

John Colet School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110491
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356756
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	John Daniell HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1014
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Wilkinson
Headteacher	Mrs Christine McLintock
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2008
School address	Wharf Road Aylesbury HP22 6HF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspection team saw 38 lessons taught by 32 teachers and held meetings with staff and students. Discussions also took place with the Chair of the Governing Body and senior staff at local partnership schools. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including policies, self-evaluation information, performance data, school improvement plans and reviews from the School Improvement Partner. The inspection team scrutinised 320 questionnaires from parents and carers and 180 from students.

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

- Achievement and standards for different groups of students, particularly in science.
- How well teachers use assessment information, especially in the planning of lessons.
- The effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in identifying and acting on weaknesses and driving on improvement.

Information about the school

John Colet School is an average-sized secondary school with specialist humanities status led by English, history and religious education. It serves the small town of Wendover and surrounding areas in a local authority which retains selection.

The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is around half the national average, as is the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average but the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.

The school holds an award for Investor in People and enjoys Healthy School status.

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

John Colet School provides its students with a good quality of education. Many of the important features of the school are good, and some are outstanding. Students and staff feel a strong sense of community and pride in the school and this, coupled with a desire to be one of the best schools in the local authority, results in a school with a strong sense of purpose.

The school supports its students outstandingly well in developing strong personal qualities and feeling very safe. Students in the sixth form benefit from good provision and play a key role in student leadership within the school. Extremely well-targeted care, guidance and support result in happy and confident students who are well prepared for the future. Students enjoy coming to school, and this results in high attendance. They make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. The school culture is one where achievement is celebrated by all and many of the school's walls are adorned with displays and certificates which promote success. The three specialist subjects enrich students' learning and contribute towards raising standards across the school. The many opportunities provided through working in strong partnership with other schools and organisations enhance the provision and secure improved outcomes. Difficulties in the recruitment and retention of teachers in science have resulted in lower outcomes than in other subjects, and have contributed to average attainment overall. School leaders have addressed the matter satisfactorily until a longer-term solution can be implemented.

The good curriculum meets the students' needs well and is delivered through consistently good teaching and learning, ensuring that they make good progress. Only inconsistent use of assessment information prevents teaching from being outstanding overall. Inspectors saw some outstanding practice, but sometimes teachers do not maximise students' progress by making the best use of assessment information held on individual students when planning lessons, or by regularly checking during the course of a lesson that all students fully understand the tasks they have been set.

The visionary headteacher and her committed team have a sharp focus on raising standards and are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Middle leaders play a crucial role in driving up standards. The effective governing body ensures that senior leaders are held to account for the school's performance. The combination of effective measures to maintain and drive forward school improvement and secure systems for self-evaluation give the school a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:

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- fine-tuning teachers' use of assessment when planning so that work is closely targeted to all students' individual needs
- further developing strategies in the classroom to assess students' understanding of what they are being taught.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enjoy their work and progress in lessons is good overall. Some outstanding learning was seen in business studies, history, drama and physical education. In a business studies lesson, all groups of students were provided with challenging activities and excellent use was made of ongoing assessment to further their learning and progress. In the small minority of lessons where learning is satisfactory, teachers do not make full use of available assessment to ensure the learning needs of groups are met, and so the rate of progress is slower. In many lessons students are aware of their current levels of progress and how to improve, and leaders use student data effectively to set challenging targets.

Attainment has been average for a number of years. In 2010, 65% of the students gained five or more good GCSE grades, and this figure was 59% including English and mathematics. Students attain higher grades in English, humanities, modern foreign languages and physical education. Performance in science was poor, due to problems in recruiting suitably qualified staff and inconsistency in the quality of teaching. In addition, a small group of students with specific problems and who faced challenging circumstances were unable to sit any examinations, and this had a negative impact on levels of progress in 2010. The school has taken decisive action to ensure such a situation is not repeated this year. Students with a statement of special educational needs made good progress against their individual targets. Available data and observations of lessons show that current students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are on track to attain higher and further improve their rate of progress.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and incidents relating to bullying are few. Students say that all reported incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. The students' adoption of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. A very large proportion of students participate in the wide range of extra-curricular physical activities offered and many serve as good role models to others. The school encourages and provides well for healthy eating within the constraint of not having a canteen, but students interpret the lack of this facility negatively. The student council is active both in school and further afield within the county, and students make a valuable contribution to the wider community. Substantial funds have been raised for local and national causes, including the Florence Nightingale Hospice and the Alzheimer's Society. Basic and enterprise skills are well developed and the school provides students with well-targeted opportunities and experiences which result in high personal aspirations. Students display positive attitudes towards each other, whatever their background, and many engage in the rich offer of cultural and social activities. In a poignant Year 8 assembly, where many students had collected donations for children less fortunate than themselves in eastern Europe, students demonstrated a good moral awareness.

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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	3
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	1
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	1
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?

Teachers make effective use of their subject knowledge in the classroom. In good and outstanding lessons, relationships are positive and effective use is made of available resources. When there are other adults in the classroom, this support is precisely targeted. Teachers make good use of questioning to check for students' understanding.

Opportunities are built into these lessons to allow students to check their own progress and that of their peers, and they know how to achieve their academic targets. In a good geography lesson on coastal environments, creative use of resources and activities led to high quality debates and group work. Where lessons are satisfactory, students still make progress but less effective use is made of assessment for planning and there are missed opportunities for checking that all students fully understand what they are being taught. The good practice observed in the use of assessment is yet to become embedded across all subject areas. The quality of marking of formal assessments is good with suggestions provided on how to improve.

The curriculum provides a wide range of courses to match the needs of the students and is monitored and re-modelled following consultation with students and their parents and carers. The specialist subjects provide good opportunities for success and the strategic decision to shift to a two-year Key Stage 3 gives greater flexibility of provision. Enrichment through flexible learning days adds a valuable extra dimension to the curriculum, as do the many after-school clubs for which take-up is high.

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Students who join the school in Year 7 say they settle in quickly and value the Year 11 'buddy' system, which allows them to meet together regularly and discuss any problems. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive highly effective provision and students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are exceptionally well cared for. The school's inclusion unit has had a positive impact in retaining students who might otherwise have been excluded from school. Specific groups of students such as students with very low self-esteem are identified quickly and receive well-targeted support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The committed headteacher and her experienced team have the respect of staff and students and have gained an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through rigorous monitoring systems which ensure accountability. Middle leaders are required to have high expectations for their own areas and are openly challenged if individual student targets are not sufficiently demanding. Leaders at all levels are aware of their role in raising standards and any weaker areas of leadership are identified and addressed through solution-focused thinking. Sophisticated systems for managing teaching and learning secure good outcomes for students. Senior leaders encourage the sharing of good practice and provide focused training for all staff. A committed governing body holds the school to account and fulfils its statutory duties well, particularly in terms of the outstanding practices and procedures for ensuring that students are kept safe and secure.

Good systems are used to gather the views of students and staff, and the school engages with parents and carers particularly well. Attendance at consultation evenings is high and leaders use this opportunity to consult parents and carers through surveys, as well as using information and communication technology systems on a daily basis. Partnership work is a major strength and excellent collaborative work with leading-edge partners and local colleges has secured increased standards in mathematics and improved success rates in vocational courses. The school has a good community cohesion programme and regularly evaluates the impact of its initiatives on student outcomes. The school's strong commitment to equal opportunities in the way that it monitors the impact of its work on different groups of students, and the way it reports back to the governing body, is highly influential in improving the school's effectiveness. Leaders are committed to reducing any remaining unevenness of performance between different groups of students.

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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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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

The sixth form is a strong feature which contributes to the school's success. Students in the sixth form achieve well, given their starting points. In 2010, 99% of students achieved grades A* to E and 40% grades A* to B. Students have high aspirations and nearly every student is able to study at their first choice of university. Attendance is high and students make a positive contribution within and beyond the school through extensive community service activities.

Teaching in the sixth form is good and students are encouraged to become independent learners. Targets are challenging and progress made towards them is monitored on a regular basis. The good curriculum meets the needs of the students well and this, coupled with outstanding care, guidance and support, prepares them very well for higher education or the world of work.

The head of sixth form has an ambitious improvement plan to raise standards further and rigorous monitoring systems are in place to address any weaker areas of performance. The good leadership of the sixth form results in positive outcomes and a sixth form which has a sense of purpose.

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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	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned from parents and carers was well above average for a secondary school. About 15% contained additional comments. A very large majority believe their child enjoys school and almost all believe that the school keeps their child safe. Most also believe that their child makes good progress and that teaching is good. A very small minority believe that the school does not help their child to have a healthy lifestyle and many written comments refer to the lack of a school canteen facility. Inspectors noted that the school caterers provide healthy food which conforms to regulations and that a large number of students take advantage of the generous range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Most believe that the school is led well, and are happy with their child's experience at the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Colet 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 320 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1014 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	120	38	185	58	12	4	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	107	33	207	65	2	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	121	38	184	58	15	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	105	33	187	52	21	7	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	91	28	204	64	16	5	5	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	82	26	205	64	27	8	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	17	210	66	38	12	6	2
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)	80	25	200	63	13	4	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	92	29	198	62	21	7	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	85	27	190	59	21	7	8	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	20	198	62	27	8	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	111	35	189	59	8	3	8	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	131	41	170	53	13	4	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.



10 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of John Colet School, Wendover HP22 6HF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. A very large majority of you enjoy school and rightly say that you feel really safe. The majority of you feel that the school does not encourage you to lead a healthy lifestyle, but the inspection team noted that school provides well for healthy eating and many of you participate in extra-curricular physical activities. A very large majority of you feel that the senior staff are doing a very good job. These are our other judgements.

- The school provides you with a good quality of education.
- The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding.
- Your attendance rate is high and your punctuality is good.
- Standards in science have been below the expected level due to staff recruitment difficulties, but the school has clear plans to address the matter.
- The quality of teaching is good, as is learning and progress.
- The good curriculum meets your needs well.
- Teachers are aware of your current levels of progress and you have challenging targets, but your teachers do not always make best use of this information when planning lessons.
- A very large proportion of students participate in the wide range of extra-curricular physical activities offered and many serve as good role models to others.
- Good sixth form provision ensures that students make good progress.
- Leaders and managers are doing a good job.

We have asked your teachers to make better use of available data when planning your lessons so that all of your needs are met, and to check that all of you fully understand what you are being taught in the classroom. You can help by never being afraid to ask for help if you do not understand something in a lesson.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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