

# Chew Valley School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109306
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	309956
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wiola Hola HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1150
Sixth form	181
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Wibberley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Mallett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Chew Magna Bristol BS40 8QB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01275 332272
<b>Fax number</b>	01275 333625

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following: achievement and standards; the quality of teaching and learning; the effectiveness of systems for academic guidance and safeguarding; and the impact of leadership and management on improving elements of provision and outcomes for students.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation form (SEF) and other review documents; nationally published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; observation of the school at work in lessons and at break times; discussions with staff and students; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. In these other areas, inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This large school serves a rural area with a significant number of pupils from wards in South Bristol. The vast majority of the students have a White British background and the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is also well below average. Whilst the percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average, the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The main difficulties or disabilities are: specific learning difficulties; behavioural, emotional, social difficulties; and autism spectrum disorder. Students' attainment on entry varies greatly but is slightly above average overall. The school has been a specialist performing arts college since September 2003. It has Healthy School status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school, with an outstanding sixth form. It enables students to achieve well academically and provides exceptionally well for their personal development and well-being, which are outstanding. Students enjoy school greatly and speak very positively about the support they receive from staff and of the excellent relationships they have with them. The school's specialism in the performing arts has a palpably strong impact on school life and students' enthusiasm for it. Students grow as confident, courteous and considerate young people whose contribution to school life is extensive, as demonstrated by the highly developed and influential school councils. The school works extremely well to ensure that any barriers to learning experienced by students are recognised and removed as far as possible, through the support work in Lake View House and from heads of year, for example, as well as in other ways. The success of this approach is reflected in the particularly good progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

In 2007, standards in the national end of Year 9 tests, and in GCSE examinations, were above average and best in mathematics. There were also strengths in English, science and music. Results in business studies, French and Spanish showed relative weaknesses. GCSE results showed that students made good progress over the five years from Year 7 to Year 11, although progress was not quite as good as in the previous few years. Girls' GCSE results, and their rate of progress, were considerably better than those of the boys. In 2008, unvalidated data show a marked increase in GCSE results and a narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' performance. Results also suggest that the downward trend in GCSE outcomes, visible over the last few years, is being reversed. The GCSE targets set for 2008 were not quite met, however, even though boys' results were better than expected. Results in Year 9 tests in 2008 were similar to those in 2007. They fell a little short of targets in mathematics and science but exceeded them in English. The process of setting targets has been at a level of moderate challenge in the past. The level of challenge has been raised considerably this year.

The school rightly describes teaching and learning as good with outstanding features. Students have positive attitudes to learning, support each other and work hard. Their behaviour in and out of lessons is excellent. Lessons are mostly very engaging, proceed with good pace, and comprise a good range of interesting activities. Many are of high quality, some are satisfactory, and instances of unsatisfactory ones are rare. Sometimes, the pace of learning is a little slow. The school's focus on strengthening the assessment of students' work, by teachers and by students themselves, is bearing fruit. Assessment is generally undertaken effectively and thoroughly but some inconsistencies exist, both in the marking of work and in the extent of teachers' questioning in lessons to explore students' understanding. The curriculum is outstanding and includes an extensive range of enrichment activities that students appreciate greatly. The school is rightly proud of much work undertaken to boost creativity and to develop students as leaders and contributors in a cohesive and supportive society. A high proportion of students study a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11. The personal care and guidance students receive are exceptional, and academic guidance is also very strong, although a little uneven across the school. The school is continuing to develop educational provision, in planning for the introduction of vocational courses in creative areas and in education for sustainability, for example. Systems for ensuring students' health and safety are entirely robust. Exclusions are reducing and there have been no permanent exclusions since 2005. Students' attendance is above average, reflecting the impact of initiatives to raise attendance in recent years.

The school is extremely well led and managed. Staff praise highly the work of senior leaders in setting out very clear expectations and in keeping their work under review. Leaders and managers are entirely focused on ensuring that students grow in every way to develop their skills and talents. They have a highly accurate view of the successes and relative weaknesses across the school and have taken action, where required, to address any shortcomings. The school has successfully tackled the areas for development raised in the previous inspection in relation to religious education and information and communication technology. The actions, together with very tangible improvements in provision and outcomes in English, and in the achievement of boys, for example, bear witness to the school's outstanding capacity to improve. Stringent action plans exist to address some remaining shortcomings, such as those in modern foreign languages. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school. The school works in excellent partnership with many agencies, with other schools and the community, to enrich education in this school and beyond.

### **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

#### **Grade: 1**

In this outstanding sixth form, students flourish in many ways, academically and personally. Students are fulsome in their praise of teachers' efforts to support, encourage and nurture them, and to devise interesting lessons and activities. Students play a hugely valuable part in school life as a whole, working at times with younger students, and enhancing school development and leadership through the school councils, for example. Participation rates are increasing, course completion rates are high and standards are rising. The sixth form is extremely well led and managed.

Students' attainment on entry into the sixth form is broadly average. In 2007, overall results in A-level examinations were similar to the national average but results in AS examinations were higher. Results in 2008 confirm the school's view that standards in the sixth form are now above average and that students' overall achievement is good and improving. Results over the last three years show particular strengths in science subjects and mathematics. Students benefit from outstanding teaching, an excellent curriculum and very high levels of care, guidance and support. A building project to improve greatly accommodation for the sixth form is about to take place.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the overall rate of students' progress by ensuring all lessons proceed with good pace, and with greater consistency in the effectiveness of assessment, particularly in marking and in questioning students to check their understanding.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

<sup>1</sup>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.

**Personal development and well-being**

**Annex A**

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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**

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Chew Valley School, Chew Magna, Bristol BS40 8QB

Thank you for your welcome when two inspectors visited the school recently. Your comments to us in lessons and at break times helped us greatly in forming our views about the school. I write to tell you about our findings.

Chew Valley is a good school. We can see that you are proud of it and enjoy it enormously. It enables you to achieve well academically. It is extremely successful in helping you develop as confident, courteous young people, exceptionally well prepared for your next stages in life and learning, and to make a valuable contribution to society. The sixth form is outstanding.

Standards in the Year 9 tests, in GCSE examinations and in the sixth form are above average overall. You do particularly well in mathematics. There are also strengths in English and science but a few weaknesses elsewhere. The school's status as a performing arts college is clearly visible in the life of the school, and enhances provision in many areas. The curriculum as a whole is excellent and includes many enrichment activities. The school is extremely effective in giving you the personal support you need, and in keeping you safe. Your attendance is above average, behaviour is excellent, and you work hard and support each other well. Your lessons are mostly good and some are outstanding. Most lessons move with good pace and comprise interesting activities. You and your teachers assess your work and progress routinely and effectively much of the time but inconsistencies exist in the helpfulness of marking, and in the way teachers pose questions to check if you are all understanding and learning. We have asked the school to further increase your progress by ensuring all lessons are well paced and that teachers always check, through marking, questioning or by other means, how well you are learning lesson by lesson. We urge you to ask teachers if ever you are unsure about your work and to miss as few school days as possible.

The school is extremely well led and managed. Leaders have been successful in boosting boys' progress, for example, and raising standards in English. Further work is planned to develop the curriculum, and sixth form students are looking forward to the new accommodation for them.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Wiola Hola Her Majesty's Inspector