

The Cavendish School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114605
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	378900
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Patricia Metham HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	987
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Askew
Headteacher	Kenneth Fitzpatrick
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 37 lessons, observed 37 different teachers, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and students. They evaluated students' attainment over the past three years, schemes of work, policies, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, and the governing body minutes. They considered responses to the questionnaire from 69 parents and carers, 152 students and 25 staff.

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

- How effectively have the differences in progress and attainment by specific groups been tackled?
- What contribution is made to the overall effectiveness of the school by the performing arts specialism?
- How successfully are senior leaders and those with subject responsibilities developing and embedding effective teaching and the use of assessment across all departments?
- How successfully does the curriculum meet the needs and support the aspirations of all students?

Information about the school

The Cavendish is a comprehensive school of average size, with a higher proportion of boys than girls. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups – about one in every five students – is lower than the national average but growing steadily. English is not the first language for about one in every 10 students, which is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is considerably smaller than average; predominantly, these students have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social development needs. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is also well below the national average. A higher than average proportion of students join or leave the school at other than conventional times.

Collaboration with Sussex Downs College and other local providers extends the range of vocational options available. The school has specialist performing arts status, and holds the Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold and Healthy Schools awards.

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

Improving attainment and progress and the support and respect given to students underpin the good quality of education provided here. The school’s leaders and managers have an accurate and constructive understanding of current strengths and challenges. Over three years, well-managed interventions have successfully tackled issues such as the underachievement of less-able boys and the needs of the growing number of students whose first language is not English. Where it has been recognised that the school alone cannot meet students’ diverse needs and aspirations, curricular options have been extended through links with a local college and neighbouring secondary schools. Collaboration between schools is being extended to compensate for a recent reduction in the college provision of vocational courses. New appointments have strengthened the senior leadership team, with a careful balance between academic and pastoral responsibilities. Governors, many of whom bring relevant professional expertise to their role, are developing a well-considered programme of review, including lesson observations, scrutiny of work and discussions with students and teachers. The school’s capacity for further improvement is good. A parent of two children in Key Stage 3 reflected the views of many: ‘The school is constantly striving to improve and never becomes complacent.’

There has been a sustained upward trend in attainment, with the proportion gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, significantly above average by 2010. Systematic assessment and the tracking of the progress made by individuals and groups of students shape a continually reviewed programme of interventions, including one-to-one tuition and booster classes. The impact can be seen in the expanding proportion of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those identified as eligible for free school meals, who are well on the way to meeting demanding targets.

Subject leaders are clear and accurate in their assessment of teaching strengths and areas for development. The senior leadership team has been expanded to include expertise in staff development and plans are well advanced to involve all staff in exploring teaching approaches that will drive further improvement. Teachers’ questioning skills are generally good but students are not always challenged to develop their initial responses into higher-order thinking or more imaginative possibilities. Academic and pastoral care are well integrated and inclusive, complemented by timely and well-managed liaison with external agencies. Communication between school and home is effective.

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The most significant challenges being tackled, with some success, are the integration of students who join late in Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 and the reintegration of the reducing number of students on fixed-term exclusion and those with poor attendance records. The school's success in supporting and re-engaging poor attenders was demonstrated in the outstanding GCSE results attained recently by several of these students. As part of the school's careful provision to ensure students' safety and well-being, new systems are being put in place to take on work with families previously undertaken by a locally-funded education welfare officer.

Students feel very safe in school. They treat each other and adults with consideration. There is very little bullying, they say, and they are confident that difficulties will be successfully tackled by adults or by student mentors and peer mediators. As one explained: 'You've always got someone.' Through elected councils and working groups, students participate usefully in school planning and improvement. They contribute to local primary schools and the wider community, largely through sport and activities linked to the school's performing arts specialism. They willingly accept responsibility and demonstrate good personal skills, such as teamwork and practical problem-solving. Good levels of literacy, numeracy and computer skills, and experience of work-related learning, give the majority of students, who attend regularly, a sound foundation for future economic well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on recent improvements in attainment and progress by ensuring that:
 - consistently high expectations, effective questioning and challenging tasks encourage students to be more reflective and independent learners
 - lesson planning and classroom management consistently match students' diverse needs and learning styles
 - best practice in lesson planning and teaching is securely embedded across all departments, supported by appropriate professional development.

- Extend and reinforce action to reduce unauthorised absence, so that attendance is in line with national averages by the end of this academic year.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most students have a positive attitude to learning. They respond constructively to well-targeted support. In 2010, for example, a review of students' progress showed that Year 9 boys were underachieving, particularly in their reading. Schemes of work were revised and by the end of the year, there was an increase of 38% in those exceeding their targets. Students collaborate productively, confidently sharing ideas and supporting each other. In a Year 10 mathematics class, for instance, dialogue between students and between the teacher and students was thought-provoking and developmental, punctuated by questions such as: 'Is that possible?' and 'What makes you think that?' In a Year 9 performing arts class, students pooled ideas and shared

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technical skills to develop stage lighting and sound effects for a ghost story. Students recognise the importance of qualifications that will extend their future options, and many are ambitious. This is reflected in the proportion – almost two thirds – opting for the English Baccalaureate. Those arriving, often mid-year, with limited English skills settle quickly, progressing as well as their contemporaries. Most students attend regularly and are very positive about their school experience. Poor attenders benefit from well-targeted support when in school. Students have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, take advantage of the school canteen’s balanced menu and participate in sports and activities such as dance. The school’s ethos of mutual respect and tolerance underpins students’ good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is well reinforced through assemblies, the tutor programme and the curriculum.

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	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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Students have justifiable confidence in the skill and commitment of their teachers; teaching was good or better in over two thirds of the lessons seen. As a Year 10 student commented: ‘They will get you further in life!’ Teachers are keen to develop their skills through peer support, coaching and continuing professional development. Teaching strengths include: enthusiastically communicated subject knowledge; a productive rapport with students; lesson planning that takes account of students’ current knowledge and skills and establishes clearly what is to be learnt; a careful and constructive approach to assessment; and a purposeful use of technology. In less effective lessons, it is possible for a small number of students to remain passive

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

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or, when teaching lacks pace or is not successfully matched to their knowledge and skills, a few students become distracted and distracting. While most marking is constructive, students are not always given time and encouragement to reflect on and respond to the advice offered.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Great care is taken to ensure sufficient flexibility to meet students' diverse needs. Partly through steadily developing collaboration with other schools, Key Stage 4 students can combine academic and vocational options in ways that best match their individual interests and strengths. Less academic or less engaged students are well supported through worthwhile initiatives, such as a BTEC horticulture course and accredited ASDAN courses that focus on personal and social education and the development of skills. The school offers a lively and well-supported programme of extra-curricular activities, with sports and performing arts strongly represented. The mainstream curriculum is complemented well by visits to theatres and historic sites, overseas trips and exchanges, and many weekly clubs and activities.

Strategies to improve attendance are being extended and reinforced but it is too soon to judge their impact, and unauthorised absence remains too high. True to its commitment to being an inclusive community, the school regularly takes in students transferred or excluded from local schools. Although given thoughtful and sustained support, not all of these students adjust easily to the school's expectations and routines. The number of fixed-term exclusions is dropping as the school develops its on-site resources, but a small, hard-to-engage core remains. For the great majority of students, the network of academic and pastoral care is strong and valued. Vulnerable students are supported extremely well through individual mentoring, regular communication with parents or carers and steps taken to ensure that teachers are aware of and know how to respond to individual needs. Responses to the inspection questionnaire emphasised the quality and impact of care, guidance and support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, the parent of a Year 7 student commented: 'The SEN team and my son's tutor have ensured that his first week has been incredibly positive.'

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and his senior team communicate a clear and ambitious vision for the school as an inclusive and high-achieving community. This is vigorously

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implemented through challenging targets for students’ attainment and progress, systematic monitoring of teaching and learning and well-directed investment in the professional development of staff. Safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and health and safety measures are thorough and well managed. As far as possible, the safety and well-being of students with poor attendance records are monitored and steps are taken to build effective links with their families. All teachers and support staff have regularly updated training in child protection procedures. Initiatives are being developed to help members of the governing body hold the school to account usefully. Further training is planned to ensure that governors are comprehensively equipped to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Curriculum-driven budgeting and financial management underwrite students’ good outcomes. Considerable care is taken to ensure equality of respect and opportunity, through personal development, the curriculum, pastoral care and openness to differences in culture and aspirations.

Partnerships with schools, colleges and local businesses are enterprising, supporting the curriculum and extending opportunities for staff development. The performing arts specialism makes a major contribution to the school’s participation in the local community. Many parents and carers are actively engaged in the school – through the parents’ forum, for example, student progress meetings and participation in workshops to help them understand aspects of their children’s education. The school is an engagingly cohesive community. Through the curriculum as well as the culture and experiences brought by those arriving from other countries, students develop an appreciation of community cohesion on a global scale. Their understanding of multicultural Britain is less well developed.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

Of the small percentage responding to the inspection questionnaire, almost all felt that their children were safe, that teaching was good and that the school was well led and managed. Inspection evidence supports these views. In a very small number of responses, concerns were expressed about behaviour and students' understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle, and about how effectively the school helped parents and carers support their children's learning. Behaviour observed during the inspection was generally good. Students demonstrated a confident understanding of how to be healthy and many clearly take advantage of sports and activities in addition to their timetabled physical education. Evidence was presented that, as well as regular consultation about students' progress, parents and carers are given opportunities to learn about the curriculum, teaching methods and assessment.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Cavendish 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 987 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	36	42	61	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	46	36	52	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	29	42	32	46	3	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	30	41	59	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	26	44	64	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	19	28	39	57	8	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	28	39	57	7	10	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)	17	25	41	59	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	18	26	43	62	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	25	36	52	9	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	23	45	65	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	33	40	58	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	22	32	44	64	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



14 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Cavendish School, Eastbourne BN21 1UE

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I and other inspectors visited your school recently. We agree with you that it is a good school, with teaching and pastoral support that enable you to make good progress and attain results that are mostly above the national average.

Amongst your school's particular strengths are the care, guidance and support you enjoy, the strength and liveliness of your school's performing arts specialism, and the opportunities you are given to take on responsibilities for each other's welfare and to influence important decisions about your school's day-to-day management. Those of you who responded to the inspection questionnaire were most emphatic that you feel safe when at school, that you learn a lot in lessons and that the headteacher and senior staff lead and manage the school well. We agree with you.

To ensure that The Cavendish School goes from strength to strength, we have asked your headteacher to ensure that:

- everyone who teaches you responds to the different ways in which you learn and challenges you to do better – even those of you who are already doing well are capable of thinking and solving problems more creatively and independently
- your teachers always make it clear how you can improve your work, and help you to develop skills that you can then use confidently across the curriculum and in a range of situations
- your teachers are regularly given opportunities to share their expertise with each other and to continue developing their professional skills
- those of you who have a poor attendance record come to school regularly in future.

All of you can help by not missing days of school, and by making the most of opportunities to explore ideas and work out solutions to problems independently.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector

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