

Colton Hills Community School A Specialist Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104395
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	355576
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	James McNeillie HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	824
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ram Sarup
Headteacher	Phil Lambert
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2007
School address	Jeremy Road Goldthorn Park, Wolverhampton WV4 5DG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Forty-one lessons were observed, taught by 37 teachers. Meetings were held with students, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at documentation such as the school improvement plan and considered 26 parental, 149 student and a sample of staff questionnaires.

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

- To what extent are attainment and progress increasing for all groups of students across the key stages, particularly in English, mathematics and science?
- Does the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the care for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities support them to make better than expected progress?
- Is the quality of teaching, including use of assessment to support learning, sufficiently challenging, and improving, to support an increase in students' progress?
- To what extent are the revisions to the Key Stage 3 curriculum having a positive impact on students' progress and enjoyment?
- How well do leaders and managers at all levels contribute to improving achievement and other outcomes for all groups of students?

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average 11-18 secondary school serving the south of Wolverhampton. It has had specialist languages designation since 2006 and been a Creative Partnership school since 2008. Its student population is ethnically diverse with the highest proportion having an Indian heritage. There is also a high proportion of students for who speak English as an additional language. The school has a specially resourced provision for special educational needs. Eleven students with physical disabilities have access to this provision, which is managed entirely by the school. Currently this provision is not extensively used as these students are fully integrated into the wider school but receive additional support from this provision when required. The overall proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Since the previous inspection, there have been four new members of the senior leadership team and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science have been in post for no more than two years.

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

Colton Hills Community School is an inclusive, caring and effectively led school that has made a number of improvements since the previous inspection.

Students' achievement is satisfactory and improving. The proportion of students achieving five GCSEs including English and mathematics at grade C or above has almost doubled in three years. The progress students make in mathematics is not as strong as in other subjects, in part because their understanding of the subject is less well developed. Students' speaking and listening skills are strong; however, their writing skills are less so. The progress made by the high proportion of students who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also satisfactory and improving. Those students who are supported by the school's resource-based provision make the same progress as their peers. These students are integrated fully into school life, for example in their participation in the school council, in extra-curricular activities and the increasing numbers who are accessing the school and wider city sixth form provision.

Students in this ethnically diverse school have positive attitudes to learning and strong relationships with their teachers and peers. One student explained that 'even though we are individuals and different, we're all part of a community.' These factors contribute to students' good behaviour, their feeling of being safe in school and their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The attendance of a small number of students who are persistently absent remains a concern; the parents and carers of some of these students are not fully engaged in the school's focus on improving learning and progress for all.

The quality of teaching and use of assessment are satisfactory. Too often, teachers do not use well enough information about students' prior learning and, in particular, strategies to assess progress during lessons. This means high levels of challenge to ensure students' good or better progress are not always evident. During the inspection, examples of good and outstanding teaching were observed and this concurs with the school's own evaluation of an improving pattern. In these stronger lessons, students have opportunities to extend their understanding, skills and independence as learners. However, this good practice is not widespread.

All students receive good care and guidance. The school's high quality work with an extensive range of agencies has a significantly positive impact on students' well-being. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those whose personal situation is challenging are exceptionally well supported. This has resulted in many of these students making very good progress in their own personal development and important wider life skills.

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The school's sixth form provides good outcomes for its students as a result of good teaching, an effective curriculum and secure leadership. Some excellent examples of independent learning were observed in these lessons during the inspection.

Leaders know the school's strengths and development needs very well and this ensures that the capacity for further improvement is good. School improvement planning is focused, effective and has had a good impact on improving the provision and outcomes. For example, the quality of teaching is getting better as a result of more specific teacher training and the increasing effectiveness of leadership at all levels. The leadership of the school's resource-based provision enables expected progress for these students.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and increase the rate of progress to good or better for all groups by ensuring that students:
 - develop their standards of writing
 - increase their understanding of mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment effectively in lessons to increase the level of challenge for all groups of students
 - students have regular opportunities to develop skills as independent learners.
- Increase the attendance of the small number of students who are persistently absent by:
 - enhancing existing links with primary schools to identify those who may become persistently absent
 - engaging with their parents and carers to raise awareness of the impact of poor attendance, for example through developing the school's plans to offer family learning opportunities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' attainment is average and rising overall. Attainment in modern foreign languages, particularly German, is very strong and there has been a rapid rise in attainment in science. Almost all students leave school with at least five GCSE qualifications. The proportion achieving grade C or above, in five subjects including English and mathematics, has risen sharply in recent years and is now almost at the national average. The results of examinations already taken and the school's secure, substantial and well-moderated tracking data, indicate that overall attainment in the current Year 11 is set to surpass that of 2010. Attainment in English is set to increase further; however, attainment in mathematics is expected to remain static.

All groups of students make satisfactory progress given their starting points which range from slightly below to below the national average. They enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. Students know how to work in pairs and groups and do so well. This

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was particularly evident in the Year 7 'integrated curriculum' lessons that focused on developing students' literacy skills. The large number of students who speak English as an additional language develop their understanding and use of English well, and the majority of students have good skills of speaking and listening. Students' writing skills are not to the same standard and this is having a negative impact on increasing their attainment in some subjects. The school has already begun to take steps to address this weakness. The students who receive additional support from the school's resource-based provision make similar progress to their peers and this was confirmed in observations of the learning of these students during the inspection. Individuals with specific and moderate learning needs also make satisfactory progress in all subjects, as was clear from participation and written work produced in a Year 9 geography lesson.

There is a calm, purposeful and harmonious atmosphere in the school. Positive and respectful relationships exist between students and with their teachers. All students, and particularly those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, develop wider learning and life skills. For example, in a session jointly taught with representatives from the Young Enterprise programme, Year 10 students developed and applied the financial and communication skills they will need to be successful in employment. Some students are good independent learners but this is not consistently the case. The attendance of students is average. There are a small number who are persistently absent from school and this prevents them from making sufficient progress in learning and in developing their wider skills.

The impact of the consistently high priority the school gives to preparation for future life is clear in students' good understanding of what is needed for a successful career, their ability to work well in teams to solve problems and the overwhelming majority who continue in education, training or employment beyond the age of 16. A number of students support others in the school and take on leadership roles, for example through sports coaching. They contribute their views through surveys and the school council, as well as raising money for local, national and international charities.

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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	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	2
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?

Teaching is not consistently securing good learning and progress. Although good and better teaching sometimes takes place, too much is satisfactory. When the progress of students is not good enough, it is as a result of insufficient planning for the full range of abilities within a class and missed opportunities to assess and extend students' learning. In the very best lessons, teachers' strong subject knowledge and skilful use of questioning challenge students' thinking and deepen their understanding. These teachers also adapt their plans as a result of gaps in students' skills identified during lessons. However, this good practice is not spread across all teaching.

The strong curriculum is well organised and meets the needs of students. The developments at Key Stage 3, which integrates the teaching of some subjects in Years 7 and 8, is beginning to have a positive impact on students' learning and progress. For example, it gives opportunities to students to apply their skills across a range of subjects. The school's specialism in languages makes an excellent contribution and enriches the curriculum offer for all students, for example by enabling all of them to study two modern foreign languages in Key Stage 3. Those students newly arrived from overseas are able to take a certified course in a language qualification and the option to progress into further study. Older students have a good balance of academic and vocational options to choose from as a result of the strong partnerships with local providers. Curriculum enrichment activities ensure students' experiences are varied.

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The care, guidance and support given to all students are significant strengths of the school. Students know there is always a member of staff from whom they could seek advice or help. Excellent work with a wide range of external agencies means the life chances are increased of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those at risk of becoming so. A good induction programme is in place for those who join the school from a non-English speaking country. These students feel part of the wider school community and are supported in doing so, for example by the range of community language courses available. There is clear and helpful information and advice available to students when they are making choices about the next stages in their education.

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future development, is ably supported by his fellow senior leaders, and sets challenging targets to support the progress of students. This has resulted in improvements to the quality of the school's provision and aspects of students' outcomes. Staff development has a high profile. For example, all staff recently visited a local school judged to be outstanding so that they could see a working day in that school and then reflect on their own practice. The leadership of teaching and learning is similarly strong. Good work in recent years with subject leaders has resulted in an improved quality of teaching. There is more to do to ensure all teachers have a clear understanding of what good teaching and assessment looks like in practice. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and honest which is reflected in its development priorities. Middle leadership is good. All subject leaders are involved in the monitoring and development of students' progress through the target setting process and evaluation of learning in their subjects. Pastoral leaders have a dual and effective focus on students' academic and personal success. The provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is monitored well. The school is developing its approach to ensure that strategies that promote greater independence and enhance the progress of students with particular needs are shared extensively with all staff.

Good practice in safeguarding students is integrated well into school life, effectively supported by the curriculum. Staff at all levels have received high quality training on child protection issues and the school's protocols are clear and effective. The governing body provides adequate challenge and support to the school, for example, through discussions about achievement. The school has a confident understanding of the cultural complexity of its population and wider community. Cohesion within the school is particularly good with students demonstrating high levels of respect for each other's cultural heritage. This is well supported by accreditation of community languages such as Russian, Polish, Panjabi,

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Dutch and Portuguese and a carefully considered induction course offered to students recently arrived to the United Kingdom. The school's ethos consistently promotes equality of opportunity and the low number of racist incidents is one indicator of its success in tackling discrimination. The impact of this ethos is evident in the sustained narrowing of the achievement gap for groups of students and the full integration into school life and equal success of all students, including those disabled students who are supported by the school's resource-based provision.

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	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	3

Sixth form

Students make good progress from their slightly below average starting points and those who study BTEC qualifications and A Level sociology make even better progress. This is as a result of a good curriculum offer, in the school and in partnership with others, and consistently good or better teaching on these courses. Students are given many opportunities to become independent learners and do so successfully. They enjoy their study, are enthused by their teachers and have very good attitudes to learning. For example, in an outstanding A Level sociology lesson, there was lively student-led debate about which groups of people are most likely to join religious sects or cults. Students are cared for well in Years 12 and 13 and given good information, advice and guidance on entry to the sixth form and for their future learning. This is evident in the very high numbers of students who remain in the sixth form for the two years. The large majority of students in 2010 progressed to further study at university and there are very few students not in employment, education or training once they have left the school. Sixth form leadership is good and there are agreed protocols across partner schools to ensure the safeguarding of students and their quality of provision is monitored and evaluated. Students are not fully involved in their own target setting and monitoring of progress, although this is developing well.

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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

There was a much lower response from parents and carers than is normally the case nationally. Those who did respond indicated that they were happy with their child's overall experience and that the school prepared students well for the next stage in their lives. Some raised concern about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that on the few occasions when students failed to meet the school's high expectations, this was dealt with quickly and effectively. Inspectors found that the school is continuing to develop better communication with all parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Colton Hills Community School A Specialist Language College 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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 824 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	35	17	65	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	50	13	50	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	13	50	7	27	6	23	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	46	14	54	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	35	16	62	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	31	14	54	4	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	27	17	65	2	8	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)	10	38	15	58	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	35	14	54	3	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	31	10	38	8	31	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	23	19	73	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	27	15	58	3	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	31	17	65	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



18 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Colton Hills Community School A Specialist Language College, Wolverhampton, WV4 5DG

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school recently. We were impressed with your attitudes to learning, good behaviour and the ways in which you respected and celebrated each other's differences and similarities.

We judged that your school is improving and satisfactory overall, and that your sixth form is good. The quality of care, guidance and support you receive are particular strengths. We also decided that the wide and varied curriculum you receive throughout your time at school is of a good quality. You told us that you think Mr Lambert and his colleagues are doing a good job. We agree with you. We also decided that the school prepares you well for the next stage of your lives. You are given good advice about what it means to have a healthy and happy lifestyle, although not all of you follow this advice. We have asked the school to increase the attendance of those students who do not come to school often enough.

The examination results at your college are improving and the progress you make is what we would expect. To enable all of you to make good progress, we have asked Mr Lambert to help you develop your understanding in mathematics and raise the quality of your writing to that of your speaking and listening skills. We have also asked the school to make certain that all teaching is as good as the best by ensuring that:

- teachers regularly check what you are learning in lessons and make changes if you do not understand or if you are finding the learning too easy
- you are given more opportunities to become successful independent learners.

You can help by letting teachers know when you are struggling or work is too easy. We wish you well at this supportive and improving school.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie

Her Majesty's Inspector

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