



Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd

19th March 2016

Mr Chris Price
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The Cherwell School
Marston Ferry Road
Oxford
OX2 7EE

Assessment Date: 16th and 17th March 2016

Summary

Thank you for hosting my visit to carry out your IQM assessment. It was a pleasure to meet your staff, students, governors and parents who were very supportive of the school. I was impressed by the welcoming nature of the school, the friendliness of students and the dedication of all staff, both teaching and non-teaching. My visit was well planned and organised, aided by a detailed and thorough self-evaluation document. The schedule was effective in allowing me access to a wide variety of people to discuss and thoroughly explore in detail each element of the IQM standards, enabling me to build up a very positive picture of inclusive practice at your school. Everyone I met was helpful and spoke positively about their experience at the school. Please pass on my thanks to the students I met who were mature, a credit to themselves, their families and the school, and very articulate in the way they put their points across.

The buildings are bright, well maintained and have been adapted over time to accommodate the changing needs of staff and students. Great care has been taken to ensure that spaces suit the needs of the learners and walls are adorned with students' work and vibrant displays that enhance the building and contribute towards a very positive atmosphere. The school is a vibrant place to come to work and to learn on both sites with distinct differences in atmosphere and culture that suit and are appropriate for the key stages. Students spoken to across all key stages were enthusiastic about the split site and felt it suited their needs at different times in their development personally, socially and academically. Students are generally exuberant, confident and enthusiastic, while all adults involved in the school are caring, nurturing and motivated in a well-resourced and well organised learning environment. Many students do voluntary work in the charity shops and residential care homes as well as a nearby hospice. The school participates in the annual Cowley Road Carnival which celebrates diversity and LGBT issues. The parents of students are active in the life of the school and contribute to staff training, parent courses, transition projects as well as running an international day.

During my visit I was able to see the school at work and was able to experience the unique inclusive ethos and culture that is ingrained in its structure and is tangible to all who visit the school. Every child is valued for who they are. The vision for the school community is to be *'A Centre of Opportunity for the Person, the Community and the Future'*, where, as a

community of individuals they are committed to creating and using opportunities to their fullest extent, thereby ensuring that students, staff and members of the wider school community enjoy success and are equipped for the future. The school aims are further supported by their status as a National Teaching School; taking a lead role in the professional development of teachers and support staff and working with other schools to contribute to the raising of standards across the whole curriculum and to develop the facilities for the benefit of the school and of the local community.

The staff at all levels are very positive about the school and go the extra mile to ensure that the students' needs are met. There is an excellent quality of support, care and nurture that is continually evolving to further enhance provision at the school. All of the staff working in the school show their enthusiasm constantly, are extremely hard working, motivated and professional. They are committed to ensuring every success for the students in *their* school, where the school works hard to ensure every student is known and stretched to achieve their full potential. It was a privilege to assess such an exciting and caring school where relationships between the stakeholders, regardless of background, are positive and constructive. The school collectively works hard to encourage a '**Growth Mindset**' and is proud that in such a large school '**All members are known as individuals**', a sentiment that was endorsed numerous times by both staff and students over the two days. I was also impressed by the welcoming nature of the school, the friendliness of students and the dedication of staff, at all levels. The school is a happy place but is not complacent and continues to seek ways of improving both the quality and the range of its provision.

The school lives and breathes inclusion from the moment you walk through the door on both sites. All adults working in the school are happy to share their school and celebrate *their* vision for an inclusive and successful school. They are rightly proud of their students and of the work they do to promote excellence and care for *all*.

The school makes every effort to ensure that all students succeed, knowing and feeling that they matter. They provide outstanding care, guidance and support. A Deputy Headteacher has oversight of student experience and wellbeing and works with all members of the community on the various aspects of this including Student Welfare, Wellbeing, Progress & Development, Student Experience, External Agencies & Links, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Transition (Year 6 to Year 7), Oversight of Year Leaders and Pastoral Support Teams. The Assistant Headteacher in charge of Inclusion oversees SEND including links to Hearing Impaired and Communication & Interaction Bases, Oversight of High Attainers and of EAL, Alternative Curriculum, Transition (SEND), Inclusive L&T, Literacy & Numeracy, sparkling classrooms. As well as these senior roles, Inclusion is a priority for everyone and the performance of disadvantaged students is an appraisal target for all teaching staff. Senior leaders through their links with faculties ensure that inclusion is permanently on the agenda. Form Tutors play a key role and are co-ordinated by experienced Year Leaders who have a non-teaching Deputy. The school has a relentless focus on driving school improvement forward and on objectively evaluating their work on inclusion. Inclusion underpins their philosophy and approach, and is shared effectively through whole school meetings, briefings, school improvement plan, learning walks, through communication with parents, carers and pupils and in discussion with the governing body. The school is committed to meeting the needs, ambitions and aspirations of **ALL** pupils, staff and other members of the school learning community by training staff in-house and by investing in specialist staffing to fully facilitate access to the curriculum for all and to work with staff to ensure that they have the knowledge, skills, ability and capacity to support the inclusion agenda.

Governors and external partners spoke very highly of the school and felt that they went above and beyond what was normally expected to ensure successful outcomes for the students in their care. Parents for the most part feel very positive about the school and everything it does to support their children and feel that their voice is heard and communication is a two-way process and issues are dealt with swiftly and successfully, although as one would expect in a school of this size there are issues that take time to address.

The school is part of the River Learning Trust, a small and growing multi-academy trust with both primary and secondary schools and with a Free School opening in 2017 and a SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training Provider). Each school within the Trust has their own aims and vision that sit within the broader principles of the Trust. The key principles of the Trust are a commitment to excellence, learning for all, and respectful relationships and include a commitment to inclusion in all the schools and the SCITT. The Headteacher has recently been appointed as CEO of the MAT and the Head of School has been appointed as Headteacher.

The Trusts and the Headteacher's vision is supported by the Leadership team in the way they manage, leading from the front, establishing the vision by implementing school policy and innovation. There are clear leadership roles identified and everyone works hard to provide a learning environment that excites, stimulates and challenges students within a secure and caring community. A highly positive team approach pervades the whole school, where SEN support, pastoral care, student intervention together with excellent guidance and true inclusive practice combine to great effect. Morale throughout the school is exceptional for both staff and students, with staff clearly committed to ensure every possible success for the students entrusted to their care, academically, emotionally and socially. Having spent two days in the school discussing inclusion with a wide variety of stakeholders, the Cherwell *'team'* are rightfully proud of their outstanding achievements so far, but are committed and have the vision to ensure they continue to achieve outstanding outcomes or beyond for all who attend or work in the school. It has been a privilege to spend time in such an excellently inclusive school that consistently goes above and beyond what is expected in every area of school life.

The Cherwell School is a significantly larger than average, oversubscribed, 11-19 mixed comprehensive school with about 1850 students on roll, serving a wide-ranging community in North Oxford. It has a split site separated by a main road which has an underpass access between the sites. The Key Stage 3 students are based on the South Site whilst the Key Stage 4 and 5 students are based on the North Site. The school became a Converter Academy in April 2012, having been judged as Outstanding by Ofsted in January 2008. The school, unique in that it does not have a school uniform, is oversubscribed and admits a substantial number of external students in Y12. The school population is ethnically and socially diverse and has roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. It has a very large sixth form of approximately 600 students which attracts a significant number of external students. It is situated in the Summertown area of the city which is a vibrant community of shops restaurants and housing.

The percentage of girls is roughly in line with the national average but the percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average. The level of deprivation, indicated by the percentage of students entitled to free school meals, is lower than the national average. However, the percentage of students whose first language is

believed not to be English is nearly twice the national average. The number of students with special educational needs is lower than the national average.

School data suggests that students learn extremely well at this school. This is most evident in the national comparative data provided at the end of KS4 through Raise-Online, and through similar analysis at KS5. At KS4, for example, the overall Value Added score has been consistently well above the national average for each of the last three years. Data from this year's cohort suggests that this strong performance will be sustained. Results are good for all students and vulnerable students do better here than their counterparts at other schools locally and wider afield. The school was graded as Outstanding in their last inspection and are exempt from future inspections for the time being. Since the first IQM assessment the school has improved further whilst also becoming an academy, becoming an academy sponsor, a teaching school, a provider of support to other schools and a significant local teacher training provider. By continuing to provide excellent state education to a larger number of pupils in a larger number of schools there is the moral driver that by working collectively in a multi academy trust, the school can make more of a difference to more children.

The school's approach to Learning and Teaching is rooted in inclusive practice, and they firmly believe that quality teaching in the classroom is the best tool to ensure that provision is genuinely accessible and appropriate for all. Policy puts emphasis on the design of lessons, schemes and assessments which present all students with challenging materials and ideas. There is a particular emphasis on aspects such as the skilful use of modelling of tasks so that they become 'low access and high challenge'. Equally, there is a focus on the construction of excellent, clear explanations of core subject content, characterised by appropriate levels of focus, ensuring that students have the residual knowledge and literacies required to engage and understand. Guided by recent developments in cognitive science, the school believes that the mark of successful learning is that students become deeply absorbed in the material at hand; therefore, lessons and teaching is designed to help students to think deeply. Clarity of focus, modelling, explanations and quality feedback are all important in helping to achieve this.

Strengths of the school:-

- Outstanding care, nurture and support with a focus on inclusion and the needs of each student. All staff in the school work exceedingly hard to meet the needs of all the young people in their care. Primarily it is the welfare and achievement of the students that matter.
- Transition arrangements are excellent both for groups of students and individuals. Transition arrangements at each stage are very good including the transition from KS3 to KS4 and from KS4 to KS5. The primary liaison programme is extensive and is differentiated to ensure that vulnerable students are helped to settle happily into school life. For example, by using 'Summer School' for two weeks in the holidays to ensure students do not slip before they arrive in September and feel comfortable from day 1 in their new school.
- All of the students and the staff I spoke to greatly value the scope for individuality as expressed, for example, through the non-uniform policy of the school. They spoke of the encouragement they receive for the development of their skills and the focus to make them independent learners and explore their talents within the school as well as

outside. They were all extremely mature and able to engage in a discussion about their school experience articulately and eloquently.

- The school listens to students! Student Voice through the School, Year Councils and the Junior Leadership team (JLT) is valued and a real strength of the school. Students are extremely positive about the school and speak confidently about the help available and feel valued and were quite clear about this and confident that issues raised are addressed. They appreciate the efforts of the staff and they are proud of the school. Students are very happy with the range of opportunities and they participate enthusiastically.
- The Headteacher and his senior team, along with the Governing Body, provide strong leadership and promote a culture and ethos of inclusion which was evident throughout the assessment. The vision and ambition of the leadership team is sharply focused on securing the best possible outcomes for all students and it was evident during the assessment that this is the core of what the school does.
- The inclusion team is very well led and there is relentless focus on inclusion and the needs of each individual child, the structure in place for inclusion through The Emotional and Behaviour Support base, The Learning Support Bases, The 7* programme, HI resource bases the CIRB resource bases. As well as the School Counselling Service, a School Health Advisor on site each day and other support mechanisms (CAMHS) is a model of good practice that is outstanding.
- Governors have a clear focus on inclusion, know the school well and can challenge and support in equal measure. They know their strengths and weaknesses and are committed to improvement and becoming even more involved in the life of the school and developing their practice through the 'River Learning Trust' MAT.
- There are well planned curriculum opportunities that provide a full range of pathways, to ensure students are catered for with vocational opportunities available to support students as necessary enriching their life chances.
- Staff at all levels feel supported and included and feel valued and part of the success of the school, staff welfare is a high priority and as a consequence morale is justifiably high.
- Performance Management Structure and Line Management Structures are both supportive and challenging. Self-review is thorough and robust and accountability is high but is not oppressive.

I am of the opinion that the school continues to fully meet the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark. A few minor areas require development of which the school is aware. I recommend that the school be re-awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark and be reassessed in 3 years' time.

I have discussed the possibility of the school becoming a Centre for Excellence as I believe they meet all the criteria. The school is very well placed to support other schools in the local area. I believe that they are well placed to take on this role and to share the good practice they have developed in the school. Therefore, I also recommend that the school be awarded Centre

of Excellence status subject to the inclusion within its plans of the appropriate areas for development and the completion of the Centre of Excellence documentation. If the school chooses to pursue this status and it were to be awarded the school would be subject to annual review from this point forwards.

Assessor: Steve Gill

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:



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Joe McCann MBA NPQH
Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd

Element 1:- The Inclusion Values and Practice of the School

From the documentation provided and evidence gained prior and throughout the two days of the IQM assessment it is evident that the school provides excellent inclusive opportunities for students to thrive and make excellent progress across the whole school. The school is justifiably proud of their inclusive practices. Despite being such a big split site school, they take care to ensure that all members of the community are known as individuals. With detailed, well planned induction programmes to bespoke packages for individuals everyone is welcomed and included. They have high ambition for all students and expect them to participate and achieve in all aspects of school life. This was clearly seen as I toured the school and spoke to staff, students, parents and governors and in the discussions held over the two days of the assessment. Form Tutors play a key role and are co-ordinated by experienced Year Leaders who have a non-teaching Deputy Year Leader to support the work in each year group, as well as Key workers and learning mentors who work with Pupil Premium students through the Scholars' programme.

Philosophically and practically Cherwell views educational inclusion as being about equal opportunities, access, achievement, respect and well-being. Indeed, in seeking to retain IQM for the second time, the school is able to show how it is exceedingly supportive to all on roll and ensures that it is at the heart of the local community, including having strong partnerships with other local schools. The school is an outstanding school and aspires to be even better, where everyone is given the opportunity to succeed by developing their full potential. A school where challenge and a diverse curriculum, innovative approaches to learning and teaching, and excellent supportive pastoral care secures success for all. Every adult working in the school shares the responsibility to identify and remove barriers to learning for all students, through early identification of need and excellence in teaching and learning. The Cherwell School is a rich and diverse community. The onsite Autism (CIRB) and Hearing Impaired (HI) bases give added opportunities for inclusion.

Results are good or better for all students and vulnerable students do better here than their counterparts at other schools, locally and wider afield. Cherwell was graded as Outstanding in their last inspection and are exempt from future inspections for the time being. In the last few years since their first IQM assessment, the school has improved further whilst also becoming an academy, becoming an academy sponsor, a teaching school, a provider of support to other schools and a significant local teacher training provider.

A Deputy Headteacher is responsible for inclusive practice within school with a clear management structure in place. The school is committed to offering an inclusive curriculum to ensure the best possible progress for all students, including SEND students and those identified as more able and talented by empowering them to achieve success in the classroom and beyond making positive contributions, realising their dreams and living fulfilling lives. The inclusive ethos of the school is based on mutual respect and collaboration. This is encapsulated by providing a nurturing, supportive and safe learning environment in which pupils feel secure, and where self-esteem, confidence, integrity and respect can be promoted.

It is clear from the two days I spent at the school that everyone connected to it want each young person to succeed, knowing and feeling that they matter. Outstanding care, guidance and support is provided by staff at all levels to ensure that they feel safe and can grow as successful learners and caring citizens. Students are given numerous opportunities and,

manage and direct their own learning and develop their future careers and aspirations. This was made very clear when I spoke to a variety of students during the assessment. The school provides a safe and highly organised environment across both sites which have differing cultures and atmospheres to suit the developmental age and needs of the students which both stimulates and challenges them. Students are supported by highly skilled staff, areas of need are quickly identified and solutions put into practice. Their inclusive approach to teaching and learning ensures that good practice is demonstrated and shared with all stakeholders and partners.

Strengths:-

- A very clear excellent inclusive ethos, centred on access for all students at each Key Stage to achieve well and play a part in the local community. Every adult that works in the school at all levels is totally committed to inclusion in its broadest sense. Inclusion is at the forefront of planning and delivery of lessons and in the implementation of policy. There is an expectation that all teaching will challenge learners of all ages and abilities.
- The provision for SEN across the school from Year 7 to Year 13 is excellent, valuing each student as an individual. Students with additional needs also make very good progress, compared to pupils nationally. The use of Pupil Premium via the Scholars' Programme and the use of Learning Mentors to support the programme is very effective and targets support to raise attainment, close gaps as well as raise aspirations. The school's plans in this area are focussed and continue to be highly effective.
- SEND and Scholars have Raising Achievement Plans (RAPs) or Strategy sheets which outline barriers. As well as regular Multi Agency Meetings (MAM) to discuss individual student issues, strategies are put in place. Student profiles are in place for all students with SEND support as well as high level EAL learners.
- All students who need one have a keyworker. The Scholars (PP students) have access to and work with a learning mentor. Year 13 students receive specialist training as peer mentors to year 7 students. Sixth form students are trained to peer mentor younger students with autism in the CIRB.
- The tangible culture of praise and rewards devised in collaboration with students leads to motivated students who want to learn and achieve to the highest standards.
- Safeguarding and child protection have a high profile evidenced by the fact that there are *five* designated safeguarding staff, training for all adults in the school is an annual event rather than the usual three year cycle and safeguarding is a part of the termly staff meeting cycle. Consequently, it is extremely effective with the welfare of students being actively promoted. Students feel safe and are listened to.
- Transition across all key stages is excellent and a significant strength of the school. Detailed information is collected from primary schools through visits made by the pastoral staff and the SENCO and appropriate plans for support, where needed, are drawn up. The primary school students visit Cherwell several times and, for the most vulnerable, there is a two week summer school organised which helps make their

transition to the secondary school much smoother. Students who have performed below the national expectations are supported through the 7* programme.

- The school has an Inclusion team that is central to the work of the school, which effectively manages and organises the inclusive practice in the school. There is a highly skilled and dedicated staff team at all levels in the school. Support and Mentoring provided by staff to pupils and in particular by the inclusion team is outstanding. The inclusion team is very well led and there is relentless focus on inclusion and the needs of each individual child. The school's Inclusion unit, referred to as 'The Base' provides a secure environment for the school's alternative curriculum for KS3 students and facilitates work on issues of behaviour management which range from sessions on anger management to considering issues of self-esteem. Further support is available through, CIRB, School Counselling Service, HI Resource Base, mentoring which is a model of good practice that is excellent and is fully embedded in the school.
- Inclusive teaching practice is included in our whole school calendar of CPD. External expertise from SENSS, British Council (for EAL work) and OXSIT (Oxfordshire Inclusion team) have been utilised with both teaching staff and TAs. Ongoing external expertise from Physical disability service and ICT SENSS addresses individual training needs throughout the year.

Areas for development:-

- There are no areas for development other than those already identified by the school as '*Future Plans*' for this element.

Element 2 - The Learning Environment, Resources and ICT

The Cherwell School is on two sites separated by a main road with an underpass access to each site. The south side, as it is referred to by the school community, houses students in key stage three and the north side houses key stages four and five, although lessons for students can take place on either site occasionally. The large site has numerous buildings that have been adapted with thought and care to provide good facilities for the students and staff. In line with the accessibility policy the school has been adapted as appropriate over the years and to become more DDA compliant. A tour of each site conducted by students and learning walks with Senior Staff revealed good accommodation for learning on each site. I was impressed with the clean and well-kept classrooms and the range of displays in classrooms and on corridors, which as well as giving information about the range of activities, including extra-curricular, that the school was offering, included the celebration of students' work and achievements. There was very little sign of graffiti and the site was generally litter free. Students are taught in mixed ability classes and classrooms and corridors display a range of work. Students with additional needs have access to resources to support their learning. RAPs and strategy sheets ensure that staff members are clear about the strategies to use.

The Sixth Form Centre is a very large and well-resourced building to house the large numbers of students who choose Cherwell for their post 16 studies and is conducive to self-study and the students seemed to make good use of this excellent facility. The Libraries on both sites are also well resourced and effectively used by students.

Displays around the school are well maintained and regularly updated, and care has been taken to make spaces bright and airy within the limitations of the old buildings. Care is taken to ensure that regular maintenance and thoughtful use of displays keeps spaces fresh and user friendly. This was evident during my tour of the school, on learning walks on both sites and in numerous conversations with students who are proud of their school. The school actively promotes a culture of learning and this is demonstrated through the vibrant displays around the school. In the lessons that I observed during both learning walks I found that students were confident in discussing their ideas and asking questions to ensure that their learning was secure. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school was excellent with students having a respect for each other and the environment in which they work. The relationship between staff and students is also excellent.

In terms of ICT, and supporting resources, all classrooms have up to date functioning and well-used whiteboards as well as access to computers and laptops. Laptops are monitored with a sign in and out system in central areas on each site. TAs offer support for other resources needed in classrooms such as writing slopes/steps etc. In rooms where students have profound hearing loss, sound systems are installed and microphones used throughout teaching. All assemblies use microphones to aid hearing for everyone. Some students also have specialist ICT support facilitated by ICT SENSS with relevant training given to use programmes to support dyslexia and physical disability need. Translation for EAL is aided by the school's EAL advocate as well as interpreters. EAL learners also use digital dictionaries, where appropriate, and sign language is facilitated by specialist staff from the HI base.

Celebrations of achievement are an important part of the school ethos and there are a number of events designed to celebrate success and effort. The regular termly school newsletter is full

of positive images of inclusive practice and displays and photographs around the school celebrate all aspects of the school and promotes the large number of extra-curricular activities, visits and events that are part of life at Cherwell. The excellent website is easily accessed and navigated allowing students, staff, parents and the local community to see a wealth of information about the school, what has happened, what is happening and what is going to happen in the future, communication is to the fore in the school.

Strengths:-

- The buildings and learning environment has been improved and developed to provide enhanced teaching accommodation, with better access to facilities and easier circulation through the school on both sites.
- All classrooms are well equipped with IWB and a range of resources.
- Achievements and contributions are celebrated throughout the building, via use of displays, student work that all enhance the learning environment and promote inclusion, on corridor walls and also in classrooms that show recent learning that has taken place.
- The school is very welcoming and its inclusive ethos is apparent immediately a visitor enters reception on both the south and north sites particularly on the south site where KS3 students have a support desk that is manned throughout the day.
- There is an outstanding Inclusion team in the school that provides outstanding care, nurture and support across the school, in a carefully considered, safe and nurturing environment. Everyone involved in inclusion at the school at all levels should be highly commended for their relentless focus on the needs of individual students and groups of students. This is evident in the support that students have access to through a variety of differing provision. The school also engages extremely successfully and works closely with numerous external agencies to support their pupils.
- Appropriate learning environments in different areas have been created to offer nurture and support for vulnerable students, such as CIRB, and the HI resource base.
- There is a clear, well implemented access plan that has been updated recently to accommodate individuals with disabilities and provides access to different parts of both buildings.
- Excellent use of both indoor and outdoor space to support pupils' learning and that includes the use of local, community facilities and many and varied after school clubs that a large number of students attend in some cases run by parents.

Areas for development:-

- There are no areas for development other than those already identified by the school as '*Future Plans*' for this element.

Element 3 - Learner Attitudes, Values and Personal Development

Students spoken to during the assessment from all key stages, either individually or in groups, or during the learning walks in classrooms spoke very highly of their school and the care and attention they get from the adults in the school. They appreciated the scope for individuality they are given, one example which is readily apparent is through the non-uniform policy of the school. Students were appreciative of the fact that whatever their age they are given the option to be seen as individuals and express themselves in a variety of different ways and have their own identities. They spoke of the encouragement they receive for the development of their skills and talents within the school as well as outside. Students have numerous opportunities to develop their leadership skills through involvement in the Year and school councils, through the Junior Leadership team, in numerous focus group discussions and as acting as mentors.

There are clear policies on behaviour and bullying that are understood by all and as a matter of course both Governors and students contribute to the writing of these policies. Incidents of bullying are low, including racist and homophobic bullying. The students I met had a very clear understanding of the school policies on behaviour, anti-bullying, and inclusion. They knew what to do in different situations and what the consequences of misbehaviour are. Relationships between students, teachers and support staff are very positive and the students really value and appreciate all that is done with them and for them. Students are clearly seen as individuals and they have close relationships with staff, TAs and other support staff. The school supports inclusion by promoting positive behaviour in all classrooms and ensures that pupils achieve because they feel happy and safe. The school is very clear that all pupils have the right to feel happy and secure when they are at the school and they should not be bullied or frightened by others. The ethos is to treat others how they would like to be treated themselves. As a Stonewall Champion school they have worked with Sir Ian McKellan to eradicate homophobic language and attitudes and this work is ongoing and part of the fabric of the school.

During the assessment, at lessons, at break-times and at lunch, students were engaged, responsive and friendly where pupils were clearly at ease with one another and were very respectful and cooperative to both their peers and classmates. This reinforces the view of the school's IQM documentation that bullying is extremely rare in the school. All students show courteous and considerate attitudes to staff, visitors and each other. Relationships between students and staff are good and behaviour in school is good. The behaviour policy is known by all and is consistently applied. There are very few fixed term exclusions and sanctions are far outweighed by rewards.

The AHT for Inclusion and the SEND support team are easily accessible and share resources and strategies. The High Attainers co-ordinator makes sure these students are stretched and challenged. Briefings on the needs of students are held regularly on INSET days and are well attended and appreciated by teaching and support staff.

Cherwell students are active in the community taking part in a range of charity and fundraising activities as well as visiting residents at local retirement homes. There is a comprehensive PSHCE programme and assemblies and tutorials focus on developing Values and Character as well as social skills, and British values. Every opportunity is taken to celebrate diversity. Assemblies, Parent evenings, progress reviews and transition events are

evident on the school calendar and support and strengthen partnerships between staff and students and home.

Students are aware that support is available through the Inclusion team for social, emotional, behavioural and mental health wellbeing. Year Leaders, the non-teaching Deputy Year Leaders and Learning Mentors understand the importance of early intervention and student needs are constantly identified and referrals are made for assessment and they are available to work as and when necessary with their students, while supporting each other. There is a culture of respect within school and this is reinforced through the school aims and school policies.

Strengths: -

- Students are extremely positive about the school. They appreciate the ethos of inclusion. They are friendly and open and proud to welcome visitors. They have a strong commitment to fairness and helping others.
- As a result of the care and guidance offered, students are able to overcome significant difficulties when they occur and enjoy school life. Support is fully integrated and offers “*wrap around care*” of the highest order. The care and nurture of students is outstanding. Adults working in the school at all levels provide an emotionally literate environment with communication high on the agenda. The individual needs of students are the primary concern of all staff.
- There is an extensive and wide variety of curriculum enrichment opportunities that are offered to students and as such enrichment activities and other special events give a clear focus on inclusion. Over 70% of students in the school regularly participate in activities. Many others take part in out of school clubs and activities.
- Students are very clear that Bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly and effectively. They know who to see for support and parents feel their children are safe in the school.
- Excellent relationships between staff and students are pervasive and secure relationships with teachers ensure that they are happy to ask for help.
- Achievement is appreciated and celebrated with students involved in reviewing their own performance.
- The behaviour and attitude of pupils is extremely positive and they are proud of their school. Sanctions are clear and consistent and are effective as a result of the behaviour for learning policy and the excellent relationships that exist throughout the school.
- The school listens to students, staff and parents. Student Voice is valued. Students are very positive about the school and speak confidently about the help available. They appreciate the efforts of the staff and they are proud of the school. Students are very happy with the range of opportunities and they participate enthusiastically.
- An excellent and very comprehensive transition program from Y6-Y7, Y9-Y10 and Yr. 11-12 which includes activities for parents and students as well as information sharing by professionals including the AHT Inclusion. The school PTA is also actively involved in

transition arrangements.

- Many of the students are volunteers within the school community and in the local community as well. They are well behaved, respond quickly to community projects and raise money for charities further afield. Older students regularly volunteer to help mentor the younger students both in and out of lessons.

Areas for development:-

- There are no areas for development other than those already identified by the school as '**Future Plans**' for this element.

Element 4:- Learner Progress and the Impact on Learning

As a high achieving school where 81% of students gained 5A*CEM in 2015 and 75% of PP students gained A*C maths, data suggests that students learn extremely well at this school. This is most evident in the national comparative data provided at the end of KS4 through Raise-Online, and through similar analysis at KS5. At KS4, for example, the overall Value Added score has been consistently well above the national average for each of the last three years. Data from this year's cohort suggests that this strong performance will be sustained. Teachers are confident in using data to help them plan lessons that meet the needs of individuals. Time and effort is put into the training and development of teachers to encourage them to use a wide variety of teaching and learning approaches in the classroom. The development of individual styles and approaches is encouraged, whilst paying attention to key elements of practice. Data is carefully analysed and information is passed to both Pastoral and Faculty Leads to ensure that individual students have strategies and interventions in place to ensure progress.

Learning plans have an emphasis on differentiation and being responsive to learners' developments, as evidenced through assessments. Different learning needs are identified and acted upon particularly for SEN students and differentiation is one of the main priorities for the school. This was clearly seen during a tour of the school and in meetings with the DHT responsible for Teaching and Learning and the work that has taken place to ensure staff understand differentiation and can use it effectively. The quality of feedback in books along with student responses show that students are aware of, and can engage with, their targets for learning and helps them in making rapid progress. The students are expected to respond to targets set and think about next steps to improve. This puts them in control of their learning and able to verbalise how to move forward. Work sampling processes show that, in the majority of cases, students take robust action on the basis of the feedback they receive from their teachers.

Strengths:-

- This is a highly evaluative school, with regular reflection and consideration of next steps in all aspects of their work which underpins their outstanding success over a long period of time.
- There are very thorough systems for assessment, very effective use of pupil progress data and well developed systems for sharing pupil progress data with staff and parents and carers.
- Students make good progress in relation to individual targets. Progress is rigorously monitored and individual plans are fine tuned to ensure success. A culture of praise leads to students being more motivated with interventions targeted effectively to ensure that targets are not just met but in some cases exceeded.
- Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally are closing, as are the gaps between boys' and girls' performance.
- Pupil Premium and Catch-up Premium funding is directed very carefully through the 'Scholars Programme' to ensure disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress and

gaps are closing. This is a real strength of the school and an excellent programme that supports inclusion at its best.

- All adults who work in the school and those involved in the Inclusion team in particular, are passionate about the work they do to support students and it is extremely effective. They should be commended for the excellent work that they do in supporting students. Adults working in the school are exceptionally well trained and are able to use a vast range of strategies to engage pupils in their learning.
- Outstanding practice in transition work at all points ensures that individual needs are identified early and intervention is effective.

Areas for development:-

- There are no areas for development other than those already identified by the school as '*Future Plans*' for this element.

Element 5 - Learning and Teaching (monitoring)

The school's approach to Learning and Teaching is rooted in inclusive practice, and they firmly believe that quality teaching in the classroom is the best tool to ensure that their provision is genuinely accessible and appropriate for all. The Teaching and Learning policy puts emphasis on the design of lessons, schemes and assessments which present all students with challenging materials and ideas. There is a particular emphasis on aspects such as the skilful use of modelling of tasks so that they become *'low access and high challenge'*. Equally, there is a focus on the construction of excellent, clear explanations of core subject content, characterised by appropriate levels of focus, ensuring that students have the residual knowledge and literacies required to engage and understand. Guided by recent developments in cognitive science, the school believe that the mark of successful learning is that students become deeply absorbed in the material at hand; therefore, lessons and teaching is designed to help students to think deeply. Clarity of focus, modelling, explanations and quality feedback are all important in helping the school to achieve this.

The careful monitoring and evaluation of what is provided for the students also adds to the confidence of parents and carers that their child is being given the very best that is available. Outstanding relationships between staff and students further gives confidence and pride to the achievements that are made. This is evident in the provision provided by the school such as the many and varied extra-curricular opportunities. There are also very well defined staffing structures with support staff and other professionals working alongside teaching staff. The headteacher and senior staff carefully monitor all aspects of the school day and adapt appropriately if things need changing. Systems for school management are also highly effective for the orderly running of the school and the day-to-day routines are well established. Communication between staff is very good and effective teamwork is clearly evident. Teachers, support and other staff, play a very important role in developing students' independent skills and employ a range of strategies to make sure that each individual's need is effectively met. Evidence observed from a tour of and learning walks around the school during the assessment and discussions with students clearly highlighted the positive way that students interacted with one another and with staff.

Self-evaluation processes throughout the school are rigorous. The Headteacher and SLT take responsibility for the School Improvement Plan and Self Evaluation Form and ensure that this is based on a robust self-review programme that provides strong evidence for future planning. SLT, teachers and Governors are familiar with the self-review systems and understand the importance for the school to know itself well. Accountability structures are in place and those members of SLT and middle leaders I spoke to felt they were challenging but also supportive.

Performance management processes are robust and clear; whole school, individual targets and priorities are agreed. CPD is well funded and resourced in terms of time. INSET days are also well-planned and good quality induction and training is delivered. Teachers and support staff spoken to say that the training opportunities provided are good. Training needs are identified and supported. The senior staff is strongly focussed on continuing the excellence in teaching for students. They maintain high expectations of both staff and students and the emphasis on outstanding teaching continues to ensure that achievement is outstanding. The quality of teaching is evaluated over time through Work Scrutiny, Learning Walks, Student Voice and Lesson Observations.

Students are set ambitious targets and they are carefully tracked throughout their time at school. Teachers are provided with clear data about the needs of individual students, their abilities, special needs and any other barriers to their learning, and they know what the expectations are in terms of progress. They understand their responsibilities under the new SEN Code of Practice and are fully aware of the need to provide excellent teaching and to provide appropriate learning opportunities for SEN students as well as for the more able students. They are fully supported by the pastoral team, who give advice and guidance on managing the learning for many SEND students. The school is very clear that it is important that teachers differentiate appropriately for more able students as well as those who are less able. The many staff at all levels I met during my visit confirmed that morale in the school is excellent and there is no culture of blame. Instead there is a collaborative and co-operative approach led by the headteacher who has a clear focus about what needs to be done and how to get there supported by an excellent Senior Team.

Strengths:-

- There is an effective package of strategies to keep on improve learning and teaching. It is targeted and focuses on key areas that are specific to the school. There is a real drive to ensure that teaching remains outstanding. Alongside support put in place using a variety of different strategies to ensure this happens. This is backed by a rigorous system monitoring the quality of teaching through, Work Scrutiny, Learning Walks, Student Voice and Observations. The outcomes from these evaluations are then used to assess the quality of teaching over time.
- Planning is rigorous and well-focused on students of all abilities through differentiated tasks that provide stretch and challenge. Students are focussed towards not just meeting but exceeding their targets.
- There is a highly organised approach to teaching and learning with a very skilled and adaptable staff group, that works tirelessly to improve their students' potential and life chances while at the same time being supportive of each other in their drive to maintain excellence.
- Students are able to access in-class support and one to one support that is well planned and effective. Alongside this there is a variety of curriculum enhancement and enrichment activities, which also ensure all students have the opportunity to improve and develop.
- Self-evaluation and self-review is excellent, the school knows itself very well and where it is going in the short, medium and long term.
- Student welfare is both a priority and is an outstanding strength of the school ensuring everyone feels safe and nurtured and working to achieve their full potential in a happy environment.

Areas for development:-

- There are no areas for development other than those already identified by the school as 'Future Plans' for this element.

Element 6:- Parents, Carers and Guardians

PCE, Information Evenings, Welcome events and social activities are well attended by parents. Many volunteer to run clubs and activities as well as fundraising events. The PTA is proactive in improving the school for example their current project is the Garden Rooms' project which aims to improve the school environment.

A group of parents have been trained to facilitate the Parentalk course and over 80 parents have signed up to take part. Parents contribute to the transition process and to the training of the school's SCITT associates. Parents arrange a Winter Festival and International Day events.

All Annual Reviews include parental contributions and parents are invited into school to discuss issues relating to their child's attendance, progress or behaviour. Parents and carers I spoke to generally have confidence in the school and they are appreciative of the support given. This is evidenced in the bi-annual Keele survey which confirms views on several areas of school life.

Communication between the school and parents/carers is generally good. Parents feel welcome when they visit the school and they receive appropriate phone calls and emails to inform them about their child's progress or behaviour and to celebrate their achievements. Parents say they get good feedback about the progress their child is making through regular academic reports. The easily accessible and navigable school website is regularly updated with relevant information which is accessible by parents/carers/guardians, including the Ofsted 'parental view' questionnaire. All parents/carers/guardians are notified of parents' evenings and option evenings and receive a termly school newsletter and student progress reports.

Bullying occurs rarely but is always dealt with quickly and efficiently. Conversations with students and parents bore this out and parents especially praised the swift way in which incidents of bullying are now dealt with. Students were proud of what they had achieved and felt they were taught very well. They said no adult working in the school tolerates bullying or rudeness and it is dealt with swiftly. Students were very vocal about the support they could expect if there were issues and they knew who to see for support. Parents said the school looks after their children socially, emotionally and academically. Parents told me they are consulted about what happens in the school and particularly regarding their own children. Relationships are for the most part excellent. Parents said the school is flexible and adapts to the needs of the child rather than the other way around.

Strengths:-

- Parents for the most part feel very positive about the school and everything it does to support their children and feel that their voice is heard and communication is a two way process and issues are dealt with swiftly and successfully.
- Parents expressed their appreciation for the support the school offers them. The Inclusion team is seen as a source of strength and help for families when needed.
- Concerns are dealt with quickly by staff. Both students and parents know who to speak to and said that incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Fixed term exclusions are very rare and permanent exclusions are exceedingly rare.

- Students and parents feel that staff are approachable and know families and the community very well.
- The school makes every effort to include parents in all aspects of school life and parents feel assured that they are valued and appreciated.
- Each student with a particular need has a key worker in the school that knows the student very well and has oversight of all the provision for that student.

Areas for development:-

- To increase the depth and scope of parental voice by using feedback from parental surveys and publishing the data to parents and others in a user friendly format.
- Exploring the use of Parent View or a similar style of survey at key points of the year.
- Investigate whether or not the 'Leading Parent Partnership Award' (LPPA) would be a way of validating the work done with parents.
- Consider setting up a Parent Forum.

Element 7:- Governing Body and Management:- External Accountability/Support

The school is part of the River Learning Trust, a small and growing multi-academy trust with both primary and secondary schools and a Free School that is opening in 2017, as well as a SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training Provider). Each school within the Trust has their own aims and vision that sit within the broader principles of the Trust. The key principles of the Trust are a commitment to excellence, learning for all, and respectful relationships and include a commitment to inclusion in all the schools and the SCITT. Each school within the Trust then has a Local Governing Body with a high degree of delegated responsibility with the Local Governing Bodies being accountable to the Trust Board; the work of the Local Governing Body and the committees is scrutinised by the Trust Board. The Trust also supports the training and development of Governors across the Trust.

The school's Local Governing Body is very active in presenting both support and challenge to the running of the school. As well as the Full Governing Body, there are two sub-committees. The Resources Committee which focuses on staffing, resources, premises, health and safety and finance and the Student Impact Committee which has a wellbeing, achievement, safeguarding and inclusion focus. Individual Governors have a special focus on Safeguarding, Pupil Premium, SEND and LAC students.

The work of the Governors is supplemented by external peer reviews of the school conducted by external school leaders. Recent peer reviews focussed on the Sixth Form and also on the outcomes and experience of Pupil Premium students. The LGB also has regular training input at its meetings, for example safeguarding and school data such as RAISE-online. Other recent focus areas for Governors includes the 2014 School Development and Improvement Plan, improving communication with stakeholders concerning the role and work of Governors supporting and challenging the school to develop policies, procedures and practice to ensure high performance for the school is sustained and sustainable. In terms of Student Impact the focus has been to support and challenge the school in developing appropriate CEIAG across the school and developing the changes required to the curriculum at each key stage. While in terms of Resources the focus has been to support and challenge the school in developing appropriate strategies to improve staff wellbeing and developing and managing the master planning (premises) project.

During my visit to the school I was able to meet the Send and Inclusion Governor, the LAC Governor and a teacher Governor. It was also clear from the discussions with three members of the governing body that governors were very passionate about the school and some have had very long-term commitments to it. They also expressed a clear understanding and knowledge of what the school is trying to achieve, and specifically within an inclusive ideology. Indeed, they are very clear in their role as a '*critical friend*,' and play an active role in determining the long-term direction and ethos of the school. They are committed to becoming even more knowledgeable about all aspects of the school and participate in in-house training courses and external training to this end. Whenever possible they take part in school activities and events.

Governors have a clear focus on inclusion, know the school well and can challenge and support in equal measure. They know their strengths and weaknesses and are committed to improvement and becoming even more involved in the life of the school.

During the two day assessment everyone I spoke to was extremely enthusiastic and motivated. There is a unity of purpose to everyone involved in the school, including SLT and Governors. Everyone is determined to ensure that teaching remains excellent and outcomes for students are maintained and improved even further. Performance management is rigorous and consistent and linked to the school improvement plan for both teaching and non-teaching staff. Senior leaders ensure that all improvement actions are born out of thorough self-evaluation. Learning walks are undertaken throughout the year to share good practice and as a means of raising standards further.

Strengths:-

- Governors work closely with SLT and provide challenge and support; they know the school very well. Their commitment to inclusion is a real strength. They are committed to the Inclusion ethos of the school.
- There is a very strong leadership team which has the interests of pupil progress and safety at the centre.
- The governors feel able to support the school and are capable of challenge and being a 'critical friend', when necessary and appropriate. They are fully supportive of the school's continuing drive to maintain excellent standards and improve further. They support high quality monitoring, understand school data and support the Headteacher and SLT in the inclusion of all students, parents and families in their school community.
- They are skilled and experienced and they serve the school very well.
- The identified governor for SEND and Inclusion is fully involved with the Inclusion team and is very knowledgeable and up to date on the SEN reforms and the inclusion agenda.
- The quality of Leadership and Management continues to drive improvement. The Headteacher and Senior Leadership team, supported by Leaders at all levels have a very clear vision for inclusion and how to move to outstanding and beyond. Leadership at all levels is exceedingly positive and optimistic and spills out to the whole school community. This is clearly seen in the way the school works with all its partners to ensure that their students have access to the best opportunities no matter their starting point.
- There is a highly supportive and inclusive ideology which permeates the whole school.

Areas for development:-

- Continue to develop actions identified by the school as 'Future Plans' for this element.
- Consider engaging in and working towards completion of the Governor Quality Mark if appropriate.

Element 8:- The School in the Community

The Cherwell School is very popular and oversubscribed. It is situated in the Summertown area of the city which is a vibrant community of shops, restaurants and housing. Many of the school's students participate in voluntary work in the charity shops and residential care homes as well as a nearby hospice. They take part in the annual Cowley Road Carnival which celebrates diversity and LGBT issues. The parents of students are active in the life of the school and contribute to staff training, parent courses, transition projects as well as running an international day. The school works with a range of businesses and organises an annual Careers Convention with seventy plus contributors to raise awareness and aspirations of the young people. The school also enjoys good links with the local FE College and the university.

The school tries very hard to prepare all students to compete in their community while making a positive and sustained contribution as members of a local community and wider society. The importance of preparing young people for participation in society as informed citizens, empowered to make changes concerning the issues that affect them and those around them is seen as of paramount importance. Alongside this is the development of personal and professional skills, characteristics and attributes as an integral part of the school's curriculum, to ensure students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment with training.

The school fosters a willingness to participate in a variety of social settings such as volunteering and cooperating with others and fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty, encouraging its students to participate in a wide variety of opportunities within the local community and beyond.

The school uses the prospectus, website and relevant literature to promote its philosophy and good practice. The website is both quite comprehensive, informative and easily navigable. It gives a picture of the day to day life of the school and includes elements that reflect the promotion of cultural diversity and equality. It is clear from speaking to staff, governors, parents and students that the school is part of the local community. It is exceedingly popular with the local community and always oversubscribed. It produces a newsletter on a termly basis and this is also available on the website. The PTA gives parents, carers and guardians the opportunity to have an input into school life. Expertise and resources are shared to advantage students and multi-agency working is part and parcel of the school's inclusion agenda. Furthermore, there are links with local and wider clubs and organisations. The school makes best use of all available resources if they can help them support students and families. It is clear from speaking to staff, governors, students and parents that the school is very much a community school.

Strengths:-

- The school sees the community as an important partner in the education of the students and makes good use of its many links to enhance the curriculum and support particular groups of students.
- The school is committed to building stronger links with the surrounding community and is supportive and respects the differences in terms of people living in the community.

- Primary school partnership work and liaison are excellent as is transition at all stages.
- Students are actively involved in enrichment activities that lead to a tangible culture of community participation.
- Students participate in a range of activities within the school and through a wide variety of visits and trips.
- There is a range of community links and a programme of events that involve the local community, the school continues to work hard to improve these links further.
- The school listens to the local community and consults on relevant issues, ensuring good relationships are maintained. It regularly takes part in local competitive sporting matches, tournaments and other community activities. Students have a good understanding of where they and the school fit into the local and wider community, they have numerous opportunities to learn about other countries, cultures and faiths.
- The staff fully understand and provide for the need to prepare pupils for life beyond school and being part of the local community.
- The staff and pupils raise funds for local causes and support charities through fundraising activities throughout the year.

Areas for development:-

- Continue to develop actions identified by the school as '*Future Plans*' for this element.
- Continue to enhance the school's reputation in the local community by showcasing student abilities using local media, social media, online newspapers and explore other areas to 'market' what the school does so well.