

Clifton: A Community Arts School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106947
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	356055
Inspection dates	29–30 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike McLachlan

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sandra Tills
Headteacher	Mr Patrick Daley
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 41 lessons and 39 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, including a parent governor, staff and, by telephone, with the school's National Challenge Adviser. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development and raising attainment plans, a range of school policies and other documents, minutes of governing body meetings, the National Challenge Adviser monitoring reports and the students' questionnaires. They also scrutinised the questionnaires returned from 112 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The evidence provided by the school to show that attainment and progress is improving for current students in Years 10 and 11 and across Key Stage 3.
- The impact of attendance and behaviour on students' attainment and progress and the ways in which the school is involving all students and parents and carers in these matters.
- The teaching and learning in lessons to see if it has improved sufficiently since the last inspection.
- The impact of the changes made to the curriculum and the care and guidance systems in order to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student population.
- The strategies the school's leaders have used to improve examination results rapidly to see if these are sustainable and firmly in place.

Information about the school

The school is a larger-than-average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students from minority-ethnic backgrounds is above average and has increased since the last inspection. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is above average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school is a specialist College in Performing Arts. The school has gained the Arts Mark Gold Award, the Sports England Sport Mark and the Warwick Enterprise award and is awaiting the confirmation of the Healthy School status having met the criteria successfully.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Clifton provides a satisfactory education for its students. The school has improved in a number of key areas since the last inspection, particularly in leadership, the curriculum and in providing good care, guidance and support for the increasingly diverse school community. Attainment remains below the national average, particularly in English and mathematics, although this represented good progress for the 2010 cohort given attainment on entry to the school is low. Achievement and enjoyment is satisfactory for all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and students from the minority-ethnic groups represented in the school. Although examination results are improving rapidly, students' learning and progress remains satisfactory as many are too dependent on direction from the teacher, lack independent learning skills and sometimes the resilience to tackle challenging work. Students feel safe. The school is a harmonious community, a real strength given the rich and growing diversity of its population. Attendance is now just broadly average as the school has worked hard to bring about improvements. However, there remains a core of students and their parents and carers who do not support or value this work fully. Behaviour is satisfactory overall but there is a small minority whose attitude towards learning limits their progress.

Teaching overall is satisfactory and improving. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and teaching is particularly good in the specialist subjects. Students say they enjoy lessons which are practical and involve solving problems. Lessons are usually well organised and ambitious targets are set. However, not all groups, particularly the most able, are working at an appropriate level throughout their lessons. In addition, there is not always sufficient time set aside for students to work independently. The good curriculum has been modified well to meet individual needs in Years 10 and 11 and is being developed to support a wider range of learning skills through the enrichment and themed programmes in Years 7 to 9. Students say they value these opportunities. Care, guidance and support systems have been strengthened by the school's extensive work with a wide range of agencies and through its internal support for vulnerable students, which ensure all feel safe and valued. Parents and carers are very confident in the support their children receive.

Leadership is good. The headteacher provides strong direction and with good support from his senior team and middle managers has raised expectations. This work is beginning to bear fruit with the best examination results to-date last year. A robust response, through the school's work as part of the National Challenge and the excellent work through the 'Clifton Learning Community' with local primary schools and children's centres, has established strong and sustainable systems to secure the gains made. The school has responded well to issues raised during the last inspection. It has rigorous and accurate self-evaluation systems and has rightly identified that further work is needed to secure improvements in teaching and in learning. Therefore, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Close the gap between the school's results and the national average, particularly in English and mathematics by:
 - increasing the number of students who achieve at the higher grades of A* to C
 - increasing the proportion of students who make good progress across all grades to improve the average point score for each subject.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - sharing more widely the best practice seen, for example, in the school's specialist subjects and themed curriculum
 - ensuring lessons are planned to develop more independent learning skills, to stretch the more able throughout the lesson and to develop students' resilience to keep going when tackling more extended writing or other work
 - ensuring work is set in more practical and challenging contexts as well as to meet examination requirements.
- Develop the work with students, parent and carers to raise further their confidence and aspirations by:
 - securing a better understanding of the importance of attending school regularly
 - ensuring students are able to assess for themselves how well their behaviour is supporting their learning in lessons.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Overall learning seen in lessons was satisfactory although there were examples of good learning seen, for example, in the school's specialism of performing arts. In the main, students show a satisfactory approach to work in lessons, responding to the teacher's direction and keeping on task when prompted. Their capacity to take responsibility for their own learning and work independently for lengthy periods without direction is not developed well. Where learning is good, activities have a real purpose in solving problems rather than just practising the skills needed to answer examination questions. In the 2010 GCSE examinations, results improved significantly on the previous year's, particularly at five A* to C and for five A* to C including English and mathematics, which was above the national threshold set for that year. All students left with at least one qualification. While students' overall attainment was below the national average this represented good progress for the vast majority of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups, given their overall low attainment on entry, particularly in literacy and mathematical skills. Attainment in English and mathematics is rising particularly at the GCSE grade C/D boundary; however, the average point scores in these subjects are significantly below the national average so further work is needed to improve rates of progress to ensure students achieve the best grades possible at all levels.

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Students say they feel very safe in school and, while recognising there are some whose behaviour is challenging, they feel confident that the school deals effectively with any issues of bullying or racial prejudice. This view is supported by a very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire. Attendance and behaviour are satisfactory although a number of students and their parents and carers do not appreciate fully how the lack of engagement reduces the effectiveness of their learning. Students have a good awareness of why they should adopt healthy lifestyles and the take up of physical activity during and after school is high. Their contribution to school life is strong. A particularly good example is the work of the 'Learning Leaders', a substantial group of students who teach their peers literacy and other skills in form and lesson time. Work-place skills are satisfactory. The school ensures a high proportion of students leave with at least functional qualifications in English and mathematics and well-developed information and communication technology skills. The school's performing arts programmes and the rich diversity of school community contributes strongly to the good development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Overall, teaching and the use of assessment to promote learning is satisfactory. A good focus on professional development is leading to a growing proportion of good teaching as seen, for example, in the school's specialist subjects. The school has rightly targeted

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raising examination outcomes; consequently, there has been a strong focus on developing skills needed to answer examination questions. However, opportunities for more extended and independent work are not as well developed. In some lessons, work set is not sufficiently practical so students lose interest and some students lack confidence and the resilience to work for prolonged periods without direction. Relatively weak literacy skills limit many students' capacity to write at length. Work is not always set to stretch the more-able students throughout the lessons, so they often complete the work set for the majority before moving on to their higher-level tasks. There are some good examples where teacher and student peer assessment is used to promote learning well, particularly in the specialist subjects.

The school's good curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is planned carefully to meet the needs of the wide range of students. The thematic curriculum seen in the lower school is well supported by the school's specialist subjects so there is a growing sense of engagement and motivation particularly where the lessons are practical and have a sense of purpose. There is a good range of examination subjects to meet individual needs and this has contributed strongly to the good progress seen in the 2010 examinations. Students speak highly of the range of opportunities available outside of the curriculum and value these activities; consequently, take up is high. Given the wide diversity of students' language backgrounds and their weak literacy skills on entry, there is a good focus on the development of literacy skills across the curriculum including the excellent use of students teaching these skills to other students in form time.

Care, guidance and support is good, an improvement since the last inspection. There is an extensive range of support for an increasingly broad range of needs, particularly in relation to students from a widening range of minority ethnic groups and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These students feel well supported by the school, particularly through support staff in lessons, the 'ACE' staff and support programmes and the 'safe haven' facility. The 'Get Sorted' after school club, which enables students to raise and resolve particular personal issues, is valued highly. Strong links with a wide range of multi-agency support enables the school to respond well to these diverse needs. Safeguarding is a high priority and the school employs two full time child protection staff to ensure vulnerable students receive good support. These strong and well targeted systems have enabled the school to drive up academic performance and to improve attendance. Almost all students, despite the significant challenges for some, move on to further education, employment or training.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership at all levels under the strong and ambitious direction of the headteacher is good and all share the vision that the school can improve further. Governance is satisfactory. Members of the governing body deliver their statutory duties well and there is a strong commitment to a rigorous training programme for improvement. Engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory as there are some who are not committed fully to supporting good attendance. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is satisfactory as attainment is still low despite the good work to support the growing culturally diverse school population. The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures is good. The school meets statutory requirements, follows the national guidance well and ensures all staff are regularly trained. The school satisfactorily promotes community cohesion and this is improving as the experiences of the diverse community are used more effectively to strengthen the school's curriculum. Given the current outcomes the school provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A smaller-than-average number of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The large majority of parents and carers were satisfied with what the school provides for their children. A very large majority felt their children were safe and cared for well. A small minority raised concerns over behaviour and a very small number wrote to say they were concerned but satisfied by the way the school dealt with these issues in relation to their own children. A small proportion was concerned that they did not get enough support to help their children.

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Inspectors found that behaviour was satisfactory and that the school dealt effectively with bullying. They raised concerns over the attendance of some students and identified the need for the school to work more closely with parents and carers to help them encourage their children to attend and achieve well in school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Clifton: A Community Arts 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 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1159 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	30	65	58	10	9	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	35	31	71	63	4	4	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	38	56	50	7	6	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	42	55	49	10	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	30	70	63	8	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	28	61	54	15	13	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	21	71	63	12	11	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	35	31	69	62	5	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	26	67	60	13	12	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	29	55	49	13	12	9	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	19	72	64	13	12	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	29	26	70	63	8	7	5	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	35	62	55	6	5	3	3

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



1 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Clifton: A Community Arts School, Rotherham, S65 2SN

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for the way you greeted us during the recent inspection, and particularly those of you who we met in our discussions and in lessons. We think your school is satisfactory and improving. The leadership, your curriculum and the way you are cared for and supported are all good and have all improved since the school was last inspected.

We think your achievement is satisfactory although we noted that last year's Year 11 students made good progress in reaching the best ever examination results for your school. We think your learning in lessons is satisfactory and good when the work set is practical, problem-solving and matched to your current skills. In order to get even better, and to close the gap between your results and the national average, we think the time is now right for staff to give you more opportunities to become independent learners. We also think some of you give up too easily when the going gets tough or work involves long pieces of writing. We have suggested staff should work with you so you become more confident to take on these tougher tasks so that all of you can reach the challenging targets set for you. With your help this should be achievable.

We were very impressed with your contribution to school life, particularly the work of the school council and your student lead learners - the next generation of teachers in the making. You say you feel very safe in school, that you like the activities the school provides and that you mostly get on well together. While we agree with you, we do think that a number of you need to improve your attendance and some of you are too easily distracted so that you do not learn as well as you might in lessons. We have asked the school to work with you and your parents and carers to improve these two aspects so you are all well prepared for the future by the time you leave school. We wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Mike McLachlan

Lead inspector

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