

Christleton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111421
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337684
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Mrs Marguerite McCloy

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,319
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Leake
Headteacher	Mr Tony Lamberton
Date of previous school inspection	June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 37 lessons, a number of registration and tutor group sessions and a sample of the school's enrichment, support or revision groups that replace the final lesson period on Wednesday afternoons. Taking into account looking at lunchtime and other social activities, the proportion of time spent by inspectors on direct observations of students' learning and personal development amounted to over 50% of available inspection time. More than 40 teachers and several support staff were observed and/or involved in discussions about the school's work. Inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of students and governors. They observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation, including relevant policies, the school's self-evaluation and strategic development planning, and its internal assessment data on students' attainment and progress. Inspectors analysed 379 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 56 completed by staff and 174 by students.

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

- students' overall achievement and quality of learning, and the progress made by all groups of learners, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are most able
- the impact of the school's work to improve the quality of teaching and develop teachers' effective use of assessment information to plan tasks that are well-matched to students' different learning needs
- the impact of senior leaders' and governors' key responsibilities on the school's overall provision and the outcomes for all learners
- the overall quality of the school's sixth form provision and its impact on outcomes for sixth form students.

Information about the school

Christleton High School is a larger than average secondary school situated near Chester in a generally advantaged area in socio-economic terms. Students attend from a wider area than the immediate vicinity and the school is significantly over-subscribed, with more applications than there are places available. Some students join for the sixth form provision. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. A well-below average number of students are eligible for free school meals. Most students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.

The school has combined specialist status in mathematics and computing with business and enterprise. It became a Foundation school in September 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Christleton High is a good school with good sixth form provision. As a result of considerable improvements in many aspects of the school's work since its last inspection, students' overall outcomes are outstanding. Teaching is consistently good or better, and leadership on many levels is outstandingly effective in articulating a clear vision for the school and in driving improvement. Students' attainment is high and has been rising steadily for the last three years. The proportion of students leaving Key Stage 4 with five or more GCSE grades A* to C with English and mathematics included is significantly above the national average at 75%. The good learning and progress seen in lessons is reflected in the much improved average point scores for each student in their overall performance at GCSE level. It is also evident across all groups of students, including those with special education needs and/or disabilities and those who are more able. On occasions, teachers' use of assessment information is less effective than it could be in ensuring that all students are fully challenged and given clear guidance on how to improve their work.

The school rightly prides itself on the exceptionally high level of personal attention and care provided for students, who are themselves a key feature of the school's success. Their behaviour and attitudes are good and sometimes outstanding. Most students are keen to learn, express themselves articulately and demonstrate maturity and responsibility, particularly during lesson times. They are proud to be here, and one student expressed the views of most who thoroughly enjoy school, when writing that Christleton is, 'a perfect example of its motto – happy, hardworking and courteous'. The views of most parents are equally positive, with a typical comment being that the school seems to have, 'a healthy balance of education, respect and fun'.

The school's thorough monitoring procedures and accurate self-evaluation provide good quality information from which to plan appropriate actions for improvement. Whole-school and departmental action plans are well thought through, although some lack clear success criteria against which the impact of the school's actions can be evaluated. Nevertheless, the ability of leaders and managers to identify and challenge any underperformance has contributed to the improvement in students' achievement, thus demonstrating a good capacity to improve further. Governors ensure that all key policies relating to the management of the school and the promotion of students' welfare are in place. They are keen to develop further towards exemplary practice, for example by reviewing and analysing more rigorously

the impact of some of the school's policies. Taking into account the school's expenditure per student, effective management of finances and the students' overall outstanding outcomes, the school provides outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teachers' use of assessment to support students' learning by:
 - sharing the good practice that already exists in the school
 - further improving the consistency of teachers' marking and feedback to students so that all know precisely how to improve their work and reach their challenging targets
 - ensuring that all teachers use information about students' prior learning to match activities fully to the needs of each individual student, particularly in mixed-ability classes.

- Capitalise on the existing good knowledge and skills of the governing body by enhancing its role in reviewing and analysing the impact of key school policies, for example, its equalities and community cohesion plans.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

From above average attainment on entry to the school, students' overall attainment is high by the time they leave Year 11. This is because all groups of students make good progress across the school. The quality of their learning in lessons at both key stages 3 and 4 is good or better. Most students are highly motivated and respond well to the predominantly challenging and engaging teaching. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are potentially vulnerable make the same progress as their peers because staff are keenly aware of their needs and provide effective support. Specialist status has a positive effect on students' performance, for instance in mathematics where a much higher proportion than nationally achieve the highest grades A* and A at GCSE. The computing specialism contributes to students' well-developed skills in the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Most students feel very safe at all times; this was not only evident in discussions with students but also in their responses to the inspection questionnaire. They appreciate the high levels of staff presence and watchfulness in and around the school, say that bullying is rare and are confident that it would be dealt with very effectively. Students have a good understanding of a wide range of potential dangers to their health and safety, as these are taught within the curriculum and regularly reinforced in leaflets and posters around the school. For example, students are aware of issues around internet safety, personal safety, and the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse or smoking. They understand how moderation plays an important role in enjoying a healthy lifestyle, and talk confidently about the nutritional values of the food they eat. Students enjoy taking part in physical education lessons and after-school activities, with many attending sporting clubs, matches or competitions outside

school time. Through participation in a sports leadership programme, some students maintain links with local primary schools and thus contribute to the local community. Other ways in which this occurs include: responsibilities as a peer mentor; membership of the school council; influencing whole-school decisions by expressing their views through 'student voice'; and raising funds to support a number of local and national charities. Music also plays a big part in school life, enabling significant numbers of students to contribute to the community by playing regularly at assemblies and concerts.

Attendance is above average, contributing to students' development of good workplace skills to prepare them for their future lives. Particular strengths in students' moral and social development are reflected in the quality of relationships across the school, their good levels of cooperation, respect for others and keen sense of justice. Attractive displays around the school not only celebrate the students' skills in art and design, but also show evidence of their participation in a range of cultural activities and experiences.

These are the grades for pupils'/children's outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is typically characterised by secure subject knowledge, good planning with the inclusion of relevant starter activities, and sharing learning objectives with students. Relationships and students' behaviour are at least good in almost all lessons, contributing to effective learning. Inspectors saw a good proportion of outstanding teaching and a small number of lessons where teaching was satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers prepared their lessons carefully to provide a good variety of activities delivered at an excellent pace with the appropriate levels of challenge to all learners. Good questioning was a common feature in many lessons. Where this was most effective, teachers provided questions which genuinely challenged the students to think, to draw on their previous learning and to give reasons for their answers. These questions were also used to probe the students' understanding and expose their misconceptions; enthusiasm helped to convey a love

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

of their subject to students. As a result, students made excellent progress in these lessons. On the few occasions when teaching is satisfactory, students are given insufficient opportunity to improve their learning through discussion or active self-evaluation. Activities are sometimes mundane and lacking challenge, therefore learning is limited.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 and is regularly under review across the school to further improve breadth and balance. A particular strength at Key Stage 4 is the wide range of courses available that are driven by student choice. The school's specialism is reflected in: the variety of ICT courses; early entry mathematics; and the business studies module that starts in Key Stage 3 to help inform students' choices regarding the study of business at GCSE level. The school has weekly one-hour provision for intervention, study or enrichment activities. Along with an extensive range of sporting, music and other after-school opportunities, these make an excellent contribution to the overall curriculum offered to students.

Staff know the students very well and pay excellent attention to their pastoral care and personal development in addition to their academic needs. Transition arrangements from primary schools are excellent. Careers advice and course options are very well organised. Students who are experiencing difficulties with their work or general school life are carefully monitored and guided by the school's Student Services department. This is instrumental in ensuring that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are potentially vulnerable make progress which is at least in line with that of their peers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher articulates a powerful vision for the school, which is shared by other leaders, staff and governors. Staff morale is high and almost all staff who completed an inspection questionnaire agreed that they are proud to be a member of the Christleton team and a valued part of the school's vision and high aspirations for its students. The personal and academic development of each individual student, whatever their abilities, background or needs, is at the heart of the school's inclusive ethos. These features, along with rigorous performance management systems and continuous professional development opportunities for staff, have resulted in the rapid improvement in outcomes for students in recent years.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good and a number of opportunities are provided for students to learn from international links with other schools and national fieldwork and studies within the curriculum. Safeguarding

procedures meet requirements and in some aspects are a model of good practice, for example in the management and maintenance of records of checks made on the suitability of staff. Child protection policies and related staff training are carefully planned and reviewed. Governors have a good range of valuable skills and experience and make a very effective contribution to the work of the school. They provide rigorous challenge for the leadership and demonstrate good practice in their commitment to student involvement in consultation and governance.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Students achieve well in the sixth form, attaining well above average standards overall. Most groups of students make at least good progress in their studies, and some make outstanding progress. A very large range of courses meets students' needs particularly at AS and A level, with some level 2 (GCSE) re-sits or vocational studies. Students also enjoy the range of enrichment activities available in the Wednesday afternoon sessions, although some expressed a desire to have more physical education time within the curriculum. A very large majority of students progress to higher education, with a high level of success in gaining preferred university places. Good leadership ensures that the sixth form provision is monitored and reviewed in order to identify ways in which improvements can be made. Leaders are aware that in order for overall outcomes to be outstanding, any inconsistencies in the performance of different subjects or for particular groups of students, needs to be reduced further.

The sixth form is inclusive and welcomes students from other schools, who settle in very well. Students value the very good care and support they are given, so that most continue their studies and complete their A-level courses successfully. Sixth form students make a strong contribution to the life of the main school: for example, as sports leaders, mentors for younger students, or by leading extra-curricular activities or fundraising projects.

The quality of teaching in the sixth form, as in the main school, is good overall and sometimes outstanding. Teachers make sure that students are aware of their target

grades and how to achieve these. Independent learning, collaborative work and peer assessment are key features of most lessons. The students themselves often make an excellent contribution to the success of their studies, through their own enthusiasm and desire to do the best they can.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	2
Taking into account:	
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

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and what it does for their sons and daughters. Many of the returned questionnaires contained positive comments, often praising the school for placing equal emphasis on promoting students' personal and academic needs. Inspectors found this to be an accurate reflection of one of the school's strengths. A significant minority of parents and carers, along with around one quarter of the students who responded in their questionnaires, did not agree that the school helps students to be healthy. Almost all of the additional comments on this question made reference to issues around lunchtime meal choices and costs. Inspectors found that the school, in response to previous feedback from parents and students, had already made changes and a new catering provider had taken over the contract at the start of this term. Leaders agreed with the inspection team's view that there is scope to enhance communication with parents by gathering their views in a more systematic way and raising parents' awareness of how the school responds to their views. Similarly, almost 10% of the 379 parents and carers who completed the inspection questionnaire do not believe that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour to be good and often outstanding across the school, and that any incidents of poor behaviour that do occur are dealt with appropriately. In fact, the overwhelming majority of students also consider behaviour to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Christleton High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 379 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,319 pupils registered at the school.

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
My child enjoys school	161	42	206	54	9	2	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	158	42	204	54	12	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	174	46	184	49	16	4	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	168	44	183	48	21	6	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	131	35	220	58	17	4	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	112	30	221	58	30	8	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	21	234	62	51	13	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example, changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	136	36	195	51	20	5	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	128	34	224	59	15	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	96	25	218	58	37	10	12	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	91	24	217	57	36	9	5	1
The school is led and managed effectively	156	41	197	52	9	2	7	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	178	47	183	48	14	4	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

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.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Christleton High School, Chester, CH3 7AD

Thank you for making my colleagues and me so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you in some of your lessons, around the school building, and in meetings. We were impressed by your good manners and helpfulness, the way you get along with each other, smile a lot and are happy to be at Christleton.

You are right to be proud of your school. It is clearly good and has some outstanding features as a result of the significant improvements that have been made in the last few years. These are some of the particular strengths we identified.

- You achieve outstandingly well because your learning and progress is good, you enjoy school and work hard, and you attain high academic standards in the main school and sixth form.
- The school provides an outstanding level of care and guidance for all students and, as a result, you feel extremely safe and well supported.
- Teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding, and most of you contribute very well to making lessons particularly successful because your own positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning match those of the teacher.
- Leadership of the school is outstandingly effective in setting a clear vision for the school's future and in challenging both staff and students to work to the best of their ability and realise their high aspirations.

Your headteacher, the staff and governors work well as a team and will not 'rest on their laurels' but continue to look for ways to make your school even better. We have suggested that teachers can further develop the good practice we saw in many lessons by using assessment effectively to support learning; this includes the guidance you are given when teachers mark your work or set specific targets for you to improve your grades. Governors and the leadership team could also review and check the impact of some of their key policies, and I know they will be looking to you to help them, as student voice is very valued in your school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marguerite McCloy
Her Majesty's Inspector

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