

Copthall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101349
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	354987
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Liz Duffy

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1150
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Scott
Headteacher	Ms Jane Beaumont
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
School address	Pursley Road Mill Hill, London London NW7 2EP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 35 lessons and saw 34 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at schemes of work, students' books, the school improvement plan, and reports from advisors to the school. Inspectors also considered 265 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents, 148 responses to the pupils' questionnaire and 60 responses from staff.

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

- Attainment and progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, with particular attention to the achievement of White British girls, girls of mixed ethnicity (White and Black Caribbean heritage) and those whose first language is English.
- Achievement in the sixth form and the appropriateness of the courses offered for preparing students for future life.
- The rigour and effectiveness of monitoring and self-evaluation by school leaders for school improvement. How far the school has addressed the previous inspection recommendations: improving assessment, improving support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and increasing attendance.
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Information about the school

This is a non-selective school which caters for girls from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. A large majority speak English as an additional language. More than 17 ethnic minority groups are represented in the school, with the largest ethnic groups being White British and girls of Asian heritage other than Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi (two sixths of the school population). The number of students with special educational needs has increased in recent years and is now in line with the national average. The school's population has become increasingly mobile over the past three years with a third of later admissions being students who are new to the country. The school's curriculum provision has recently expanded to incorporate a range of vocational options. In the childcare, beauty and business and finance diploma courses students from Years 10 to 13 study alongside each other. In 2002 the school gained specialist status in business and enterprise.

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

Impressive levels of support from all members of staff at the school, complemented by a proactive approach to involving external agencies and a keen focus on individuals' pastoral needs, help this good school to provide outstanding guidance and support to the girls in its care. A parent commented: 'The teachers are very caring... pastoral care is excellent.' This is equally true of girls' excellent attitudes towards one another; they support each other well and actively celebrate and appreciate the diversity of the school.

Students enter with average prior attainment. By the end of Year 11 a large majority of girls gain five or more subjects at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, and they significantly exceed predictions in art, mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology, dance, drama and history. The school recognises that attainment is not as high in science and that the overall progress of girls of White British origin whose first language is English is not in line with that of their peers, especially in the lower years. Levels of achievement observed by inspectors in two thirds of lessons were good or better and standards demonstrated in the majority of books were above average. Students' overall achievement is good, including achievement by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities who benefit from a range of vocational courses and additional English language teaching. This is also the case in the sixth form. A notable strength of the school is the revamped curriculum which has significantly contributed to the substantial increase in standards this year. It is now responsive to the differing needs of its student population as well as providing relevance for girls from different cultural backgrounds..

An overwhelming majority of students thoroughly enjoy school and feel safe in their environment. They take seriously the need to be healthy and general conduct is mature and considerate. Students have high moral values and behaviour is good. Students want to contribute to the life of the school and take pride in contributing to their community. They engage in a variety of activities provided through specialist status which helps them to understand the world of work. In addition, they have the opportunity to visit local businesses and work with notable partnerships, such as the National English Ballet. The involvement of parents and carers in students' learning is not as strong, as they are not informed enough of their daughter's achievement.

An ambitious vision for the school is shared by governors, school leaders and staff. The strong focus on improvement has led to an increase in attendance which is now above average. Sharper records and support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has led to good achievement, and an outstanding curriculum has ensured that vulnerable students have remained engaged with school. The tracking of students' progress is comprehensive and this helps to inform additional support for students. Teachers' use of this tracking system and its data to inform expectations and thus suitable

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teaching approaches in the classroom is less secure. As a result some activities in the classroom do not meet the needs of all students. The previous inspection recommendation to improve guidance for students through a more consistent use of assessment has not been fully met across all subjects. Despite this, there is clear evidence that leaders have coherent strategies to raise standards, to improve teaching and curriculum provision, which indicates that the capacity for continuing improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in science and the progress of identified White British girls in all subjects by:
 - raising students' aspirations and teachers' expectations in the lower years
 - expanding teachers' repertoire of teaching strategies and their use of data and the tracking system to inform the setting of appropriate tasks and intervention which meets the needs of all students
 - sharing the good assessment practice observed in some lessons where students were shown how well they were achieving their targets and what they needed to do to improve
 - involving parents more readily when students are not reaching academic expectations.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Overall progress is good in the majority of subjects and is significantly better in art, design and technology, dance, drama, English language, history, modern foreign languages (other than Spanish) and mathematics. In 2010 the proportion achieving five or more A*? C grades including English and mathematics at GCSE increased sharply. Attainment in science has not improved as quickly as in other subjects. Up to 2009 achievement in science has been satisfactory. Current assessments indicate that this picture is starting to change with good standards being reached in Years 7 to 9. In comparison to their peers, White British girls do not perform as well in all subject. At the time of the inspection girls of mixed ethnicity (White and Black Caribbean) were performing above average. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as their contemporaries and take full advantage of the vocational and support programmes on offer. Students who receive extra support for special educational needs do not perform as well in science.

Students are confident that issues are speedily dealt with in school and as a result feel safe. This is helped by the student-run anti-bullying council which provides a number of support mechanisms for students. Generally behaviour around the school is good. Exclusions have fallen. Students demonstrate a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Since the last inspection clear attendance procedures have been put in place resulting in increased attendance. This is now good. Students make a highly positive contribution to the school; for example, through mentoring younger students and through the school council. In addition, older students work extremely well with primary pupils on reading recovery programmes. Students enthusiastically involve themselves in global issues and have been most proactive in fund raising for victims of the Haiti earthquake and for flood victims in Pakistan. Not only is students' development in literacy, numeracy

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and information and communication technology skills outstanding, but so is their understanding of leadership skills and financial capability. This is promoted through the Enterprise Passport, the Copthall Student Leaders Team and also the activities offered through the school's business and enterprise specialism. Students are well prepared for future life.

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	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

In the best lessons observed teachers' subject knowledge was secure and students' interest in the subject was heightened through the teachers' energy and enthusiasm for learning. Most striking was when a teacher undertook an activity alongside students to help further their understanding; for example, in drama the teacher acted alongside students and in dance the teacher helped students to undertake more imaginative lifts safely. Discussions in the better lessons were challenging and mature in nature and students had a clear idea of what was expected of them. In less-effective lessons, progress from one activity to another was slow and students' concentration flagged. The level of challenge was not always well matched to students' abilities and the success criteria were not explicit. The use of assessment to improve learning during lessons and within marking was of variable quality.

Since the last inspection a number of changes have been made to the curriculum so that it is now flexible and responsive to students' needs. A number of pathways are open to

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students and most innovative is the organisation of the childcare and beauty courses which enables the courses to be run on site rather than at the local college. Several changes have been made in response to students' requests; for example, students helped to design the popular fortnightly enrichment programme. The changes within information and communication technology have generated a sharp rise in results and further breadth has been added to science so that students can have the opportunity to undertake a vocational course if they wish.

The range and quality of pastoral care is impressive. At all stages pastoral support for the more vulnerable students is outstanding. There is a high commitment from staff to know every individual. The learning support department has improved its record keeping and this is now good. Learning coordinators carefully track the progress and monitor the personal development of students, responding promptly to signs of disaffection or distress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her senior leadership team provide strong direction for the school and are well regarded by staff. This is complemented by an equally enthusiastic middle leadership team who are evaluative and strategic in their approach. Staff are proud to be members of the school and feel involved in what the school is trying to achieve. Learning coordinators and subject leaders have responsibility for the identification of underperformance as well as subsequent actions to help raise standards. They do this effectively, which aids the good school improvement planning. The tracking system works well with intervention classes and with one-to-one learning support but is having less success in classroom practice. Not all teachers are using the data and tracking information effectively enough to address learning needs in the classroom.

The school is a thoroughly cohesive and harmonious community. Its ethos and the inclusiveness of the curriculum ensure good equality of opportunity. The senior leadership team recognises that auditing and evaluation of community cohesion could be strengthened, as well as partnerships with parents to support their child's learning. Partnerships with businesses and other educational institutions are extensive and benefit not just students but staff as well.

Governance is a clear strength. The governing body supports and challenges the school in equal measure. Its members are rigorous in ensuring that students and staff are safe. Exceptionally effective procedures to ensure that students are kept safe and secure, including those relating to child protection, are in place and well understood at all levels.

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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	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Overall, standards on entry to the sixth form are in line with national averages; almost a third of the sixth form enter from other institutions. By the end of their two-year courses of study the majority of students attain slightly above the national average. Good progress is made by students with little variation between different ethnic groups of students as a result of good teaching and early intervention with those who are underperforming. The improved curriculum, including extra study skills support, a wider range of vocational courses and English language classes, has led to more students staying on in Year 13. Students speak highly of the support and guidance they receive from school leaders, school tutors and the school counsellor.

There are plenty of opportunities for students to act as role models in the rest of the school; for example, helping to run extra-curricular clubs and helping Year 7 girls settle into the school. The Student Executive works hard to engage the sixth form community in the school. The sixth form leadership team recognises that contributions to the wider community and students' ownership of such activity are not as strong.

Extensive data analysis and excellent relationships enable the sixth form leadership team to know their students well. Monitoring and evaluation are outstanding; leaders work successfully alongside subject leaders in drawing up recovery action plans and monitor implementation and delivery well. The team is ambitious in its shared vision and this has helped to ensure that students succeed academically and socially; maintaining good outcomes as students' backgrounds and subsequent learning needs have become more diverse. They make effective use of partnerships to ensure students' aspirations remain high; for example, securing the opportunity for students to study law at a local university.

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Students leave the sixth form as well-rounded individuals who are well prepared for future life.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The response rate to the questionnaire is higher than the national response rate for secondary schools. Almost all parents agreed that their child felt safe at school and most parents believe that their child enjoys school. Areas that parents would like to see improved are: being more informed about progress, greater support to help with learning and for the school to take more account of suggestions and concerns from parents. These are areas that have been identified for improvement by the senior leadership team via internal self-evaluation. Parents are appreciative of the support provided for their children, especially Year 7 parents who made a point of stressing how easy the transition from primary school to secondary school had been.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Copthall 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 265 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	82	31	163	62	15	6	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	94	36	161	61	5	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	57	22	159	61	31	12	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	20	165	62	34	13	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	42	16	175	66	32	12	6	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	16	151	57	53	20	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	16	174	66	37	14	2	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)	56	21	157	59	27	10	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	14	171	65	36	14	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	26	145	55	31	12	10	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	13	156	59	41	16	9	3
The school is led and managed effectively	60	23	162	61	23	9	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	83	31	149	56	25	9	2	1

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.



17 October 2010

Dear Students Inspection of Copthall School, London NW7 2EP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to visit your school. In particular, I would like to thank those students who gave up their time to speak with us and those of you who filled in and returned the inspection questionnaire.

I am pleased to inform you that your school is a good school. You are being taught well and you all benefit from an engaging curriculum which meets your varied needs and interests. This is a key strength of the school, along with the care and support that you receive. We were most impressed with the way you look after and support each other. An overwhelming majority of you feel safe at school. You are provided with a range of opportunities to make a positive contribution to the school and to the wider community. Your school has established effective links with other schools, colleges and with local businesses and a number of you are enjoying the benefits from those partnerships.

To support your school's continuing improvement, we have asked your headteacher to:

- ensure all of you attain well and make good progress, especially in science. In order to do this we have recommended that written guidance in your exercise books is more helpful, the tasks in lessons help to stretch you further and teachers' expectations of you are higher.

You can help by having high expectations of what you can achieve, by asking readily for help when you need it and by ensuring you complete your work to the highest possible standards.

I am sure you will be successful with your studies and in helping your school improve further.

Yours sincerely

Liz Duffy

Lead inspector

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