



Cheam High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103010
Local Authority Sutton
Inspection number 286550
Inspection dates 10–11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Michael Chisnall HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Chatsworth Road
School category	Foundation		Cheam
Age range of pupils	11–18		Sutton SM3 8PW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8644 5790
Number on roll (school)	1748	Fax number	020 8641 8611
Number on roll (6th form)	348		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Rosemary Satchell
		Headteacher	Miss Rebecca Allott
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cheam is a very large and over-subscribed school that draws its students from a wide range of primary schools within the local area. It has specialist status as a language college. It takes students from the full range of ability but the majority of them are attaining average standards when they join the school. Eligibility for free school meals is much lower than average. There is an average proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need. The sixth form includes a unit for students with moderate learning difficulties, known as the PEP group (post-16 entry level programme). Around one in five students has a minority ethnic heritage, although no one group predominates.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Cheam High is an outstandingly effective school and quite rightly deserves the high reputation it enjoys. It has improved significantly since the last inspection and is going from strength to strength. At the heart of this positive picture is the excellent leadership of the headteacher, supported by the first-rate senior team. Between them, and backed by the whole staff, they have very successfully created an environment for learning that enables students to make good progress, achieve well from their starting points and to reach standards in tests and examinations that exceed the national average.

This drive for higher standards has not been at the expense of students' personal development but quite the reverse. This is a school where individuals really do matter and students value this reality. Their behaviour is mostly very good; they enjoy coming to school and attend well. Their attitudes to learning and the wider life of the school are excellent, resulting in them developing as confident young citizens who make very strong contributions to the school community and beyond. They are being very well prepared for the next stage in their education and the world of employment.

The leadership of the school has placed significant emphasis on developing practice in the classroom through staff training and regular feedback to staff on their teaching. This has led to teaching being consistently good with much that is outstanding. High quality practice in English and modern foreign language teaching is being successfully shared across other departments to improve learning and achievement but more could still be done to extend the very best practice in teaching. Students learn well within an outstanding curriculum that meets their needs and aspirations very closely indeed. The impact of the language specialism is very clear with major contributions to, for instance, students' confidence, their oral skills and their cultural awareness. Options at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, complemented by a wide range of additional after-hours experiences, make the all-round experience for students rich and varied.

Despite being a very large school, Cheam High successfully meets the needs of students, particularly those who are vulnerable, through a well structured system of support and guidance that tracks their academic and pastoral development very well. Students value the range of staff to whom they can turn if they need advice or support.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses very well and makes accurate judgements about its effectiveness. It takes highly effective action to bring about improvement. It is exceedingly well supported by its governing body. Its capacity to make further improvement is outstanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is much larger than at the last inspection and welcomes students from a broad range of abilities and other schools. Attainment on entry compared with other sixth forms is below average. However, all groups of students make good progress and achieve well. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make very good

progress, and the achievement of students in the PEP group is outstanding. There is a high staying-on rate from the main school and between Years 12 and 13. The sixth form is successfully raising students' aspirations and an increasing number, currently around 80 per cent, progress into further or higher education each year.

Students' personal development and well-being are excellent. They grow in confidence and maturity, taking responsibility for peer mentoring, organising school functions such as talent shows and charity work. Those in the PEP group blossom and develop skills for life and work at a fast rate. Teaching and learning are good with much that is excellent. The curriculum includes a broad range of academic and vocational pathways. There is good guidance for students who say they are 'helped back on track if struggling'. The sixth form is very well led and is effective in providing a good education for its students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching still further so that a greater proportion of lessons are of the highest quality

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 are improving and are now above average. Students make good progress and, given their starting points, achieve well, particularly in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Students make less progress in science because the quality of teaching and learning is not as strong as in other subjects. However, standards in science are improving as a result of focused efforts by the school.

Standards in the sixth form are average but improving, with above average standards in many subjects, particularly English, foreign languages, media studies, mathematics, business studies and physical education. The only subject that is below national averages is design and technology; this is because of staff recruitment issues. Achievement in the sixth form is good because students are taught well and make good progress.

The school exceeded its challenging targets in 2006 and is on track to meet higher ones in 2007. There is no significant variation in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds or between girls and boys. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make very good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development of students is outstanding and they are confident and responsible young citizens. They are happy at school, attend well and take part in the wider life of the school, such as clubs and productions. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students get on exceptionally well with staff and each other. They reflect upon events and share thoughts and feelings well. They have a strong understanding of cultural diversity, promoted significantly by the language specialism.

Students display very mature attitudes to their learning and almost all of them behave very well, helping them to feel very safe. However, there is very small minority of students whose behaviour falls short of expectations. Racial harmony is excellent and discrimination of any kind is discouraged. As one student explained, 'We speak out if we are offended and our teachers listen.'

Students are well aware of reasons for adopting a healthy lifestyle but do not always make sensible choices in eating habits. The language status makes a major contribution to the development of skills that future employers appreciate, such as confidence in speaking and working together. Students have excellent understanding of business enterprise and are very clear about their aspirations for future study or careers. They make very strong contributions to the community through such activities as the school council and acting as mentors for younger students. Their voice is heard very clearly and many are involved in staff selection and in giving their views on the effectiveness of lessons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching is good overall and some is excellent. Students enjoy lessons and respond positively to the enthusiasm and commitment that teachers show. They learn well because lessons are planned effectively and use a good range of methods and resources to engage students. Interest is captured, for example, through the imaginative use of interactive whiteboards to present ideas, learning through song in French and friendly competition in mathematics and science quizzes. There are very good working relationships in lessons; teachers are approachable and very supportive. Assessment of students' work is thorough and reported to parents regularly.

The whole school drive to improve teaching and learning is paying off. Outstanding practice in several subjects is being effectively shared across the school. For instance, ways of interacting with students in language lessons are being used in other subjects

such as science, where standards are now rising. However, there is room for further extending the very best practice so that more lessons are of the highest quality. For instance, improving the quality of written feedback, or reviewing progress towards targets as lessons progress are both aspects that could be better in some lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is extensive and well thought out, meeting students' needs and aspirations very well indeed. For example, the additional literacy lessons in Year 7 give students a strong start to their learning. The specialist status enables students to learn two modern foreign languages and to widen this experience still further through additional provision, such as optional Japanese. Careful planning of the personal and social curriculum, delivered in part through 'Life' lessons, ensures that students gain understanding of life skills, such as the prevention of bullying, staying safe and being healthy. The school is experiencing some temporary staffing difficulties in design and technology, limiting the range of experiences for some students in Key Stage 3. However, careful management is ensuring that statutory requirements are met.

Year 10 students gain very good insights into some of the demands of employment through the well-planned work experience programme. The school is developing its range of vocational courses that enable some students to attend a local further education college. These courses complement the very wide range of opportunities that are available in the sixth form. These include a scholarship for gifted tennis players and an outstanding PEP programme for learners with moderate learning difficulties. There is an extensive range of school clubs and activity days that significantly enrich provision and enable all students to extend their learning through visits and events involving languages, arts, sports, and the humanities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school gives outstanding care and guidance to its students in Key Stages 3 and 4. It is good in the sixth form. Pastoral support is strong, blending together students' academic and personal development well. As one parent commented, 'The pastoral care has been very important in my children's academic progress as well as their day-to-day security.' Students new to the school are inducted very well. A parent of a sixth former noted, 'My daughter has never looked back. She was welcomed from day one into the sixth form and is thoroughly enjoying her new experience.' However, the school has rightly identified the need for more consistency in mentoring and independent learning in the sixth form.

Support for vulnerable students is strong through extensive collaboration with specialists and regular mentoring. Guidance is closely tailored to their needs; for

instance, buddies in Year 8 and mentors in the sixth form are ready to help. Commitment to inclusion is outstanding. Very good attention is given to risk assessment and child protection. There is excellent tracking of students' academic and personal development so that individuals are appropriately supported. Students are well aware of how they are doing and of the targets they are set in subjects. The best teaching makes clear to students what they must do in order to achieve those targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding and make a major contribution to school improvement. The leadership of the headteacher and the senior team is excellent and has very successfully enabled management at all levels to work consistently to improve not only the achievement of students but also the quality of their personal development. This has resulted in a happy and harmonious school where students do well and enjoy a range of learning both in and out of the classroom. The language specialism is also very well managed so that it has a significant impact on the wider life of the school.

There is first-rate knowledge of where the school could do better still and effective plans for bringing about improvement. This is because the systems to check how well students are learning are very effectively structured and give senior managers detailed knowledge about the quality of provision. There are high expectations of both staff and students; second best will not suffice. Communication with parents and carers is of high quality and the school takes very good account of their views when planning significant changes to its work.

The governing body provides highly effective support to the school and ensures that it has detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Because of this, it is very well placed to hold the school to account for its work and to challenge it to do better still. It discharges these functions very well indeed. The school's large budget is managed prudently so that spending is well targeted. Because of this and the good progress made by students, value for money is very good.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

I would like to thank you very much for the very warm welcome that you extended to the inspection team when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with many of you and are grateful for the way in which you shared your thoughts with us. In return, I want to tell you about the inspection findings.

You attend an excellent school and one that is getting better all the time. There are several reasons for this. The most important one is that it is led and managed excellently by the headteacher and senior staff. They know the school very well because they are constantly checking how well you are learning and making the right decisions about how to help you make still more progress. You are taught well in almost all your lessons and in many of them, the teaching is first-class. We have asked the staff to look at ways to make more of your lessons as good as the best ones. Perhaps you can share your ideas about how this can be done with staff.

The curriculum that the school offers you is excellent and enriched in lots of ways. For instance the range of languages you can learn, options in the sixth form, activity days and after-school clubs all contribute to making school life varied and interesting. Staff look after you very well indeed and keep a good track of how you are doing. If any of you need extra help or support, you receive it and this helps you to keep learning very well.

All of this, and more, makes a big difference to what you achieve. In tests and examinations, you reach higher standards than average and make good progress. Almost all of you behave very well, attend school regularly and enjoy what you do. In meeting many of you, we were able to see just how well you are developing as confident citizens of the future and ready to embark on the next stage of your education. Many of you, and your parents, told us how proud you are of your school. We think that this pride is entirely justified and we wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Chisnall
Her Majesty's Inspector