

Christopher Whitehead Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116978
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	354334
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1007
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathryn Bentley
Headteacher	Neil Morris
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 44 lessons, four tutorial sessions and two assemblies, observing 48 teachers in a variety of roles. Learning support staff were observed in a range of contexts. Professional feedback was offered to all staff who were observed teaching. Senior staff were invited to conduct a number of joint observations of teaching and learning with the inspection team.

Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including: the minutes of governing body meetings; the reports of the school improvement partner; the school improvement plan; and details of the school's partnership work. Inspectors were in school during the first day of the 2010 Year 7 transition arrangements and evaluated how this was conducted. They scrutinised the students' work, the school's records and the 260 parental questionnaires returned. A total of 125 student and 115 staff questionnaires were also evaluated.

- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:
- the variation in standards and achievement over the last three years
- the quality of teaching and learning across the school and in the core subjects
- the impact of the school language college specialist status on provision and standards.

Information about the school

The school is larger than secondary schools nationally and draws students from the south west of the city and the surrounding area. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just below the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is less than half the national figure and so is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language.

The proportion of students registered by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national figure, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. The school has a specialist special needs provision. There are a small number of children in the school who are looked after by the local authority.

The school has language college specialist status and has also received the following national accreditations: the Leading Aspect Award for Innovation; Investors in People; the Arts Council ArtsMark - Silver; the International School Award; the Healthy Schools Award; and the Football Association FA Charter Standard.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Outcomes for individuals and groups are good and standards in the school's languages specialism are nearly twice the national average. Students make good progress. Equality of opportunity is good; the small numbers of students from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds do as well or better than their peers. Higher achieving students do well at GCSE. Those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good and many make outstanding progress.

Overall, teaching and learning are good; there are no significant inadequacies in particular subjects or across year groups. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are good and this, with the effective professional development opportunities provided for staff, is a real strength of the work of the school. The most effective teaching secures high level responses from students in vibrant, engaging lessons; for example, in an outstanding Year 9 French lesson, particularly well-managed oral challenges provoked GCSE level responses from a mixed ability group. The school is working hard to develop this style of teaching and to blend it with a wide range of curriculum opportunities at departmental level. At present, the balance between teaching, learning and outcomes is not as well-developed in English and mathematics. Attainment in English and mathematics, although satisfactory and clearly demonstrating good achievement Key Stage 2 to 4, is not as strong as in the specialist subjects.

The range of curriculum opportunities provided is outstanding. External partnerships and the stimulus provided by the school's specialist language college status are helping to extend the range of courses provided. The impact of these developments is already evident in rising standards not only in modern foreign languages but also in information and communication technology. The range of the out-of-school-hours provision is extensive with a high take up by students.

The students make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community, for example through the efforts of the school council's charitable work and in their involvement in staff appointments. As a result of the effectiveness of the school's outstanding mentoring and guidance systems, the students' rate of attendance is high and has been on a three year rising trend. Behaviour is outstanding and break time socialisation is calm. Students from a wide range of backgrounds develop as confident, articulate and tolerant young people as they progress through the school. The care, welfare and guidance provided are outstanding; parents, carers and students spoke positively about the nature of the individual support available and students spoke of 'staff going out of their way to help you'. Effective academic guidance based on good assessment for learning has helped to raise standards.

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The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in embedding ambition and driving forward improvement has been outstanding; they have collectively created a vibrant learning community. Self-evaluation is critically realistic. All of the staff responses to the inspection questionnaire noted they felt proud to be a member of staff. Governance is outstanding; the minutes of the governing body meetings provide clear evidence of effective support and challenge for senior staff and of a governing body with a clear focus.

The leadership team has done very well to maintain and enhance standards at age 16, and to continually develop teaching and learning through systematic monitoring and highly accurate self-evaluation. Six of the eight prime judgements inspectors make against the Every Child Matters framework were graded outstanding. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the programme of curriculum review across all departments that has been stimulated by the school's specialist language college status and exemplified in the developments ongoing in information and communication technology.
- Raise standards in English language and mathematics by ensuring the balance of tuition and assessment for learning activities match those of the most effective departments.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The proportion of students gaining five or more higher grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, dipped in 2009 as a result of staffing issues which have now been addressed. Despite this, the most-able students did well and 22% of the Year 11 group secured eight or more GCSE grades A* to B, including English and mathematics.

The results of 2010 GCSE examinations taken early in Year 11 confirm that outcomes in mathematics have returned to the level secured in previous years when they were closer to the national average. The 2009 GCSE results in modern foreign languages, the school's specialist area, are outstanding, at nearly double the national average; similarly, outcomes in English literature were almost as positive. Examination outcomes were strong in art and design, computer studies and design technology.

The school's robust assessment evidence base confirms that vulnerable students and those with special educational needs have made good and often outstanding progress for the last three years, and this was confirmed by a scrutiny of the students' classwork. A measure of this success is the high proportion of students gaining five A* to G passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, 93%, a figure maintained for the last 2 years.

Attainment on entry is below the national average. The students' current learning and performance during this inspection was good. Lesson outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn and they respond well to this challenge. Enjoyment and achievement are good, with strengths evident in

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modern foreign languages and computer studies where the impact of the school's specialism and outstanding teaching are raising standards.

The inspection questionnaires noted that 98% of parents and 91% of students responded positively to the questionnaire on 'feeling safe'; inspectors observed very good procedures to support this view. Behaviour is outstanding, the students' attitudes to learning were often a positive feature in lessons and the sensible movement of students in some of the school's confined corridors is impressive.

Attendance has risen steadily for three years and is high. A good range of popular and healthy school meals are available, and the proportion of students engaged in sport is high. The student council has been involved in sourcing food from ethical and sustainable sources, and the students grow organically on-site much of the canteen's summer salad requirements. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding with notable strengths in their moral and social progress.

The range of workplace and other skills the students develop towards their future economic well-being is good; the students' computer and self-evaluation skills are above average. The proportion of students who leave to take up places in employment, education or training is well above the local and national averages.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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 ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall with the large majority of lessons found to be good or better; outstanding practice was seen across a range of subjects. In the best lessons, teachers constantly challenge students to explain or extend their learning. They use well-targeted questions and a range of activities which interest and engage students, including the use of computers and interactive whiteboards. Students respond particularly well when they are encouraged to solve problems or learn by doing. Two of the eleven outstanding lessons seen were delivered by young staff new to teaching. These lessons were well-matched to the students' learning needs, activities engaged their attention, and they were driven forward by effective one-to-one or small group support. As a result, the well-directed questions generated high level competitive whole class discussion. These strong performances in information and communication technology and history lessons were matched by others in modern foreign languages, science and drama; they are a testimony to the effectiveness of the school's continuing professional development programme and the strength of the leadership of these departments. Teaching assistants often provide effective support in lessons so that students with special educational needs learn as effectively as their peers.

Less effective lessons were characterised by extended periods of the teacher talking to the class or because planning sometimes paid more attention to assessment activities than to student centred activities. Students know their targets and teachers often refer to the skills required to achieve particular levels of response. The students have been taught to accurately assess their own work and that of their peers against examination board requirements. Marking and assessment for learning is good overall, although some variations exist.

Outstanding curriculum provision supports the interests of students of all abilities. Provision is broad and balanced overall, but is being invigorated by the range of courses being very successfully introduced in some subject areas as a result of the impact of the school's specialist language college status. The wide range of enrichment activities is especially good and student engagement is high. Partnership working with other education providers is strong, extending the range of vocational provision in Key Stage 4.

All aspects of care, guidance and support are outstanding. Regular analysis of student performance and the work of effective pastoral managers play a key role in supporting students' emotional health and well being. The school conducted the new Year 7 induction day for over 200 primary school pupils during this inspection. The good quality of the experience provided was clear to inspectors. The school's options system and the in-house careers guidance provide excellent advice. The school has excellent links with external agencies. The strength of this support, care and guidance is evident in the outstanding attendance and behaviour of the students. The local authority views the school's work on attendance as exemplary practice which they recommend to all other schools. Students say they have high levels of confidence in the school's advice and support, and parents are positive about the quality and accessibility of information,

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advice and guidance provided.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The manner in which senior leaders have embedded ambition and driven improvement through an effective approach to dispersed leadership and holding key staff to account has been outstanding,

There has been a consistent focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment. The headteacher has clear expectations of the effective classroom practice required; the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior staff is accurate. As a result, standards have been maintained and improved so that students make good progress towards challenging targets.

Safeguarding is good and fully meets requirements. Governance is good with a clear focus on school improvement and effective management of limited resources. Senior staff and the governing body have effectively managed the refurbishment of much of the school site with funds from commercial neighbours.

The school's excellent care, guidance and support lies at the heart of outstanding engagement with parents, carers and students, the very high levels of attendance and the students' very positive attitudes to learning are the result of these efforts; parents and carers commented appreciatively on the work of middle leaders in this context. Over 90% of parents and carers felt the school was led and managed effectively.

Outstanding partnerships working with a wide range of other education providers, locally and across the county, as well as with community groups are a strength of the school's outstanding community cohesion work; this charitable support has a global dimension. Senior staff and governors deploy resources effectively and the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for 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

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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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers responded positively to the inspection questionnaire with 10 of the 13 questions registering a 90% plus approval rating. The students' responses were equally as positive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Christopher Whitehead Language College 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 260 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1007 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	27	173	67	14	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	89	34	165	63	4	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	96	37	144	55	14	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	85	33	154	59	14	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	71	27	173	67	10	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	60	23	169	65	25	10	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	19	173	67	29	11	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)	88	34	156	60	7	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	62	24	178	68	15	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	100	38	136	52	14	5	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	18	170	65	25	10	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	103	40	139	53	14	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	109	42	137	53	8	3	1	0

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 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. 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 pupil's 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.



1 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Christopher Whitehead Language College, Worcester, WR2 4AF

As you know, your school was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. First of all, I would like to thank you for your openness, friendliness and courtesy during our visit. The inspectors enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. Your school is a friendly place where staff know you very well, and almost all of you noted in the pupil questionnaire how staff care for and support you. Inspectors judged this care, guidance and support to be outstanding and we were also impressed by your outstanding behaviour and attendance. Well done!

The inspectors found that teaching and learning are consistently good and we agree with you that the lessons where you are involved in your own learning are particularly impressive. We believe that the range of curriculum opportunities provided is outstanding but there is room for a greater range of opportunities, such as you experience in languages and information and communication technology, to further improve your academic progress.

I have also asked the headteacher and the governing body to raise standards in English language and mathematics.

I look forward to hearing about your future success.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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