessed. Records of school leaders' current monitoring of teaching through observations in lessons, however, show that they are still placing insufficient emphasis on the progress that pupils make. Nonetheless, the new policy is a step in the right direction.
- Leaders' understanding of the progress that pupils make across all year groups and subjects is too inconsistent and, at times, unconvincing. For example, their understanding of the progress of pupils currently in Year 11 is good but this is not the case in other year groups. In particular, the school's information on how pupils are progressing in key stage 3 is not robust enough and appears to show wide fluctuations in the performance of pupils in years 7 and 8 across different subjects.
- The school's leadership has undergone some major changes in recent months. The acting principal has been in post since November 2015 (having stepped up from being vice-principal) and two new assistant principals joined the school in September 2015. As a team they are beginning to get to grips with some of the key issues that the school needs to act upon but as yet many of their initiatives have had too little time to show any significant impact or, like the new strategy for monitoring teaching, require further refinement.
- School leaders do not yet evaluate well enough the use of either the pupil premium, the extra funding provided by the government for disadvantaged pupils, or Year 7 catch-up funding for pupils who enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy. Leaders do not have sufficient insight into what impact these funds are having on the progress pupils make. Staff have received some training on how to teach disadvantaged pupils effectively but this has yet to have a significant impact on practice in the classroom.
- Middle leaders, especially those who are in charge of subjects, are beginning to work well together in building links between subjects across the curriculum. For example, the literacy policy for science provides more opportunities for pupils to write and is beginning to improve pupils' extended writing.
- The curriculum has undergone some reorganisation in the light of recent national changes. More time is provided for core subjects such as English and mathematics and pupils in key stage 4 study one less GCSE course. Three pathways have been designed and introduced to support pupils based on their ability, but the lack of accuracy in the attainment and progress data for pupils in years 7 and 8 means that some doubts must remain as to whether all pupils are on the most appropriate pathways.
- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum meets the needs of most pupils and makes a good, if uneven, contribution to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development (SMSC). Good use is made of external speakers and links with the local police and community support officer are strong. The school's own SMSC audit, however, recognises a weakness in the spiritual and cultural provision for pupils in years 9, 10 and 11. It is due to the patchiness in provision that pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development requires improvement.
- There are some extra-curricular activities, mostly sporting, but the school does not monitor these closely enough for a judgement to be made on the degree to which they contribute to the pupils' personal, social, moral, spiritual or cultural development.
- The school's marking and feedback policy is followed by most teachers but with varying degrees of effectiveness. In some cases teachers are using it to help pupils make good progress. In other cases, however, teachers are not using the opportunities afforded by the policy in order to help pupils improve their work.
- Leaders' work to promote fundamental British values is at an early stage of development. As a consequence, while pupils are very clear about the school's own core values, they lack explicit knowledge of how these relate to fundamental British values. Staff have been trained on the dangers of radicalisation and extremism but work with pupils to raise their awareness of such dangers is still at an early stage of development.

■ The governance of the school

- Over time governors have not been able to supply the levels of challenge and support that the school leaders have required during a period when outcomes for pupils were falling dramatically. No one can doubt the commitment of many long-serving governors to the school but they currently lack the capacity to be a significant positive influence on improving the quality of education. They do not possess the depth of understanding of the school's work necessary to enable them to carry out their work effectively. For example, governors show no detailed knowledge of the impact of the school's use of the pupil premium or of Year 7 catch-up funding.
- To their credit, governors recognise the shortcomings of the governing body as currently constituted. Recently they have voluntarily undertaken an external review of governance but this is incomplete and so far they have not been able to implement any significant improvements as a consequence.
- The governors have decided to enter into a multi-academy trust with Royal Wootton Bassett Academy. This is a nearby school that Churchfields is already working with and that has a successful record of helping other schools to improve.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school places a high degree of importance on safeguarding. Recent changes have introduced a greater tenacity in the way the school challenges the external agencies it works with. The designated safeguarding lead has brought better organisation to the school's child protection records. All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and the school makes all the required checks on their backgrounds. Most pupils reported feeling safe and this view was echoed by a large majority of parents who responded to the online survey of parental opinion.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment that pupils experience in their time at the school is inconsistent and as a consequence it requires improvement.
- Teachers' planning is often focused on the completion of tasks rather than the progress of pupils from their individual starting points. Moving swiftly through tasks is too readily equated with higher ability. As a result, teachers tend to tag extension work on to the end of tasks that all pupils undertake rather than thinking more imaginatively about whether or not all pupils need to do the same tasks to start with.
- Some teachers are using information about what pupils can and cannot do to help them plan lessons but this is not a consistent feature of teaching across the school and consequently pupils' progress suffers. Good examples of how to use assessment information to help pupils make progress do exist, for example in mathematics, and the school could usefully learn and build on this good practice across all departments.
- The degree of challenge presented to pupils varies too much across subjects and year groups, particularly for the most-able pupils. As a result pupils' levels of engagement can be variable. When they are given stretching tasks to do, many rise gladly to the challenge, particularly the more-able girls. Some pupils, notably boys, switch off or drift in the face of uninspiring teaching. As a result, teaching does not consistently develop positive attitudes among pupils.
- Questioning as a tool to probe, assess and develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills is used inconsistently in the school. When done effectively it challenges pupils to think and tackles misconceptions, but too often it is cursory or perfunctory.
- Teachers do not always make best use of the information provided by the school about pupils with special educational needs or disability. Similarly, many do not take sufficient account of the needs of disadvantaged pupils, despite the recent training they have received on this. Examples of good planning and delivery of teaching for these key groups do exist and leaders are beginning to think more strategically about how to promote this. For example, the school has revised the way it deploys teaching assistants to work with groups of pupils. However, this is a very recent innovation which has not had the time to demonstrate any impact.
- In the online survey, Parent View, parents mostly agreed that the school sets appropriate homework and the vast majority are pleased with the information the school provides about their children's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils do not generally display a thirst for knowledge or a passion for education. They are often content to sit back when they have completed the work set rather than actively seeking out new challenges. These attitudes improve somewhat in Year 11 and many pupils in this year group were keen to join recent Saturday morning booster sessions in mathematics.
- Observations in lessons and scrutiny of work reveal that many boys, especially those from White British backgrounds, have not yet developed the habits associated with successful learners. Girls, however, often show they have the awareness of how to learn effectively and the self-motivation to do so.
- The school is working to develop pupils' understanding of what it means to be a successful learner. For example, the school is currently having a drive to improve the frequency with which pupils bring the correct equipment to school. Despite this some pupils are still not arriving prepared for work. They are failing, for example, to bring the calculators supplied by the school to every mathematics lesson.
- Pupils report that some bullying does take place but they know who to go to when it happens. They are reasonably confident that the school deals with bullying well.
- Pupils speak very positively about the work done by the staff in the Grove Learning Centre, which helps pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs. This enables them to develop as individuals and to deal with any problems they might have.
- A small number of pupils attend a childcare course at nearby New College. This makes a positive contribution to their personal development, behaviour and welfare by successfully meeting their needs as learners.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some pupils reported that there were occasions when their learning was interrupted by the behaviour of their fellow pupils. Inspectors saw some evidence of this, mainly from boys, in the form, for example, of talking over the teachers' instructions. While such behaviour could not be regarded as prevalent it was of sufficient concern to those pupils who wish to get on with their learning for them to mention it in discussions with inspectors.
- Pupils' levels of self-discipline are variable. Some work well in classes but others lose concentration, especially when the teaching does not engage, challenge or inspire them.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school's site. They are polite and courteous to adults and helpful to visitors.
- Attendance is improving due to the increasingly effective work of school leaders in targeting resources at key groups and individuals in order to reduce their absence. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving faster than the overall rate, although there is still some work to do with disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent.
- The school has worked hard to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions. A key role in this successful drive has been played by the effective use of the Churchfields Inclusion Centre. This means that pupils who previously might have been at risk of exclusion are kept in education.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The progress that pupils make in all year groups and across subjects is too inconsistent and, as a consequence, requires improvement. This is closely linked to the variable quality of teaching, learning and assessment that pupils experience in their time at the school.
- In contrast to the poor performance of pupils in the past, current information on pupils' outcomes indicates clear signs that things are now improving, although there is still some way to go before they could be regarded as anywhere near good. For example, the attainment and progress of pupils currently in Year 11 is close to that expected of pupils nationally. Rates of progress in mathematics in Year 11 are also improving but they are still some way short of the national figure.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is improving and the gaps between their progress and that of other pupils are narrowing, as is the case for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. However, the improvement here is less marked and gaps remain for both these groups of pupils.
- Pupils' progress across a range of subjects is variable, especially in key stage 3. Moreover, the school

does not have an accurate enough understanding of the progress that is actually being made in this key stage and this is, in itself, an obstacle to further improvement.

- The progress of girls has been a significant strength of the school over recent years and continues to be so. By contrast, boys' achievement has declined in recent years. Current information, however, shows that boys' progress is improving but that there is still a wide gap between the progress made by boys and girls. This was clearly evident to inspectors in lessons and in pupils' work.
- Pupils, and particularly girls, who speak English as an additional language make very good progress.
- Pupils do not yet read widely and often. The school has a wonderfully maintained library but it is used at lunchtimes more like a common room than a place to read or work in. The school does not monitor closely enough the extent to which pupils read but it does have information to show that the pupil premium has been used to speed up the development of disadvantaged pupils' reading ages.
- Pupils who attend childcare courses at nearby New College make good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	137408
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10017580

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	779
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Saunders
Acting Principal	Sandra Muir
Telephone number	01793 487286
Website	www.churchfields.swindon.sch.uk
Email address	administrator@churchfields.org
Date of previous inspection	21–22 February 2013

Information about this school

- Churchfields Academy is a secondary school of smaller than average size. It converted to be an academy in August 2011.
- It has higher than average proportions of pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who have special educational needs or disability.
- It has much higher than average proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- The academy has been receiving support from Royal Wootton Bassett Academy, which is a teaching school. It is in the process of forming a multi-academy trust with that school.
- The school uses one alternative provider, New College in Swindon.
- The school currently does not meet the government's floor standards for GCSE results, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects. A large number of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. During the time spent in lessons the opportunity was taken to scrutinise pupils' work.
- Inspectors had discussions with the acting principal, senior and middle leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and one other governor. He also spoke to the school's improvement partner. Inspectors had discussions with pupils from all year groups and with members of the student council.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was scrutinised, including the school's own self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings, records of observations of teaching, of pupils' work and information about their progress. Documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also checked, as were the school's records of the checks it makes on teachers.
- In making their judgements inspectors took into account 24 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire. There were no responses to the online staff or pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

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