

# Cornfield School

Cornfield Close, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 6HY

**Inspection dates** 2–3 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching across the different subjects. It has not been good enough to secure good achievement, particularly in English and humanities.
- The development of students' reading and writing skills is not systematic and students do not yet practise these skills enough across all subjects.
- Teachers do not always use the school's information about students to plan activities in lessons which challenge, motivate and engage them.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment during lessons to help increase students' engagement and accelerate the progress they are making.
- Students' attendance, though improving for many, remains well below that of students nationally.
- Behaviour, whilst improving for most, is not consistently good, and in some lessons a lack of engagement prevents some students from learning successfully.
- Some leaders of subjects do not always check closely enough on the quality of teaching and its impact, including ensuring that the grades given to students can be justified from the work that the students have done.
- Frequent staffing changes have meant that teaching and achievement have not always improved, despite the efforts of senior leaders including governors.
- New systems for tracking students' progress have been introduced but are not yet fully embedded.

### The school has the following strengths

- Older students value the improved opportunities for vocational learning at college and in the workplace.
- Students enjoy subjects where they are given greater opportunities to be active such as science, physical education and art.
- Students feel safe in school and parents and carers value the way the school supports their children.
- All leavers find places in further education or training.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, some of them jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector heard students read, looked at students' work in books and on display around the school.
- The inspector took account of the school's procedures for safeguarding. The inspector looked at the school's planning, leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the monitoring of teaching by school leaders and the tracking of students' academic and social progress.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, other staff, students, two members of the governing body and the headteacher of one of the other schools in the federation. The inspector had a telephone conversation with the school's Improvement Partner. .
- The inspector took account of inspection questionnaires returned by 23 members of staff, together with the school's own surveys of the views of students and parents and carers. The inspector reviewed Parent View (the online questionnaire) but there were too few responses on the system to provide an analysis.

## Inspection team

Timothy Feast, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Cornfield is a small school which provides for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- All students have statements of special educational needs. Some students have additional needs, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autistic spectrum condition (ASC).
- This year, all the students are boys and nearly all are from White British backgrounds. None speaks English as an additional language.
- Over half the students are eligible for the pupil premium. This is well above the national average. The pupil premium is an additional sum of money provided by the government to support students known to be eligible for free school meals over the last six years, children looked after by the local authority and those from service families; there were none from service families at the time of the inspection.
- The school has high levels of mobility, with students joining at all times during their secondary school years.
- There are considerably more boys in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
- The school's curriculum for older students provides opportunities for students to study vocational courses at a number of local colleges and to experience work-based learning in a range of local businesses.
- Since the last inspection, the school has become part of a 'hard' federation of three local special schools. This has led to a re-structuring of governance.
- Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the senior leadership. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013. There is no permanent member of staff in post who leads on English.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching so achievement is raised by:
  - teachers consistently using the information about students' performance to plan work that effectively challenges, motivates and engages them
  - teachers systematically using the opportunities across subjects to improve students' reading and writing skills in their lessons
  - teachers systematically checking students' progress and understanding in lessons and using this information to change their activities and strategies when students' progress is not good enough.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - implementing an effective strategy to tackle the poor reading and writing skills of many students by ensuring that there is a common approach in lessons which is reinforced by discrete intervention sessions and specialist support
  - further developing the role of subject leaders so that they have a greater impact on raising standards and improving teaching
  - implementing a tracking system which is manageable and which allows all staff to see the progress students are making and use that information to help their planning of lessons
  - relentlessly focusing on strategies to improve attendance and behaviour in lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students progress at considerably different rates in different subjects, irrespective of their disabilities or special educational needs, and this is seen in the results they attain by the time they leave the school. Achievement is not good in English and humanities but is better in science, mathematics, physical education, art and design and in information technology.
- Progress in lessons is typically better when students are actively engaged in the tasks set for them. This was seen to good effect in a Year 7 outdoor pursuits lesson, where students confidently met the objectives for the externally validated award, including correctly identifying different trees and their wood. In too many lessons, however, progress is not fast enough.
- School records and observations during the inspection show there is little difference in the achievement of different groups within the school, including those joining the school at different times of the school year.
- Students' achievement is good in their vocational courses, including off-site in local colleges, and they develop good attitudes in their workplace learning.
- All groups of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium reach similar levels of attainment to other pupils in the school in both English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4.
- More able students make similar progress to other ability groups and do succeed in attaining good GCSE grades in subjects such as mathematics, science and art and design, but not consistently in all of them. There is no early entry policy for GCSE. Students with additional difficulties make similar progress to that of students generally, in the school.
- The school assesses students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics on entry and implements a programme of additional support. This programme is not having sufficient impact and the reading and writing skills of many students remain low. Students often struggle with more complex words in their reading and insufficient guidance is given on how to improve writing. Such limitations have an impact both on students' academic outcomes and on attempts to raise their self-esteem. They make better progress with their skills in mathematics.
- Students achieve a range of vocational qualifications through courses both in school and at local colleges. Local employers comment positively on the personal attributes shown by students on work experience placements. All these opportunities assist students in moving to the next stage of their education and, over the last three years, all students leaving at the end of Year 11 have progressed to college placements or training.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is inconsistent across subjects, despite the monitoring work of senior leaders, and it has not enabled students consistently to make fast enough progress in all subjects.
- Whilst the teaching of some staff has improved, supported by the work of senior leaders, the turnover of staff in subjects such as English and humanities has contributed to this inconsistency.
- In less effective teaching, activities do not engage the students sufficiently, their concentration wanders and behaviour deteriorates. In these classes with small numbers of students, work is not always focused effectively on the individual needs of the students. Staff do not take enough account of the information they have on how well students are doing in their planning.
- Where students are not motivated by the activity planned, staff do not take effective steps to change tack to re-engage students, including ensuring that support staff are used to maximum effect.
- In more effective teaching, teachers have high expectations of what the students will achieve,

whether it is completing trampolining routines, conducting science investigations or following up the visit to Brighton to produce art work of a high standard for their GCSE course work; staff provide a high level of effective comment on the students' progress and what they need to do to improve their work, and students respond positively. In these classes teachers work well with support staff; in the best teaching observed, the teamwork was seamless and students benefitted from high quality support from all staff.

- The teaching of reading is not consistently of a high quality. Students who were heard reading lacked strategies to deal with unfamiliar words, often resorting to ineffective guesswork. There is insufficient emphasis on reading and writing across subjects. The quality of students' writing in books was often poor and there were very limited opportunities seen to do any extended writing.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Behaviour and students' attitudes are not consistently good, because high expectations of what students can achieve are not consistently re-enforced by all staff.
- On occasions, students do not show that they can concentrate for periods of time appropriate for their age or persevere with the tasks they have been set. In too many sessions, some students lost interest and either did little work or had to be removed to avoid hindering the learning of others.
- Where expectations are high, students thrive on being expected to do well and tackle challenging tasks. They stay on task, concentrate well and respond positively to suggestions for improvement. There are excellent relationships with staff in some subjects and, in discussions with students; these were the subjects they said they enjoyed the most. On occasions, some students showed a real thirst for knowledge through the questions they asked, for example when, in response to a propaganda poster being studied, asking if 'King Kong' had been filmed before the First World War.
- Students' behaviour off-site, in local colleges and in work placements is better and more consistent than it is in school because they are more motivated than they are in some of the school-based teaching.
- Students say they feel safe in school and that any incidents of bullying are quickly and effectively dealt with. The number of incidents of poor behaviour and occasions when physical restraint have had to be used has fallen in recent years. The number of fixed term exclusions has reduced over the last few years. Students, in their conversations with the inspector, indicated that they thought their behaviour improved whilst they were at Cornfield School. Parents in the school surveys indicated that they thought their child's behaviour improved whilst at Cornfield.
- Attendance is well below the national figure but a majority of the students improve their attendance whilst at the school. Attendance at college and work-based learning is often good and their good attitudes are frequently commented upon.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school has not sustained the quality of its work since the last inspection.
- Recent appointments have helped to strengthen the capacity of the leadership team and changes in the governance through the federation are focused on raising its impact. These changes have enhanced the school's capacity for improvement. However, some of these improvements are new and are not yet embedded.
- Changes in staffing, including middle leadership, has led to some inconsistencies, especially in their collection of evidence to accurately demonstrate students' achievement across different subjects. This in turn limits the impact they have on improving teaching and raising

achievement. New systems for tracking student progress have been introduced, replacing ones not sufficiently easy to use but they have not been in use long enough to be fully embedded. The old systems limited the effectiveness of both middle leaders and support staff.

- Senior leaders have systematically monitored the quality of teaching and brought about the improvement of some individuals' performance and the departure of others from the school. These observations have contributed to staff's performance management and the challenge to staff who underperform. The school acknowledges, however, that significant inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching, especially in relation to the teaching of different subjects.
- The current programmes to enhance reading and writing skills have not had sufficient impact on skill levels. A sharper focus on improving reading in the short term is still waiting on the adoption of a consistent approach across the federation.
- School leaders have improved the curriculum, especially by increasing the range of vocational opportunities for older students. The range of accredited courses has also been expanded.
- Students are clear that the school is consistent in promoting opportunities equally and creating an environment where discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated. However, the school's impact on fostering good relationships has not been fully effective in terms of promoting consistently good behaviour. Similarly, its impact on promoting good attendance has not been strong enough.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and linked to appropriate planning, at school, federation and locality levels.
- Pupils' premium funding is used effectively, with additional one-to-one targeted support provided, and students' attainment is in line with that of their peers.
- The school has received limited support from the local authority. The headteachers value the support and challenge they provide each other through the workings of the federation.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors continue to know the school well, especially the quality of teaching and how well the students achieve, including performance data. They support the school in areas where it is facing problems, for example over its funding. Governors do hold school leaders to account. The expectation is that the new governance structure implemented by the federation will strengthen governance through the adoption and monitoring of equally stringent standards across the three schools. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and the governing body follows good procedures in relation to financial management. Governors are aware of the use that is made of pupil premium funding and its impact and they have questioned whether the funding could be used more effectively. Governors have adopted the new performance management policy and have linked performance to salaries, including the release of underperforming staff.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	126170
<b>Local authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	426402

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community Special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	36
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Surtees
<b>Headteacher</b>	Maria Davis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28–29 September 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01903 731277
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