

Cirencester Deer Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115771
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	338660
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm HMI

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 of pupils on the school roll	1,059
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Beckerlegge
Headteacher	Ms Chiquita Henson
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The team observed 31 lessons involving 28 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and staff. There were no meetings with parents and carers. There were telephone conversations with the School Improvement Partner and two headteachers of partner schools. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at school policies, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records and other school documentation, including analyses of 242 responses by parents and carers to the questionnaire. Inspectors also took into account the views of 142 students and 59 staff who responded to their respective questionnaires.

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

- the achievement and attainment of different groups of students, such as those learning English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- teachers' use of assessment data to improve the rate of students' progress across the school
- the impact of recent initiatives by leaders and managers, including the governing body, to improve students' progress further.

Information about the school

Cirencester Deer Park is larger than the average comprehensive school, and admits students from Cirencester and its surrounding villages. Most students are from a White British background, and there are a small number of students from other ethnic heritages. The school has been a technology college since 1995, and has acquired two further specialisms in the arts and applied learning. It is the lead school in its Leading Edge Partnership, and a Training School. The school is the recipient of the Sportsmark award and is a School of Creativity 2009-11. Fewer students than average are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.

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

2

Main findings

Cirencester Deer Park is an outstanding school. Governors, leaders, managers and staff share an ambitious vision for the school's development as a centre of excellence within the wider community and as a leader in the development of teaching skills and curriculum provision. Persuasive leadership by the headteacher drives a constant and constructive cycle of faculty reviews and innovation. Her effective senior leadership team is strongly supported by management at all levels. The impact of recent strategies on students' achievement and personal development has been excellent. However, the governors and leadership team are aware that a number of policies, including those for gender and equalities, are neither sufficiently clear nor tightly monitored to ensure that students' progress can be improved further. Nonetheless, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

Students' attainment is high and has been for the past three years. Attainment in the school's specialist subjects has also been impressive. Progress made by all students has been good, but was much better in 2009 and school data indicate clearly that attainment in key subjects will be even higher in 2010. This is partly a consequence of the impact of recent strategies to give more targeted support to students who need individual help, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Students' overall achievement is now outstanding.

Students pointed to the skill and commitment of teachers as being a major factor in their success. Amongst the strengths observed were secure subject knowledge, excellent questioning skills, a highly productive rapport with students, lively pace and the confident use of appropriate technology. Students identified discussion, pair work and individual research and presentation as being especially effective in developing their skills as learners. Outstanding teaching was observed in a range of subjects involving timely and constructive use of varied assessment methods to evaluate and extend students' understanding. However, teaching was good overall because not all lessons demonstrated these elements consistently well. Target setting has been made more rigorous and challenging for students, but in some areas the targets were not translated into appropriately challenging activities for all students. The marking of written work most often combined encouragement with detailed guidance on how to improve.

The curriculum has the breadth and flexibility to meet the needs of all students

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extremely effectively. A wide choice of vocational courses is offered, some through excellent collaboration with other local schools and colleges. Outstanding care and guidance ensure that students follow courses that meet their individual abilities and aspirations, and that they are strongly supported through the process. Students’ success as learners is complemented by their outstanding attitudes and skills that will serve them well beyond school. They are courteous, articulate, and treat each other and adults with consideration. They respond to challenge with confidence. They enjoy their own and other people’s successes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers make consistently effective use of the new, challenging targets for individual students, to enable students to make faster progress.
- Ensure that the school’s policies are always sufficiently detailed, both to guide actions and to support the clear evaluation and review of the school’s success in achieving its goals.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

It was clear from the lessons observed that the high attainment and outstanding achievement of all groups of students are matched by their development as thoughtful, confident and enterprising young people. They have very positive attitudes to their education and attendance is high. Students take advantage of the many opportunities to become independent learners. They are skilled at collaborative and practical problem-solving and are good at applying their critical thinking to present a coherent and personal line of argument persuasively. They feel very safe at school, confident that any difficulties will be quickly resolved by staff or by other students. They accept responsibility with enthusiasm and respond with great maturity when invited to evaluate the work of others and to put forward ideas for change within the school and local community. Students display an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Participation in the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities is very strong. Strength in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, and the skills they develop through work-related learning and ‘enrichment’ activities, equip students extremely well for life after school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, strongly promoted by the school’s ethos and curriculum.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	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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Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Most of the teaching seen was good and some was outstanding, displaying highly developed professional skills. Teachers often made what was to be learnt very clear and presented a sequence of increasingly challenging activities, punctuated by opportunities for reflection and consolidation. Inspectors saw excellent examples of teachers using open questions to prompt independent thinking and to establish students' levels of understanding. Some teaching was not so good, though none observed was inadequate. Teachers knew each student's target but were not always adept at matching the level of challenge in activities to the needs of students. Students said that the most effective teaching was collaborative, encouraging them to investigate, challenge and extend the ideas and subject content presented in lessons. The marking of written work most often, but not always, balanced encouragement with specific guidance on how to improve.

Very successful partnership working adds further breadth to an inclusive curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, well-planned pathways provide options tailored to students' different needs and ambitions. Vocational opportunities are being extended through excellent partnership links with other schools. The school's various specialisms are strongly presented through a wide choice of options that prove very popular at GCSE. An extremely wide range of well-supported and challenging activities complements the main curriculum, including team and individual sports, arts, visits and subject-linked trips and expeditions. The school's international links are exploited very well to enable students to experience cultures and values in different parts of the world.

As parents and students make clear, the quality and scope of care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students' individual needs are very carefully assessed and, when appropriate, they are given extra support through specialist provision in the Inclusion Centre. Well-coordinated management ensures that pastoral care and academic guidance complement each other very effectively. The school's Pupil

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Services team works constructively with external agencies when appropriate. Students are, rightly, confident that the guidance they are given on how to prepare for their next steps beyond Deer Park is well informed and effectively tailored to their individual needs.

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 headteacher provides strong leadership in order to maintain the outstanding outcomes achieved by students at the school, supported by high expectations and good lines of accountability. The impact of teaching on learning is monitored well, but not all teachers yet apply their knowledge of target setting to ensure that lesson activities fully meet the needs of all students. Good safeguarding procedures are in place and staff are fully aware of their responsibilities. Individual case studies demonstrate the thoroughness of care for vulnerable students. Recent initiatives to strengthen provision across the ability range are beginning to make a positive impact on the progress that students make through the school.

Governors have a good understanding of the school’s workings, updated through regular meetings. They are well equipped for their role in providing both support and challenge to the school, but have not ensured that all school policies are detailed enough to support clear evaluation, especially in relation to gender and equalities. Financial planning and controls are excellent, systematically implementing priorities set out in the school’s development plan. Value for money is outstanding. Instances of racial tension or bullying are very rare. They are carefully logged and prompt action taken. Students develop a thoughtful understanding of their local community, and their links with schools around the world add relevance and detail to the exploration of international issues in lessons. The school’s provision promotes community cohesion extremely well. Engagement with parents and carers whose children need significant support is very constructive, and communication with them is consistently prompt and comprehensive. Management of the school’s specialist areas is outstanding. Deer Park makes a highly significant contribution to training, teaching and curriculum in local schools and draws most productively on a range of partnerships to extend opportunities for its own students.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	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	1

Views of parents and carers

The support for the school that parents and carers express in their questionnaire responses is very strong. Above all is the clear view, expressed by a large majority of parents and carers responding, that their children enjoy school and feel safe. There is very high agreement that teaching is good, the school is helping their children's learning well, and that overall they are happy with their children's experience at the school. A small number of parents and carers disagreed with the statement that the school helps students to have healthy lifestyles. Inspectors found that there is plenty of encouragement for students to lead active lives, including good extra-curricular sports opportunities.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cirencester Deer Park 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 242 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1059 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	103	43	121	50	10	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	96	40	140	58	1	0	1	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	117	49	108	45	10	4	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	104	43	126	53	9	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	90	38	138	58	6	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	56	23	161	67	16	7	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	20	161	67	22	9	0	0
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)	107	45	118	49	4	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	96	40	128	53	9	4	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	76	32	148	62	10	4	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	23	147	61	15	6	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	99	41	130	54	8	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	118	49	110	46	6	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 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

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 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.



14 May 2010

Dear Students

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

Thank you very much for the way you welcomed inspectors into your school. You will be pleased to know we think your school is outstanding. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing how much you enjoy being part of the school's community. You attain high standards and make good progress, helped by good teaching and an impressively broad curriculum. You demonstrate what mature and responsible attitudes you have, not just to learning, but also to each other and members of staff. You work very hard and make an excellent contribution to the life of the school. You are to be congratulated on your exemplary behaviour. You have shown excellent personal moral values and great concern for your community and that of the wider world.

The headteacher and staff are doing an excellent job in supporting and guiding you to make sure you continue to do your best. There is an excellent range of activities in class and in extra-curricular events. We were impressed by how many of you take advantage of these and join in as much as you can.

We think your school can improve even more by:

- ensuring that all teachers, not just the best, provide you with stretching lesson activities to enable you to meet your targets
- reviewing school policies more regularly to ensure they are detailed enough to be effective.

You can help by working hard to achieve, and possibly exceed, your challenging targets so that you fulfil your potential.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector

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