

Chosen Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115763
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326266
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Anne Looney HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1,407
Sixth form	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David McTeer
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Turner
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 November 2005

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out at no notice by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 27 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents and students' work.

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

- Whether all groups of students in the school make good progress.
- Whether the school's curriculum and care, guidance and support meet the needs of all students.
- The quality of the teaching and the specific features of teaching which promote enjoyment and help students make the best possible progress.
- How effective all senior and subject leaders have been in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's work.

Information about the school

Chosen Hill is a large, popular school with 1,407 students on roll, including 251 in the sixth form. The school has had specialist technology school status since 1997 and launched a second specialism in languages in 2008 after it achieved high performing specialist school status. The school is situated on the outskirts of Gloucester and recruits students from over 40 feeder primary schools. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well below the national average as are the proportions of students who are from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with a statement of special education needs is above the national average.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Chosen Hill School is an outstanding school which ensures its students make good progress and attain high standards but also become fully rounded individuals by the time they leave. Students at the school are courteous, attentive in class, considerate of their peers and consistently mature and thoughtful. They are excellent ambassadors for the school in their contributions to the wider community outside the school.

Students benefit as a result of the outstanding curriculum on offer. Despite the fact that the curriculum was judged to be outstanding at the time of the last inspection the senior leaders have not been complacent. Review has been regular and rigorous to ensure that the curriculum moves with the times but also becomes increasingly personalised to meet the needs of all students.

The school supports all students extremely well to ensure they can make the best of the opportunities provided. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive particularly well-targeted support.

The overall quality of teaching is good. There is some outstanding teaching which really stimulates the students and involves them actively in their learning and the assessment of what they have learned. This high quality of teaching is not yet consistent across the school. The senior leaders are aware of the need to raise the standard of all teaching to that of the best and have established good systems to monitor teaching and identify strengths and areas for improvement. They are making good use of stronger subject leaders to improve practice across other areas and are supporting teachers well with targeted professional development.

The school is particularly well led by the headteacher who has a clear vision for the school focused sharply on improving students' learning. The headteacher has driven the school forward and made exceptionally good use of partnership activity through the specialisms, with Initial Teacher Education and with local schools to extend the opportunities for the students and enhance their learning. The governing body makes a highly significant contribution to this drive. The vision for the school is shared well throughout the school although there is some variability in the

effectiveness of the middle managers in monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning. The school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the frequency of outstanding teaching by:
 - planning carefully to meet the needs of, and extend, all students
 - building into lessons more opportunities for collaborative, creative and independent learning
 - ensuring students are more actively involved in reflecting on their learning and their progress.

- Ensure consistency of rigour in the way middle managers monitor the work of their subject areas, evaluate impact on students' progress and plan for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

- Students' overall achievement is outstanding. All students show an interest in their work and are knowledgeable about how well they are doing. Their outstanding behaviour and attendance contribute significantly to how well they succeed. Students apply themselves well in lessons but, as they themselves say, they learn better in lessons that really engage them and which are active and varied in style.

- Attainment is high, as GCSE results have been consistently significantly above the national average. The school has regularly exceeded the challenging targets set and its own detailed monitoring system indicates that it is on track to do so this year as well. There has been a big upward trend in the percentage of students achieving five or more higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics: in 2008 this was 19% higher than in other schools nationally. Results in English have been exceedingly high and this is reflected in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in that subject throughout the school.

- The progress students make over their time in Chosen Hill is good and there is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by the individual learning mentoring which secures their good progress.

- All students say that they feel safe at the school and report that the little bullying there is, is managed very well by the school. Relationships between students are of high quality and students with disabilities are equally involved in the extent to which they contribute to school life outside the classroom. Students' ability to

reflect on issues is very well developed and they exhibit a strong sense of what is right and wrong. They have a secure understanding of world and international issues but their understanding of multicultural Britain is slightly more limited because of a lack of first-hand experience.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

- The overwhelming majority of teaching is effective in ensuring that students learn well and make good progress. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and have high expectations of their students. Lessons are well planned with structured activities designed to build up students' knowledge and skills. Learning objectives, whilst routinely shared with classes, are not always made explicit in terms of what students will learn by the end of the lesson. There is good use made of new technologies such as the virtual learning environment and video conferencing to extend learning opportunities. Some excellent teaching was observed by inspectors in English, science, drama, history and music. These lessons provided extensive opportunities for students to work collaboratively in groups or pairs or to learn independently. Questioning was probing and the teachers' use of supplementary questions to really get students to think was very effective. In the small number of lessons observed where teaching was satisfactory, students' progress was constrained by the fact that the work was not matched well enough to their needs; or there was a lack of variety, pace or challenge in the planned activities. Not all teachers make the best use of their teaching assistants.
- The school has worked hard on the use of assessment since the last inspection when it was encouraged to make better use of assessment information to plan for

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

progression. Students are set ‘challenge’ targets and their progress is carefully monitored against those targets. Work is marked regularly and is levelled. As a result students know at what level or grade they are working. In the most helpfully marked books, guidance on how to improve is very precise and related specifically to that subject. As a result students can articulate exactly what they need to do to improve. There are also some very effective combinations of self-, peer- and teacher-assessment which fully engage the students in identifying the next steps for their learning. Some particularly effective coaching and peer-assessment were observed in physical education. This high quality of assessment is not yet consistent across the school.

- The curriculum has developed further from a position of strength at the time of the last inspection. The pilot Skills Training and the 4 Rs cross-curricular project is very successful in supporting Year 7 students as they enter from primary school. The further development of ‘pathways’ for Years 10 and 11 has widened further the range of courses, both academic and vocational, to meet students’ needs. The impact of the school’s two specialisms has added considerably to the curriculum in terms of extensive and varied use of technology, international links and language projects such as the one set up with GCHQ in Cheltenham. The range of extra-curricular activities is broad, varied and very well supported by students who value highly what it adds to their lives at school.

- Staff know the students exceptionally well and care for them very well. All students are confident that the school will do its best to support them and help them take informed steps towards the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders and governing body are ambitious for the students and the school. The values promoted by the senior leaders are shared with, and supported by, staff. Staff respect the headteacher and value the ease of communication they have with her.

There is an effective cycle of improvement planning. There are systems set up for regular ‘curriculum monitoring’, which allows the school to keep track of students’ progress against their challenging targets and to intervene when necessary. This monitoring information, together with other data, informs self-evaluation. Subsequent improvement planning is thorough at whole-school level and in subject self-evaluation documents. The quality of departmental self-evaluation documents,

however, is not uniformly high in the rigour of the analysis.

The systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning have led to the school having an accurate and well-founded view of their quality. The quality of feedback to teachers given by the senior leaders is of a high standard. The monitoring of teaching by middle managers is not consistent yet in its rigour or in the quality of the feedback given. Teachers are, however, well supported by the school to help them improve their practice.

The school has very robust procedures to ensure the safety of the students. Systems are kept regularly under review and staff knowledge of issues relating to safety is very well maintained. There is a commitment to inclusion in the school and equality of opportunity is extremely well promoted and discrimination robustly tackled.

The governing body's contribution to the school is characterised by outstanding commitment. Governors are closely involved with a range of school developments and the governing body uses its mix of expertise and experience very effectively to challenge the school where appropriate.

The school works very hard to involve parents in the decision-making processes of the school. The parent group, 'Chosen Voice', exemplifies this very well. The school promotes community cohesion well and has undertaken an effective community audit. There is a strong feeling of the school itself as a community and the school has developed an effective strategy for engaging with the local and with international communities. The school has not yet made a rigorous analysis of its work in developing community cohesion in terms of the needs of minority groups.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

There were no students in school at the time of the inspection but the school's own analysis of extensive feedback from students indicates that students are happy with

the education they receive at Chosen Hill. Numbers entering the sixth form are growing steadily as a result of the increasing breadth of the curriculum offer. Students are very well supported both throughout their time in the sixth form and as they move on to higher education or employment. Their academic progress is rigorously monitored.

Students' attainment is above average and their progress overall is good. There is, however, variability between subjects. Outcomes in English literature, mathematics and physical education have been noticeably better than in other subjects.

Students in the sixth form take full advantage of, and value, the opportunities the school provides for them to develop as leaders of the school. They involve themselves very well in support of younger students, for example, through their work as house leaders or in mentoring reading groups.

The leadership of the sixth form has analysed data on student outcomes in specific subjects and has put in place appropriate changes. These have yet to have impact on students' outcomes in terms of greater consistency in the rate of progress across all subjects.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority showed high levels of satisfaction with the school. Those who wrote positive comments referred to the school as 'excellent' and spoke highly of the support their children receive. The inspection team supported these views. A small number of parents and carers expressed some concerns but there was no trend in these concerns. Parents would like it noted that many of them were unable to return questionnaires because of the tight time scale of this inspection.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Chosen Hill to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 338 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 814 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	234	85	8	

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
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.



5 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Chosen Hill School, Gloucester, GL3 2PL

The inspection team enjoyed listening to your views when we visited your school on 3 and 4 June 2009. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us.

Chosen Hill is an outstanding school. It helps you make good progress and also to develop into well-rounded individuals by the time you leave. We were very impressed by your behaviour and by the courteous way you treated us and your fellow students.

You told us that you feel very well supported in school and that all students are treated equally. We think that your curriculum choice is outstanding and you also told us how much you value the range of sports, musical and other activities you can get involved in outside school.

You make good progress in lessons, and examination results are above average in the sixth form and high at GCSE. This happens because teaching is good overall and because you work hard and behave very well. You told us that you learn best when lessons are active. Your headteacher and the other school leaders know this and are determined to help you make even better progress and make the school even stronger.

We have asked the school to do two things.

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by making sure you are fully involved in all parts of the lessons.
- Make sure that all subject leaders are analysing very carefully what is good in the subject and planning to improve those areas which are not as good.

You can help by continuing to work as hard as you do now.

Yours faithfully

Anne Looney
Her Majesty's Inspector

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