



Coquet High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122363
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281244
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Paul Hancock HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Acklington Road
School category	Community		Amble
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		Morpeth, Northumberland
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01665 710636
Number on roll	592	Fax number	01665 713470
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr William Dodd
Date of previous inspection	1 December 1999	Headteacher	Mr Paul Allen

Age group 13 to 18	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 281244
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Coquet is a 13–18 community high school with 592 learners in a small town on the Northumberland coast. The school became a specialist engineering school in September 2004. There are 128 students in the sixth form, of whom about two thirds are girls. Virtually all the students have English as their first language and come from white British backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although there is a higher than average number with a statement of special educational needs. A large proportion of pupils start at the school with results and literacy skills that are below and sometimes well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Coquet High judges itself to be a satisfactory school. The results of inspection confirm the school's evaluation.

Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been slow. Strategic plans and practice were not implemented consistently enough across subjects to speed up the pace of improvement. The effect of this can still be seen in many aspects of the school's work including assessment, behaviour, safety and lesson planning. However, the school is now moving forward with more urgency. Its specialist school status has provided real impetus for this; it is a good engineering school and innovative design work is a strength. Most aspects of the school's work are satisfactory including leadership, management, and students' personal development and well-being.

Results at Key Stage 3 have improved and progress is satisfactory when compared with the starting point of the students. GCSE results have improved in the last two years. The better subjects are design and technology, art, and mathematics. The weakest are drama, French, history and physical education. Standards in English and literacy at both key stages are unsatisfactory. The rate of improvement in standards at Key Stage 4 compared with Key Stage 3 is slower, but is satisfactory.

Specialist school targets are being met and additional provision resulting from this is contributing to the progress in mathematics, science and information and communications technology (ICT). Gifted and talented pupils have more extensive opportunities as a result of the initiative. It has helped the school to establish vocational engineering courses and to improve resources. The most recent computer-aided design and manufacturing systems are frequently used in lessons.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school and inspectors agree that the sixth form is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress and gain average results. The teaching is satisfactory. Most learners are drawn from the main school and the vast majority complete their courses. Because the sixth form is small and the school is unable to offer a full timetable, some students find they have too much free time. Leadership is satisfactory and there is a renewed focus on monitoring achievement and standards. This is because practice has been inconsistent between subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop and implement a clear strategic vision for the next five years which is supported by careful financial planning.
- Raise standards in English and literacy across the school.
- Remove inconsistencies in departmental practice in order to improve behaviour and standards in all subjects.

- Make sure that, through rigorous monitoring, marking and written feedback, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school accurately judges achievement and standards in the main school to be good in mathematics and science but unsatisfactory in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Specialist school targets are being met, and exceeded in mathematics and science.

Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved in the last three years. This reflects the pattern of progress by students which is satisfactory when compared with their starting points. In 2005, standards were significantly above average in mathematics and science but well below average in English. Targets in English were unrealistic in 2005 and have been revised for the current year.

The proportion of pupils at Key Stage 4 gaining higher GCSE grades improved from 46% in 2003 to 49% in 2005. The best results were in art and design, design and technology and mathematics and the students made good progress. Results in English language and English literature were weak.

Standards in the sixth form are average. Results at advanced level have been consistently high in English and improvement has been particularly strong in art; and in design and technology. Progress at this level is satisfactory, often from a low starting point.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, with some good aspects. Attendance is close to the national average. Students generally behave well and responsibly, but in a few lessons a small minority persist in disrupting learning for others. This behaviour in lessons is not dealt with consistently. The school promotes healthy living well. It also encourages pupils in the main school to take part in sports, but not in the sixth form. There is a good level of participation in the active clubs. Students enjoy working in practical and creative areas and show they can quickly develop individual study skills.

A strong programme for personal, social and health education covers key areas for students of this age. It also raises awareness of social and global issues. Students make a positive contribution to the community through interesting charity work and links with other organisations. The school works hard to widen all students' horizons. Their social, moral and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is less successful. Assemblies observed did not contain a spiritual element and there is insufficient provision for religious education (RE) in the sixth form. Students make satisfactory progress in skills required for their future economic well-being, although for some,

spoken and written communication is limited. Careers advice is available from teachers and representatives from the Connexions service.

Personal development and well-being in the sixth form are satisfactory. Students are well looked after by pastoral staff and they appreciate the support and encouragement they receive from their form tutors. Nearly all students continue in full-time education. Learners benefit from improved ICT facilities and the opportunities for independent study in the new private study accommodation. This is complemented by a range of enrichment activities. Students have very good opportunities to express their views through the sixth form executive. Parents and carers of sixth form students are supportive of the school's provision.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning varies, but is predominantly satisfactory, confirming the school's evaluation. However, senior managers' evaluation of teaching indicates a higher proportion as being satisfactory than was reflected in the lessons observed by inspectors. In the best lessons, teachers tell students what they will learn, start work rapidly and set a brisk pace. In the weaker lessons, teaching lacks pace and not enough is expected from students. They do not always know their expected grades and how to improve their work. This leads to a level of disruption which slows the progress of the whole class. Most students' work is marked and encouraging comments help some students to improve. The school acknowledges that assessment practice is inconsistent. The system in place is adequate, but not all teachers use it productively to monitor students' progress.

The school is working hard to ensure that the majority of lessons are well-planned and most lessons have a range of activities. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is making teaching and learning more effective. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included in all activities. They receive effective support when they need it and make satisfactory progress.

Students in the sixth form know their target grades and most are kept informed about their current standard and effort.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A satisfactory curriculum is offered which meets statutory requirements, except for the provision of religious education in the sixth form. The school provides well for numeracy and ICT but does not develop literacy well enough.

Specialist status has a positive impact on the provision of ICT, and design and technology. The curriculum for older pupils is enriched and a fifth of all pupils have taken up the opportunity of working with the further education college to acquire

vocational qualifications. The construction course has proved so popular that a college centre has been opened in Amble.

The social education programme includes modules on citizenship and work related learning. All pupils take part in two weeks work experience and the curriculum is enriched by a good range of activities outside lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Inspectors could not agree with the school's judgement that care, guidance and support are good. There are good aspects but, on balance, it is satisfactory. Students say they feel safe and can turn to an adult in confidence if they need help or advice. Good links with external organisations support the welfare of vulnerable pupils and child protection procedures are fully implemented. Risk assessments are usually carried out, but not in every case.

Support given to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. It can be focused on students' needs very well, but there are times when it is not specific enough. Academic progress is not tracked consistently across all subjects. The school is now planning to intervene at an earlier stage because underachievement is not always identified early enough.

Pupils say that bullying is dealt with promptly. The school council and youth service have worked together to run 'bullying awareness' weeks. Students have clear advice on their GCSE options and for their further education or employment. Visitors from different walks of life are invited to make presentations and students are encouraged to make visits to institutions such as universities. More extensive links with the community have been established through specialist school status and the extended schools initiative.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Students make satisfactory progress, often from a low starting point. The school's own evaluation is accurate.

There is now a greater sense of urgency to take action and deliver improvement. However, the school does not yet have a shared strategic vision for development over the next five years. Recent initiatives have not been driven through with a sense of urgency, especially those to improve teaching and learning.

Senior managers and subject leaders are developing as an important management force in the school. They are starting to analyse data, evaluate strengths, and identify where improvement is needed. Nevertheless, the existing systems for monitoring and evaluating progress are applied too infrequently. Not enough lesson observations are carried out to ensure policies on behaviour management, assessment, and teaching are delivered consistently across all subjects. Leadership of the sixth form is taking

steps to improve the monitoring and evaluation arrangements because, again, there are inconsistencies between departments.

Value for money is satisfactory and the school provides an inclusive education for all students. Specialist engineering school status has helped finance extra teaching time in mathematics and science but the English department remains overstretched. Governors are taking a more active part in the school's development and becoming critical partners.

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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>	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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
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?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

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

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	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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

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17 March 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for all your help when we inspected your school on 15 and 16 March. We particularly enjoyed hearing your views and listening to you talk about the work you were doing. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning their questionnaires and say that we took all their views into account.

I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

Your test and examination results are steadily improving.

Standards as a specialist engineering school are high and you produce innovative design work.

You do not make the progress you should in English.

The student council and sixth form executive provide good opportunities for you to air your views.

A small number of you do not behave as you should and stop others from making progress in lessons.

Staff work hard and want to make the school even better. To help them, we have asked if they could:

develop a long term plan to speed up the rate of improvement

raise standards in English and literacy across the school

remove inconsistencies in departmental practice in order to improve behaviour and standards in every subject

make sure you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve in all lessons.

Thank you for all your help. You are a credit to yourselves and your school.

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector