



# The Cornelius Vermuyden School and Arts College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 115336  
**LEA** ESSEX LEA  
**Inspection number** 279578  
**Inspection dates** 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Dr. Ian Seath HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Dinant Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		SS8 9QS
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 685011
<b>Number on roll</b>	900	<b>Fax number</b>	01268 510290
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. Steven Lacy-Smith
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 September 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Carol Skewes

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	13 June 2006 - 14 June 2006	279578

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The school completed a self-evaluation form which was useful for inspectors and gave an accurate picture of the school. Inspectors observed lessons, talked to teachers and leaders, and many students. In addition, students' work was examined. Inspectors were pleased to receive many completed questionnaire forms from parents.

## **Description of the school**

Cornelius Vermuyden school is an increasingly popular mixed comprehensive school in Canvey Island, Essex. It has received Specialist Arts College Status. At the time of inspection it had around 900 students. Of these, around 98% are from White British backgrounds, and less than 2% speak English as an additional language. The school catchment contains areas of significant deprivation. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little higher than the national average for schools of this type, as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Cornelius Vermuyden Arts College is a good and improving school and its students progress well. It has the potential to become outstanding. Although many pupils enter the school with levels of achievement well below that of many other schools, by the time they leave they are performing better than would be expected and are well equipped to progress to further study if they so choose. A relative weakness is that some students do not achieve the highest GCSE grades in some subjects. Support for students is very good and those who need it are very well provided for, so they achieve well. The school has a good emphasis on improving teaching and learning. As a result, most of the teaching is good, and only a small proportion is not as good as it should be. The marking of work is not yet consistently helpful in enabling students improve. Teachers plan for their classes well, and teaching assistants are very effective in their role. Good academic support is given throughout the school year. Very few students leave the school with no qualifications, and the proportion achieving five or more A\*-G grades is higher than in most schools. Students enjoy their time at the school and they feel safe. They know how to keep healthy. Any incidents of bullying are rare and they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students show respect for their peers, and behaviour is generally good. Because of this, good learning takes place in class and the school has a calm and ordered atmosphere. The grounds are pleasant, and students' work is extensively displayed so that they can take a pride in it. Students and the wider local community benefit from the school's Specialist Arts College status. The school has a resident artist who works to enrich both the environment and students' experience. For example open air sculpture sessions motivate students to work effectively with shape and texture. The school is involved in many community ventures which successfully make art accessible to those who might otherwise not benefit. A large arts centre is used both as a teaching and workshop space, and for exhibiting students' work. Achievements in science have been weak in the last few years. The school recognises this and has made many changes as a result. Early evidence indicates that standards improved in science in 2006, though it is too early to be sure that this will be sustained. The school provides good value for money, and has a strong capacity to improve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the proportion of students achieving high grade GCSE passes. Ensure continued improvement in science.
- Work to eliminate the small amount of inadequate teaching and learning.
- Improve the consistency of marking so that all students understand what they need to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievements and standards are good overall. The achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. When students enter the school in

year 7, their attainment is generally lower than the national average and fewer of them have reached higher levels. At Key stage 3, overall progress has been satisfactory in recent years, but the sharp improvement at Key Stage 4, particularly in the last three years, means that many students have exceeded the standards expected of them by the age of 16. Science remains a relative weakness within this strong and improving picture. The proportion of students achieving five or more grades A\*-C at GCSE was close to the national average in 2005; at 48% it has shown an improving trend over the last 3 years. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to G has improved consistently and is now significantly higher than the national figure. This is an indication of the way in which the school successfully strives to ensure that all students achieve. Students are very successful in Information Technology and Art and Design. Students in Art are able to fast-track onto an AS course.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of students is good. By its actions, the school shows that it values all students. This is demonstrated by the wide variety of opportunities they are offered to take responsibilities which help prepare them for life as adults. For example, students are able to take up positions as teenage governors and peer mentors with whom other students can discuss any problems. Students respond by showing positive and mature attitudes to school and to learning. They are happy in school and behave well. The exception to this is in those few lessons in which teaching does not motivate students, they become bored, which results in disruption of learning. The sensible behaviour of students continues when they move around the school site and when they are in practical lessons. They make an effective contribution to the wider community by becoming youth community volunteers and by working in primary schools in activities which enhance the school's Specialist Arts College status. Students understand the need to be healthy. They appreciate the excellent range of healthy eating options provided in school and the vast majority pursue a healthy lifestyle through involvement in sport. Attendance is satisfactory but the school continues to improve. Students have increasing opportunities to take part in activities related to the world of work and enterprise and thereby to develop skills which are necessary for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall. Many of the lessons observed were good and a significant number were outstanding. Inspectors observed a small minority of inadequate lessons. Lesson planning is good, with a clear emphasis on what students should learn. Class management is generally effective, so behaviour is calm and learning can take place effectively. Corridor discipline prior to lessons is good. In the best

sessions, teachers are fully aware of the abilities and needs of all students in their care and they structure the learning accordingly, stretching the most able. Teachers use computers and inter-active whiteboards well, which motivates students. For example, in one Year 8 science lesson on photosynthesis and food webs the teacher encouraged students to work in groups to evaluate different definitions offered in an animation projected onto the interactive white board. Questioning is effectively used in lessons to involve all students, although occasionally learning is not consolidated as lessons progress. As a result, students may forget some of the concepts or key words they have covered. In the small number of less successful lessons, some students become restless and disrupt the learning of others. The most able students are not always sufficiently stretched in every subject, though the support given to those lower achievers who need it ensures that they achieve very well. The school has recognised this and has good plans for improving provision for gifted and talented students. Though good overall, the quality of marking is variable. In the majority of examples comments are full and helpful, and spelling and grammar are corrected so that students are clear about what they need to do to improve. However this is not always the case and in some cases students would not have been clear how they could have gained better marks or grades. The work of the teaching assistants is very effective and highly valued by students and staff.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Students follow an appropriate curriculum in both key stages, though it is particularly imaginative in Key Stage 4. In Years 10 and 11, students have a good and well-developed range of GCSE and vocational options. One group in each year is fast-tracked in art, enabling them to follow an AS course. Fast tracking is developing in technology, too, so that Year 9 students can take parts of their GCSEs early. Vocational courses in business studies and engineering have recently been introduced and there is the opportunity for training at a nearby college under the Increased Flexibility Partnership Programme. These initiatives have helped to reduce the number of school exclusions. This September will see a further extension of options with the introduction of catering, new programmes of study for science, and a short course in citizenship. Gifted and talented students benefit from additional enrichment opportunities during Summer School but there is recognition that more needs to be done to provide greater challenge for these students. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are exceptionally well supported, especially through the work of the Learning Support Department, which enables them to fully participate in the curriculum. The school has an excellent range of extra-curricular activities which includes dance, sport, homework clubs, photography and many more. Students' achievement has improved as a result.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides an outstanding level of care, guidance and support to its students. It has numerous, well thought out and unusually imaginative programmes in the Pupil Support Centre, some of which involve the support of outside agencies for those students who may be at risk. The programmes result in students developing increased confidence and inter-personal skills which help them to learn. They include a successful reintegration programme for students who need to modify their behaviour, as well as opportunities for students to become more independent. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and security are effective. Staff rapidly identify those students who have learning difficulties and disabilities and set up appropriate and effective individual learning programmes which enable them to make outstanding progress. Those not reaching the required levels in Year 7 improve their standards by being taught in a small group in the Progress Unit. Students benefit from the focused support of well trained teaching assistants. Systems to provide similar support for gifted and talented students are presently being developed. Throughout the school, students know their targets and what they must do to make further progress. A new inspection programme in year 9 in which students talk to staff about their learning is helping to direct them clearly as to how to improve their work. Students say opportunities to mark each others work are helpful in motivating them to work harder.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher provides very good leadership and a strong direction. She sets high expectations. Emphasis on spreading leadership and accountability as widely as possible has worked in drawing staff together and giving the school a common sense of purpose. The achievement of Specialist Arts College status has given the school a strong impetus and the students a much increased range of experience. The school has a strong capacity to improve further. The improvements the school has made ensure that students make good progress. The school's vision is well adjusted to the needs of students and their community. The curriculum has been shaped carefully so that all students gain from the opportunities available. Furthermore, the outstanding leadership of provision for students with learning difficulties means they make exceptional progress. Careful thought has been applied to how all students are drawn effectively into the life of the school. Governors are becoming increasingly involved in the work of the school. They are highly supportive, although at this stage they could usefully increase the level of challenge they offer to the leadership of the school. The whole school is sharply focused on raising achievement. The good teamwork of the senior leadership team, especially on improving teaching and learning, is leading to the spreading of good practice. The school has a good understanding of its teaching and learning; the grades it awards for lessons, occasionally over-generous, are generally accurate. The school is highly systematic in monitoring and evaluating its work and students' achievement. Each department keeps a close track on its provision and results and this is providing them and the school with an effective basis for tackling

weaknesses. As a result, the school makes best use of its staff and resources. The school recognises the need to improve science results and has implemented a number of changes to address the issue. There are early indications that standards in this area are beginning to rise.



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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Recently, I visited your school with three other inspectors. We talked to many of you, looked at your work, and sat in on some of your lessons. We were also pleased to receive so many completed questionnaires from your parents. Your school is a good one and it is improving. It has many strengths - for example you told us that you liked the variety of things you can do outside school, you liked the art you do, and you felt safe. You also liked the food. The school also cares for and supports students very well indeed. We thought that one of the strengths of the school is you. Throughout our visit you were courteous and helpful, and we thought that you were calm and sensible around the school. In most of the classes we visited you worked well and learned, but we noticed that, in a very small number, poor behaviour by a few disrupted the learning of others. The school knows about this and has been taking steps to minimise it for some time - but they will need your help to stop it completely. Students at your school progress very well and the majority of you will leave with good GCSE results. The school agrees with us that one of the ways it can help students even more is to stretch you even further and help more achieve the highest grades. Again you can help with this by making sure that you are clear about what you need to do to improve further, and by asking if you are not. One of the things you told us was that bullying is rare. You can help keep it this way by talking to either your parents, teachers or peer mentors if you are affected. If you do this it will be dealt with quickly and effectively - we all agree that bullying is wrong. So thank you for your help, and I wish you all well.