

The Corsham School

The Tynings, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 9DF

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2012

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school's focus on creativity enriches teaching. The 'Making Room', which is staffed by a professional artist, is accessible to all curriculum areas. Activities started in the classroom are transformed into imaginative work which extends learning.
- Relationships between students and their peers and between students and their teachers are strengths of the school.
- Students behave exceptionally well. They are always polite and are proud of their school.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make exceptional progress and are excellent role models for younger students.
- The governing body provides a high level of challenge and successfully helps to plan and drive school improvement.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has been above the floor standard for a sustained period of time.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' academic progress is not as rapid in Key Stage 4 as it is in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form.
- Students are not always given sufficient time to respond to the advice teachers give them about how to improve their work.
- Students' targets are not used effectively enough by all teachers to plan lessons where the work matches students' needs so that they all learn well and make good progress.
- In a minority of lessons, there are not enough opportunities for students to work independently.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, including some joint observations with members of the school’s middle leadership team. Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to lessons.
- Observations of other aspects of the school’s work were also made, including a visit to the Making Room, listening to students read, assemblies and a scrutiny of marking.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, groups of students and representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation, performance data, records relating to behaviour and attendance and looked at samples of students’ work. They also looked carefully at the school’s central record of checks on staff.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 124 parents and carers in their responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered the views of staff, including those expressed in 72 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector | Additional inspector |
| Helen Matthews | Additional inspector |
| Steven Edwards | Additional inspector |
| Sean Thornton | Additional inspector |
| Alan Jones | Additional inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The Corsham School is a larger than average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school converted to academy status in April 2011 and will become the lead school in a multi-academy trust in January 2013. At the previous inspection in February 2009, the predecessor school was judged to be outstanding.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in care of the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and students who have a parent or carer in the armed forces) is below national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above the national average. This is also so for those supported at school action, and for those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of students are White British. Few students have English as an additional language.
- A minority of students in Years 10 and 11 take vocational courses at local colleges as part of the Foundation Learning programme.
- The number of students on roll in the sixth form has increased since 2008 and retention rates from Year 12 to 13 are above the national average.
- The school holds a national award for creativity and an international award for its website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that students make consistently excellent progress from year to year especially in Key Stage 4 and in English and mathematics
 - ensuring that students' targets are closely matched to the learning needs of students of all levels of ability and to their individual rates of progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to work more actively, independently and in groups, especially in the core subjects
 - ensuring that students are given opportunity to respond to feedback from teachers by making corrections, applying the improvement targets they have been set in later pieces of work or by talking to teachers about what they need to do to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. They make very good progress in Key Stage 3 and exceptional progress in the sixth form. The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C has been above the current floor standard for a sustained period of time.
- There is a consistent pattern of higher than average percentages of students attaining the highest GCSE examination grades of A* and A across a range of subjects.
- All groups of students, including disabled students, those with special educational needs, the few from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to their peers and to all students nationally.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding effectively to support eligible students. It has provided individual help and guidance, one-to-one tuition and funded additional learning opportunities. As a result, these students make similar progress to their peers and to all students nationally as seen in their comparative average points scores.
- The great majority of parents and carers who completed the Parent View questionnaire believe that their children make good progress at the school.
- Across the school, and most notably in the foundation subjects, teachers fully exploit opportunities for students to work creatively. Students use a variety of media to make models and visual displays to help them learn. For example, a large scale model of the Buddha created by sixth form philosophy students depicts the key teachings of the Buddhist religion. Additionally, the creation of a model volcano enabled Key Stage 3 students to understand the sequence of events in a volcanic eruption.
- Students following vocational courses at local colleges make good progress in their academic and personal development. This is evident in the low numbers of students leaving the school who are not in education, employment, or training. The school does not enter students early for examinations.
- In the sixth form, academic achievement is consistently high, and exceptionally high in some subjects, as indicated by the above national percentage of students attaining A-level grades A* to B.
- Students are encouraged to read widely and the school makes very effective use of sixth form students, who have been trained in phonics (the linking of letters or groups of letters and the sounds they make) to support and develop reading with younger students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding practice, most notably in the foundation subjects. This is endorsed by the view of the large majority of parents and carers who completed the Parent View questionnaire that their children are well taught at the school.
- Classroom relationships are extremely positive and students speak highly of their teachers and the adults who work with them.
- Where teaching is best, for example in a Year 10 design and technology lesson graded as outstanding, students learn quickly, enjoy the activities and are motivated by very good teacher questioning. Additionally, in a Year 9 German lesson the very high expectations and excellent questioning by the teacher resulted in all students readily contributing to the lesson and being enthusiastic about their learning.
- In the majority of lessons, the pace of learning is at least good. Teachers use a variety of interesting activities and creative approaches to capture students' interest. This includes the use of the facilities available in the Making Room to make topics come to life and to make learning fun.
- Where teaching assistants and other adults are deployed, they make an effective contribution to

learning.

- Teachers mainly adapt work well to suit the varying abilities of students. However, in a few lessons tasks are not tailored closely enough to students' needs. In these lessons students do not consistently have the opportunity to work independently or in pairs or groups to find things out for themselves and there is little evidence of active learning. Where this happens students do not make sufficient progress.
- The majority of students know their targets and their work is regularly marked. In the best lessons, for example in a Year 11 history lesson, students could explain precisely what they needed to do to improve their work and there was clear evidence of a dialogue between teacher and student in the exercise books. However, other work in students' books indicates that they are not in the habit of correcting work or acting on the teacher's advice in a range of subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are proud to be members of the school and find it difficult to say anything about how it could be improved. They behave exceptionally well in lessons and at social times. They are extremely courteous and polite and show exemplary attitudes towards learning. This is a particularly strong feature of the school.
- The positive views of students are strongly supported by the staff questionnaire responses and those of the parents and carers who completed the Parent View questionnaire.
- The systems to manage inappropriate behaviour are widely understood by students. Incidents of exclusion are rare and declining. Students speak about the shock of being excluded and how this sanction is used effectively to help them address their attitudes towards school. Students who have previously been excluded from the school benefit from personalised learning opportunities and are supported to make good progress on reintegration to the school.
- Students feel safe in school. They are aware of the different forms of bullying. However, although bullying of any kind is rare, when it does occur it is dealt with highly effectively. This includes one incident of cyber-bullying in which the school proactively worked with local police officers to address the situation.
- Attendance is above the national average and students are punctual to lessons.
- Students' moral development is evident in their outstanding behaviour and their showing clear understanding of right and wrong. Many donate the monetary value of their reward points to charity.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led. Middle leaders work effectively to ensure that the academic and personal progress of students is checked regularly. The focus on creativity has a positive impact on the work of the school and the impact of this work can be seen around the school and in the local community.
- Leaders tackle weaker practice through the provision of personalised professional development. This enables teachers to work together in pairs or groups to share ideas about how to plan and teach effective lessons. Senior leaders regularly drop into lessons. The focus for these drop-ins is now specifically about teaching and learning. Where shortcomings are identified, staff, together with their relevant middle leader, have responsibility for addressing them because they will be the focus for the next visit.
- Well-organised systems for performance management ensure that teachers' objectives are closely aligned to those of middle and senior leaders and that all are matched to the development needs of the school. Teachers' pay progression is directly linked to close assessment of their performance.
- Students benefit greatly from the school's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. The school's emphasis on creativity provides an unusually large variety of occasions where students can respond to art, music, drama, dance and literature. As a result students respect each other and value their differences. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination of all kinds very effectively.

- The curriculum has significant strengths and meets the needs of the students and the local community well. It is highly personalised for those students who would benefit from alternative placements. The GCSE programme is well tailored to students' capabilities. Those wishing to gain the English Baccalaureate qualification are supported to do so. The school works in close partnership with local colleges to ensure diverse and inclusive provision post-16.
 - Financial decisions are focused on the development priorities for the school and for supporting students' progress. The use of the pupil premium is closely monitored to ensure that it enables those students who are eligible to secure the same rates of progress as their peers.
 - Staff responding to the questionnaire are highly positive about the school. As one commented, 'The ethos of the school is built on superb relationships at all levels.'
 - Procedures to ensure safety, child protection and safeguarding fully meet current requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school very well. They provide good support but also hold school leaders to account. They challenge decisions and, as result of good dialogue between governors and school leaders, policies relating to the curriculum and to performance management have been refined to meet the needs of students and staff. Governors have an accurate understanding of data and of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are fully aware of the quality of teaching and of how the school works to improve teachers' performance in the classroom. They ensure that performance management arrangements are closely linked to teachers' pay progression. Professional expertise within the governing body ensures that governors have a good grasp of the finances available to the school. As a result, resources are well managed and pupil premium funding is targeted at the right students. Governors are committed to ensuring financial provision is long-term enough to secure improvements in achievement. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Appropriate training ensures that all governors are able to fulfil their roles effectively.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136611 |
| Local authority | Wiltshire |
| Inspection number | 395690 |

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

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| Type of school | Academy converter |
| School category | Non maintained |
| 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 | 1,366 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 233 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Niall Smiddy |
| Headteacher | Martin Williams |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25–26 February 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01249 713284 |
| Fax number | 01249 701102 |
| Email address | headteacher@corsham.wilts.sch.uk |

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