



Cowplain Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116410
LEA Hampshire LEA
Inspection number 279819
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Peter Green

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Hart Plain Avenue
School category	Community		Cowplain
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Waterlooville PO8 8RY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02392612020
Number on roll	1077	Fax number	02392612030
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Geoff Lawton
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr David Rowlinson

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	24 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	279819

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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

Cowplain is a large, semi-rural comprehensive school in Hampshire. The school gained Business and Enterprise specialist status in 2005 and its numbers have increased since its last inspection. The percentage of students eligible for free schools meals is close to the national average as is the number of students with statements of special educational needs. The vast majority of the students are of White British Heritage. Students' attainment on entry to the school is just below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Taken overall Cowplain is an effective school that provides a good quality of education for all of its students. The staff team is well led by the headteacher and senior managers. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses which match the findings of the inspection team. They have successfully addressed the issues raised by the last inspection, made successful curriculum changes and the school improvement plan sets out clearly the right priorities. There is good capacity for further improvement. However, some sections of the plans do not currently contain sufficient information about how the success of proposed activity will be measured in terms of its impact on student progress.

The support for students of all backgrounds and abilities is a strength of the school's provision and as a result students achieve well. There has been an upward trend in examination results since the last inspection and standards are average. The school's work with many partner organisations and the community is very effective in helping to meet the needs of its students and promote an inclusive ethos. Students contribute positively to the community.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles in the curriculum and in the services it provides. The students feel safe and behave well. The range of sporting and extra curricular activities and trips is wide; students and parents speak highly of these. Since the last inspection the school has developed its enterprise curriculum well. Students make good progress especially in years 7 and 8 when they take their key stage 3 tests a year early with good results. GCSE results reflect good achievement for the pupils. Teaching and learning are good, though classroom strategies to extend high and low achieving students are not used consistently enough by all teachers.

The head involves parents and governors fully in decisions about the school. Governors are most supportive of the school and help to set a caring and student-centred ethos. The school, however, does not fully meet the statutory requirement regarding collective worship. A very small minority of staff did not have appropriate performance targets agreed.

What the school should do to improve further

andmiddot; Ensure that all action plans refer more clearly to how they will impact on student progressandmiddot; Ensure that the school strategies to extend pupils are used by all teachers andmiddot; Ensure that all staff have measures of student progress in their performance management targets

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievements are good and standards are close to the national average. GCSE results are at the national average. Students enter the school with attainment below the national average and they make good progress especially in Years 7 and 8, confirmed

by the results of the national tests taken at the end of Year 8 which are significantly higher than average. Achievement in 2005 was slightly higher than average for a small group of lower attaining students and those with significant learning difficulties.

The school's data for 2006 clearly indicate that standards have risen significantly especially in the vocational subjects, making the overall achievement good, though the achievement of A* and A grades at GCSE is still low. The data for the current year 11 cohort show that results are likely to increase by at least 15% when the vocational GCSE double awards are taken into account. Analysis of coursework marks already gained for English, maths and science indicates that results should rise significantly overall. This shows good achievement considering these students' prior attainment.

The school sets realistic targets based on its own analysis of students' previous achievement. The system for setting and tracking these targets is robust and is contributing to improved performance by students. Recent initiatives have been undertaken to improve the performance the most able but these have yet to have an impact. The school analyses its results carefully and requires departments to produce corresponding improvement action plans which are regularly monitored.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. When asked what the school does best a student said, 'It gives you freedom and use of an open mind'. A strength of the school is how it develops work related skills. Students leave school well prepared to express their views and plan and manage projects as well as finances. Several students have developed their mini-enterprises into small businesses and work with younger students to develop their skills.

In making changes, the school positively encourages the students to express their views through the school council and enterprise groups. Suggestions, such as the purchase of drinking water dispensers, making the school safer, dealing with bullying and extending the range of courses, are acted upon. Students speak highly of the school; most behave well and enjoy their lessons. They like and are positively motivated by the rewards system based on 'learning improvement cards'.

Attendance is at the national average but often students are late for registration and lessons. This is a problem which the school plans to tackle through computerised registration. Absences, however, are already systematically tracked and followed up.

Students' moral and social development are good. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory with missed opportunities for reflection. They develop good social skills as they progress through school and feel well informed about how to keep themselves safe. Students involve themselves enthusiastically in fund raising for charities and in working with the local community.

There is good attention to healthy living. On the suggestions of the students, the school withdrew the supply of all fizzy drinks and has provided water fountains as replacements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Training and work done to improve student learning are starting to have an impact on raising standards further. The system of lesson observation by senior management is robust. From these observations teachers receive detailed feedback and reports on how they can improve their teaching further.

During the inspection, the most successful lessons shared some common characteristics. Students were fully engaged in a wide range of activities. Planning and preparation was thorough. Classroom management was good. Teacher expectations were high. The relationships between students and teachers in these lessons were also very good with a cooperative approach to the work. The strongest teaching was where students were set relevant and challenging tasks and the teachers focused clearly on checking their progress and evaluating their learning. Two particularly outstanding lessons were observed in maths and English.

Overall lesson plans have clear teaching objectives but sometimes there is not enough detail on what students should learn in lessons, resulting in some teaching that does not always stretch the high or low achieving students. The majority of teachers mark students' work in great detail and give very clear and relevant guidance on how to improve. However, the school is aware that marking in some areas is not always consistent and is acting to ensure departments address this. The presentation of some students' work is of a low level that is too readily accepted by a few teachers.

The teaching of students with special educational needs is good and they achieve well. They and other students receive good support from a well-organised team of learning support assistants and specialist teachers who provide in-class help and one-to-one tuition.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and the school correctly views this as strength. It has been improved greatly since the last inspection when this was identified as a weakness. The school has developed a good work-related and vocational curriculum, which includes opportunities for work experience for all students and involves real projects such as planning the 'Way Ahead' Conference for Year 11. In Years 9 to 11 students now have a much wider choice of relevant vocational subjects as well as more traditional academic subjects. The introduction of such subjects as business and communication studies, leisure and tourism and media studies is popular with students who are achieving well in these subjects.

The school has some very strong community links with local businesses, colleges and other schools, for example through the Havant Federation. These have opened

alternative curriculum pathways for students in Years 10 and 11 and aid their progression into work or college when they leave school.

In Years 7 and 8 the students follow a condensed curriculum and take end of key stage examinations a year early in English, mathematics and science. As a result, the Year 9 curriculum has been developed to have a wide range of enterprise activities which include specific focus on improving literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT. Citizenship is gradually being developed across the curriculum.

The extra curriculum provision is extensive and well supported by students and staff. Attendance at homework and extra study clubs such as confidence building and coursework is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, support and guidance is good with some outstanding features; it is based on a strong pastoral support team. This team includes a student guidance counsellor available to all students. It brings a coherent focus and holistic approach to addressing student needs from medical, and behavioural, to welfare and social support. The team works closely with parents, and is effective in managing exclusions and reintegrating students back into school or with managed transfers to and from partner schools in the Havant Federation. The team provides good support for gifted and talented students and help for those lacking in confidence.

Child protection issues are given prompt attention and risk assessments are planned with care especially safeguarding and supporting vulnerable students. Support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is well resourced and targeted.

An inclusive ethos is promoted well by the student support team who use sound strategies to build confidence, such as 'Challenger' and 'Mission' activities and its outdoor education programmes.

Careers education and guidance are good and all students have a personal interview before they choose their subject and course options. The tutorial programme is satisfactory. Though tutors track progress well, personal improvement targets for students are not always specific enough or recorded accurately by the students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher and the senior leadership team have a clear vision for the development of the learning experiences for students and encourage innovation. The senior team is well organised with clear line management links with all the areas of the school. Its members appropriately support and monitor their own areas.

Staff and governors are fully involved in producing the comprehensive three part school improvement plan. The mid-term plan shows a number of ways in which the

benefits for students can be measured but the annual plans for individual subjects, with the exception of mathematics, currently do not include sufficient measurable criteria to show the extent to which standards will be raised following the actions taken. Improvements are planned for next year. Governors have a good strategic overview of the school and hold the school to account for standards. However, a daily act of collective worship has not been introduced since the last inspection.

Staff appraisal includes very systematic and effective arrangements to monitor teaching but observations do not always focus sufficiently on learning. Arrangements for professional development are well organised and outcomes are effective. However, statutory performance management requirements for teachers are not yet fully in place as at least two teachers were not set specific objectives for the progress of the students they teach.

The school consults regularly with parents and acts promptly on their feedback. The annual survey, conducted by an external agency, shows that parents and students think the school is doing well for them. The school is already using its additional specialist funds to make a significant contribution to mathematics teaching in some primary schools. As a result of recent improvements in target setting, the school has good capacity for improvement and value for money is good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ 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	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

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

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?	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	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

Students

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team that visited your school on the 24 and 25 May 2006 to let you know our findings and to thank you for telling us about the school. It was helpful to talk to so many of you from all year groups. We enjoyed our visit and appreciated the friendly and courteous welcome you gave us. We agree with you that Cowplain is a good school. Our report on the school will soon be published and it will be available in full for you, your parents, guardians and others to read. Here is a brief outline of the main points made in the report which we hope will be helpful to you and your teachers.

We consider your school is doing well because:

- the staff care about you and your welfare
- the staff are fully committed to helping you to achieve good results
- it has developed a good curriculum for you through which you can develop both academic and vocational skills, knowledge and experience
- it offers a good range of out of school activities, trips and visits
- it gives you opportunities to contribute positively to the community.

We think the school is well led and the staff are keen to help you; and we also think the school can improve further by:

- taking more careful account of your progress in all its improvement action plans
- making sure that more lessons engage and stretch students of all abilities
- complying with statutory guidance when reviewing how teachers can help you to do better.

We think that your headteacher and the staff are committed to making these and other improvements and we hope you will all contribute to them and benefit from them. With our thanks and best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Peter Green

Her Majesty's Inspector