

Cornfield School, Littlehampton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126170
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	360010
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Surtrees
Headteacher	Maria Davis
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried by one additional inspector. The inspector visited 11 lessons and observed seven teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and students. Students' work, information on their progress, safeguarding policies and other documents were evaluated. Questionnaires from four parents and carers, 20 staff and 23 students were scrutinised.

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

- Whether data is used effectively to ensure that all students have equality of opportunity and address areas where improvements are identified.
- The extent to which the school enables students to take responsibility for their actions and maintain their progress in terms of their personal and social development.
- Whether actions taken by senior managers to monitor the curriculum are ensuring that students receive a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The extent to which the governing body understands the school's provision and how effectively it challenges the school to bring about improvements.

Information about the school

Cornfield is a school for students with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. All have statements of special educational needs. A number of students have been statemented with additional special needs including autistic spectrum disorders and communication and learning difficulties. A small minority of pupils are in the care of the local authority. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The current acting headteacher has been in post since January 2010 and prior to that was the operational headteacher for the past three years. The school gained the Inclusion Quality Mark in May 2010.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Cornfield is a good school that effectively supports its students to achieve well and make good progress in their personal and social skills. As a result, students are well prepared for life when they leave school. The excellent systems and procedures for care, guidance and support ensure that staff know the students very well and are accomplished in supporting them to improve their behaviour. The consistent approach of staff in managing students ensures they understand the school's expectations and work hard to meet the challenging targets they are set. The school is a safe place to be and there is a real sense of community at Cornfield, which values students' views and encourages them to be part of the school. Students recognise this and, in the Ofsted questionnaires, all commented that they know teachers are interested in their views. They take great pride in the work they do within the local community, with which they have developed very strong links. Because the school successfully supports students to improve their behaviour, they develop into keen learners who work hard in lessons. They make good progress and for some, especially in subjects such as science and art, progress is often outstanding. This is because teaching is good with many strengths. Staff are very well focused on ensuring that students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Students confirmed this, with many outlining what they needed to do to improve their grades. The curriculum contributes greatly to students' learning and to their enjoyment of school. This results in attendance that is good overall and often very good in Years 7 to 9.

Students talk very positively about the impact of the school on their lives and how it has helped them; as one commented, 'I was always in trouble at my last school and now I'm not.' Through good assessment, the school identifies students who need extra support and this often results in huge gains in progress, particularly in literacy. The school recognises, however, that it needs to further develop opportunities for students to practise their literacy skills in other subjects.

The school has improved since its last inspection and is constantly looking at ways it can develop further. It is well led, with a strong senior management team that is determined to ensure the best quality education for its students. Quick action is taken when weaknesses are identified and there are clear plans to move the school forward. As a result, the school has good capacity to sustain the progress it is making. The governing body, whilst very supportive, has recognised the need to develop its role and is putting in place an action plan. They receive considerable information from the school but this is not always easy to understand. Senior staff acknowledge the need to provide more succinct and clearer information to the governing body to enable it to challenge the school more effectively.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further opportunities for students to extend their literacy skills in other subjects.
- Provide the governing body with more accessible and succinct information that will enable it to challenge the school more effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment of students is well below that expected nationally because of their special educational needs. Despite this, two thirds of last year's Year 11 students left with five GCSEs. In art, many achieved A to C grades and one student achieved an A grade in English Literature. A number of students achieved B grades in the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) GCSE, whilst students in Years 10 and 11 achieved creditable passes in science GCSE double and single awards. For many students, this reflects good and, in some cases, outstanding progress. Their good progress is evident in many lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson Year, 10 students developed a very good understanding of factors and multiples so that by the end of the lesson they could give good examples of what these terms meant. Data gathered by the school show that all groups, including those in the care of the local authority, achieve equally well.

Students are rightly proud of their successes and talk about how well they are doing. They appreciate the support they get and clearly enjoy all the different activities they can be involved in. Sport features highly in their conversation and they are pleased with the success of their football team, the Cornfield Wasps, and that of their basketball team. They are very clear about the importance of keeping fit and have a good awareness of healthy foods.

Behaviour in and around school is good. Students respond well to staff intervention and are very positive about the rewards system. The vast majority of students comment that there is little bullying and, where there is a concern, they say they can talk to staff and it will be dealt with. Students' moral and social development is very good and they have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong. They are often reflective, considering, for example, what makes a good role model and assessing how well they are doing in school. Their knowledge and understanding of different cultures is supported well through their links with a school in Africa.

Students take their roles and responsibilities very seriously. This is very evident in those who are training to be sports leaders. In a physical education lesson, Year 10 students used their knowledge and skills very well to coach younger students in improving their trampolining skills. The school council plays an important role in decision making and has influenced changes, for example to the school grounds. Students are very involved in the community and, through the focus weeks, make an excellent contribution in supporting local groups. For example, they work with adults with disabilities, making toys for them, and put on plays at the retirement home as well as playing bowls with them. Opportunities to be involved in enterprise schemes, work experience and attendance at college support students well in preparing for the next stage in their education.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' good quality planning and clear expectations ensure that students make good progress in lessons. Students know what they will learn and there is often good feedback by staff about what they have learnt in lessons. The good level of support provided by teaching assistants helps students stay on task and often their specialist knowledge supports learning very well. Teachers use their subject knowledge very well to provide a good range of activities. Games such as bingo in science and practical problem solving in mathematics ensure students enjoy their learning. Occasionally, opportunities are missed in lessons to effectively support those students with literacy difficulties and too much reliance is placed on support staff to help these students complete the tasks.

The curriculum is adapted to meet the individual needs of students. There is a very good focus on vocational skills in Years 10 and 11, with many opportunities for work experience and access to college courses. 'Focus weeks' provide an excellent range of activities to extend students' skills as do the literacy and numeracy days that provide challenges to students to develop their basic skills. There is good planning to develop numeracy across the curriculum and whilst training in literacy across the curriculum has resulted in examples of good practice in some subjects, this is not consistent across the school.

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The strategies to support students to improve their behaviour are very good because all staff are consistent in their approach and their expectations are very clear. As a result, there has been a considerable reduction over the last few years in the number of incidents, fixed-term exclusions and students out of lessons. Very good links with outside agencies, together with the school's very robust systems for tracking each individual, ensure that all students are supported extremely well. Specific support groups (known as 'waves') provide intensive one-to-one work, enabling students to make rapid progress in their literacy and numeracy skills and so achieve at a similar rate to their peers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Strong leadership and management by the headteacher, well supported by her deputy and senior management team, have ensured that the school has made good progress since the last inspection. The issues raised then have been addressed very well and mathematics is now a strength of the school, and students' contribution to the community is excellent. There are effective systems for monitoring provision within the school and good use made of other professionals to confirm the school's judgements. The extensive systems for tracking students' progress in their learning ensure that staff identify and respond very quickly to any students who are not making sufficient progress and provide the support they need to do well. This ensures that all students have the same opportunities and that there is no discrimination.

The governing body monitors safeguarding arrangements effectively and at the time of the inspection these were good. However, the school is in the process of updating some of its policies to ensure they reflect the very strong practice that exists throughout the school. The governing body has evaluated its own effectiveness and is clear about what it needs to do to improve. Members receive considerable information from the school, such as the detailed evaluation of its progress in developments. However, at times, there is too much detail which is not always accessible to non-educationalists and this occasionally prevents the governing body from challenging the school effectively. Links with parents and carers are good and the CoPE course is proving successful in involving parents and carers more actively in their children's learning. Community cohesion is effective. Links with the local community are very strong. The school has in place a number of links both nationally and globally and has detailed plans to develop these further.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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

Views of parents and carers

A very small number of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. They were all positive about the school's positive impact in supporting their children. One parent wrote, 'All the teaching staff have been outstanding. My son would never have progressed without their professionalism.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cornfield 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 inspector received 4 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 44 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	1	25	3	75	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	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.



30 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Cornfield School, Littlehampton BN17 6HY

Thank you so much for being so friendly and helpful when I came to visit your school recently. A special thank-you must go to the students in the school council who took time to come and talk to me. It was great to hear you talk about so many positive things and how much you have benefited from attending Cornfield.

I agree with your views that your school is a good school. I know that you work very hard in lessons and, because of this, you do well in your learning. You work very hard at improving your behaviour and you clearly appreciate all the rewards and Golden Time on a Friday. I was very impressed at how much you know about keeping healthy and it was good to hear about all the different sports and activities you are involved in. The school is very good at checking that you are all doing well and it looks after you very well. Your teachers know you well and make sure you make good progress in your learning. Some of you clearly benefit from being part of the Waves groups which help you make really good progress in your learning.

The school is well led by the headteacher and all the staff work very hard to make sure you do well. Because the school wants to be even better, I have asked them to make sure that the governing body has better information about the school so that it can check on how well you are doing. I have also asked them to make sure you have more opportunities to improve your literacy skills in other subjects.

I wish you well for the future and hope you continue with all your hard work in the community.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascal

Lead inspector

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