



The Sir John Colfox School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113852
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279264
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Martyn Rhowbotham HMI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive | School address | Ridgeway |
| School category | Community | | Bridport |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 | | Dorset DT6 3DT |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01308 422291 |
| Number on roll | 1021 | Fax number | 01308 420036 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Mark Roberts |
| Date of previous inspection | 15 February 2000 | Headteacher | Mrs Kay Taylor |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sir John Colfox School is an average-sized, mixed comprehensive school in Bridport, Dorset. It serves the town and the surrounding rural area and has 989 students on roll, including 116 in the sixth form. It has specialist status in languages. Almost all students are from a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, as is the proportion of students whose first language is not English. The proportion of students with special educational needs, including statements, is slightly below the national average. On entry to the school, students' achievements are in line with the national average. The school has many partnerships with other schools and colleges, including a joint sixth form with Beaminster School, in order to extend the range of courses on offer.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges its overall effectiveness as satisfactory and this is confirmed by the inspection. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Leaders and managers are aware of the variations in standards achieved in different subjects and have appropriate plans in place to address these differences. Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 but it is more variable in Years 10 and 11. Students' personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour in lessons is very largely good and most students behave well around the school and in the playground. The development of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 has been successful. Most students enjoy school and they value the additional activities provided such as sports and clubs. The school monitors the quality of teaching well and is working to minimise the inconsistencies between departments. Parents are generally positive about the school and the school is aware of concerns they have. Students are cared for well and the guidance they receive is good. The senior leadership team is relatively new in post. They have focused appropriately on improving the key aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of teaching, and achievements and standards. The school has made good progress in using data on individual students to identify underachievement. The school provides satisfactory value for money. These recent improvements, combined with an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses, highlight the school's good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Post-16 provision is provided through a long-standing partnership with Beaminster School, some seven miles away. This enables a wider range of AS level and GCE A courses to be offered but the provision of courses other than these is limited. Students enter the sixth form with a range of abilities. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students enjoy and respond well to the challenge provided in their lessons. They make good and often very good progress, especially in Year 13. They are proud of their achievements and of their school. Students in the sixth form value greatly the help and support they get from their teachers. They also enjoy the chance to help and support students lower down the school and the opportunity to work with students from Beaminster School.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve achievement and standards at the end of Year 11 by building on the effective practice lower down the school
- increase the level and type of courses in the sixth form
- improve the consistency of examination performance between subjects
- ensure all teaching reaches the standards achieved in the best lessons by sharing effective practice amongst staff.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average. By the time they leave the main school at the end of Year 11, the educational standards achieved by students are also in line with others nationally. In Years 7 to 9, the school has made good progress and students now achieve well, resulting in marginally above average results. Students are set targets regularly by their teachers and they are aware of their own progress. Results in tests given in Year 9 are rising steadily, particularly in English, where higher levels than those seen nationally are achieved. This is because teachers have developed the ways that they teach students, emphasising thorough and accurate assessment and use this to help them plan their work more effectively and to maintain sufficient challenge. In Years 10 and 11, students' progress is more variable than lower down the school, resulting in standards at the end of Year 11 that are at the national average. Where the expertise is fully shared between teachers and students' progress is properly measured and used to plan their learning, achievement is good. Students with particular educational needs make progress that matches that made by their peers.

In the sixth form, students make good progress by the end of Year 13. The school accepts students with a range of abilities into the sixth form. Teaching is good, students understand how to improve their work, and their progress is carefully monitored and rigorous targets are set throughout. However, achievement in Year 12 is less marked than in Year 13.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. They respond well to the school's many opportunities to ensure their well-being and personal growth. Students particularly appreciate the cultural and international experiences created through the school's language specialism. Good spiritual, moral and social development is evident in their considerate behaviour and involvement in charitable fund-raising.

An improved curriculum ensures that students enjoy their education. Vocational courses such as hairdressing are successful and valued. These courses and other curriculum changes have improved attendance, which is now average. Attitudes and behaviour are mainly good both in lessons and around the school. Recent integration of students with learning difficulties and disabilities into mainstream classes has been successful, leading to improved achievement.

The physical education department and good extra-curricular activities ensure that students develop positive attitudes towards fitness. The school's promotion of healthy eating is satisfactory.

Students make significant contributions to the community in a wide variety of ways. These contacts reinforce social development well. Understanding of the world of work

is good, promoted by effective careers provision and work-related courses. Subjects such as business studies and the vocational courses on offer contribute effectively to students' acquisition of skills relevant to the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school judges teaching and learning to be satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Inspection evidence shows these judgements to be accurate. The better lessons have clear objectives which students understand. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and they plan a range of innovative activities that challenge all students, especially the most able. Students carry out these tasks with enthusiasm and take responsibility for their own learning and progress. Information and communication technology is often used well to support learning in these lessons. In a good geography lesson, the teacher used a data projector and a video skilfully to enable students to learn and make very good progress in an enjoyable and challenging way. In the less effective lessons, objectives are often vague. Tasks are unimaginative and they provide insufficient interest or challenge for students. There is often a lack of variety and students become bored, lose concentration and spend too long chatting. Learning is not checked frequently or rigorously enough.

In the sixth form, teachers plan lessons that provide good challenge and enable students to think for themselves and to develop their independent learning skills. Students willingly take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers provide students with good opportunities to demonstrate their understanding. They check on students' progress throughout lessons. Students take responsibility for their own learning and progress and produce good work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form, where there are few vocational options or courses other than GCE A levels. Good collaboration with other schools and colleges has increased the range of courses available. Improvements to the range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 have had positive effects on students' attitudes, motivation and attendance. These courses also help students to develop a good understanding of the nature of enterprise and work-related learning. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are integrated effectively and, with effective support, make good progress. The range of additional activities such as sports and clubs for younger students is good. It is satisfactory in the sixth form. A strong PE curriculum promotes good teamwork. The school has achieved many sporting successes at regional and national level. Health and safety issues and risk assessments

are well considered. Personal, social and health education is well organised, promoting students' good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe and to help them prepare properly for the world of work. There is a strong Internationalist ethos in the school with close contacts with partner schools in Europe and regular exchanges and cultural events.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Students are cared for and supported well. They feel safe and generally enjoy coming to school. The challenges set by teachers are well judged so that most students clearly understand how their education is progressing. Students are well informed about their school and their future options at all stages, from their transfer from primary school up to when they are looking forward to higher education or a career. Students in the sixth form appreciate the support they receive from teachers and they value being treated by their teachers as young adults. They also value the opportunities they have to become involved in supporting students lower down the school with schemes such as acting as mentors for students in Year 11. Students who may be at risk through difficult circumstances of any kind are recognised early by the school. Outside partners are often in close contact with both teachers and students to help, advise and support their good work. Parents are kept in close contact, receiving regular reports on progress. The ideas and views of the student body are sought regularly and used to develop the way students are taught and to bring about improvements to the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the arrival of the headteacher and the creation of a new senior leadership team, there has been an appropriate focus on improving monitoring and evaluation of key aspects of the school's work. This has led to a comprehensive programme of subject reviews. Consequently, teachers have been helped to concentrate on teaching and students' learning. The result has been some improvement in students' achievement, especially in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. Standards have also improved in some subjects in Years 10 and 11. The school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses, especially with regard to the quality of teaching and inconsistencies in subjects. Value for money is satisfactory. Improvements to date and the school's effective self-evaluation show that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

The school makes successful efforts to create a safe and happy environment within which students can work and develop. As a result, students enjoy equal access to all that is on offer. The school has made good progress over the last three years in the analysis and use of data. This has meant that heads of subject areas are now in a position to address any shortcomings in achievement by individual students. Although some impact is discernible, for example, in the English department, it is still too early to see the full effect of this work in every subject area.

Governors play an active role in the monitoring and evaluation programme. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their good working relationship with the senior leadership team enables them to give support and to provide challenge when there is a need.

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Inspection judgements

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|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 2 |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | NA | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | Yes |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 | |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 | |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 | |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | Yes |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | Yes |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we recently inspected your school. You probably saw us around the school and we may have visited one of your lessons. Some of you came to meetings with us where you were very good at discussing your work and your progress. You also told us what you like about school and what you thought could be improved. You were very polite and helpful during the inspection and were particularly good at giving us directions when we got lost! Some of your parents or carers filled in confidential questionnaires which we took into account on reaching our judgements. You all made an important contribution to the inspection and we would like to thank you very much for that.

The main strengths of the school are:

- the progress you make in Years 7, 8 and 9, especially in English
- the progress made by the end of Year 13 in the sixth form
- your generally sensible behaviour in lessons and around the school
- the additional activities such as sports and trips
- the range of courses in Years 10 and 11
- most of you know how well you are doing.

So as to improve further, the school needs to:

- make sure you do well in all subjects in Years 10 and 11
- introduce more courses into the sixth form
- ensure that all lessons are as good as the best ones.

You can help a great deal in this by attending all of the time and working as hard as you can in all of your lessons.

Thank you again for all of your help in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.