

Cirencester Deer Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115771
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	290331
Inspection dates	2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Tony Shield

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	1110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr Philip Beckerlegge
Headteacher	Ms Chiquita Henson
Date of previous school inspection	17-19 September 2001
School address	Stroud Road Cirencester Gloucestershire GL7 1XB
Telephone number	01285 653447
Fax number	01285 640669

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. During their one-day visit, inspectors investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies, minutes and other school documentation, observation of the school at work, interviews with senior members of staff and students, and parental questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Cirencester Deer Park School is a larger than average comprehensive school serving Cirencester and its surrounding villages. Most students are from a White British background, and there are only small minorities from other ethnic heritages. The school has been a technology college since 1995, and more recently has also achieved both arts and vocational status. It is also the lead school in the Leading Edge Partnership and a Training School. The school is a recipient of both the Sportsmark and Artsmark Gold Awards. Fewer than average students are eligible for free school meals. Thirty students have learning difficulties; as a percentage of the school roll, this is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cirencester Deer Park School is a good school with many outstanding features. The school has some very special qualities. It benefits from an ethos which puts the individual student at its core, and encourages students to develop outstanding personal skills. The school educates some remarkably confident young people. The curriculum is both innovative and exciting, increasingly designed to meet the individual needs of students. The leadership team, led with vision and insight by the headteacher, is ambitious for further improvement and is well placed to achieve it. Most parents are very supportive of the school. Typical of comments received by inspectors was: 'The school has a vibrant and positive feel about it, and is always prepared to go the extra mile for its students'.

Academic standards are above average at all levels, and students achieve well. Results both at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations have been significantly above average for many years. Results in mathematics at the end of Year 9 are particularly good. At GCSE, students did well in most subjects in 2006, and particularly in English, mathematics, science, religious education and expressive arts. The inspection looked carefully at some of the weaker performing areas at GCSE, notably history and information and communication technology, and found that the school's effective strategies are leading to improvements in students' progress. As a result, students' achievements are improving, following a slight decline during the last two years. Students' progress is currently more rapid in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, but the school's tracking systems do not yet focus enough on progress, as opposed to standards, to provide a detailed analysis of why this should be.

Teaching is good with outstanding features and there is a purposeful buzz in most classrooms. Teachers have high expectations and students respond with determination and pride in what they do. Because the curriculum stresses learning for a purpose, students participate with eagerness to do their best. Much teaching is of a high quality, although at times lesson activities fail to challenge individual students at an appropriate level. However, the school has a clear understanding of how students learn and what makes for effective teaching. Best practice is shared through the work of the learning leaders group and inspectors saw good progress in most lessons they visited.

The school's technology, arts, and vocational status is enriching its work, and making an increasingly wide-ranging and important contribution in all areas of the school. Productive partnerships with the local, national and international community further enhance the school's provision. The excellent curriculum is also boosted by an outstanding range of well supported extra-curricular activities. 'Standstill days' provide a flexible and innovative approach to teaching particular aspects of the curriculum.

Students and staff get on very well with each other in a climate of mutual respect. Students' outstanding personal development is reflected in their very positive attitudes to school and the eagerness with which they contribute to the school community. The seriousness with which older students take their responsibilities to mentor younger students is impressive. Behaviour is exemplary and many examples of courteous and sensitive behaviour were observed by inspectors, although some

parents expressed concern about the behaviour of a small number of students in some classes. Students feel safe and a culture of care and respect is threaded through all aspects of the school's excellent guidance and support procedures. A strong commitment to individual students is apparent, both in students' pastoral care and academic guidance. Students know their target grades and, importantly, how to achieve them.

Self-evaluation is woven through the school, and staff at all levels are reflective in their practice. At the same time, curricular innovation is encouraged. The headteacher, well supported by her senior team and team leaders, leads with clarity of purpose. She has maintained the school's standards while enhancing its distinctiveness through achieving additional specialisms, but there is no complacency and the school shows determination in its pursuit of even higher standards. However, management has been insufficiently focused on using assessment data to measure progress and to determine the effectiveness of the school's provision. Governors are exceptionally well led and play a key part in the school's strategic planning and monitoring.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise the level of achievement by using assessment data with more precision to plan work and set tasks which are tailored more accurately to the needs of individual students, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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.



3 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Cirencester Deer Park School, Cirencester, GL7 1XB

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were particularly impressed by the courteous way in which you greeted us and the maturity you showed in answering our questions. You rightly take considerable pride in being a student at Deer Park School. Your school is good, with many outstanding features.

Here are some of the main findings from our report:

- the school's distinctive environment and curriculum offer good opportunities for you to thrive
- teachers and staff at all levels take considerable care to ensure that you are very well looked after and supported through school
- good teaching enables most of you to make good progress and achieve above average standards; your own determination to do well also makes an important contribution
- many of you develop confident personal and social skills, which prepare you very well for your future beyond school
- the curriculum is excellent and is increasingly planned to meet your individual needs. There are superb opportunities for enrichment through clubs and other activities; the performance of *Much Ado about Nothing* during the inspection was clearly enjoyed by all those taking part
- the headteacher, her senior team and all other managers carry out their responsibilities very well and with a clear sense of how things can be made even better.

In order to improve your progress, we have asked the school to make sure that data is analysed carefully to check your progress, particularly through Years 7 to 9, so as to ensure that lesson planning takes account of how well you are doing and stretches you even more!

Thank you once again for your help during our visit. Best wishes for the future!

Yours faithfully

Tony Shield
Lead inspector