



Copleston High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124842
LEA SUFFOLK LEA
Inspection number 281819
Inspection dates 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Lindsay Hebditch LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Copleston Road
School category	Community		IP4 5HD
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01473710951
Number on roll	1803	Fax number	01473274467
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. William Robinson
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Laurie Robinson

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	1 February 2006 - 2 February 2006	281819

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Copleston High School is an oversubscribed mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18. It has 1803 students, of whom 371 are in the sixth form. The school is situated on the eastern outskirts of Ipswich. There are 89% of students from White British backgrounds and 4% speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The Sixth form also acts as the post-16 centre for a neighbouring secondary school. The school achieved Specialist Sports College status in September 2001.

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 evaluated its effectiveness as good and while the evidence from this inspection confirms the strengths, inspection findings indicate that overall effectiveness is satisfactory. This is largely because of inconsistencies in standards in core subjects at Key Stage 3, variations in teaching and differences in the approach taken by middle managers. This means that the school does not fully capitalise on its particular strengths of promoting good attitudes and behaviour and a positive climate. Most students make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment and pass rates at GCSE and GCE A/AS-level are close to the national average. The good quality of the school's care for all students is reflected in their appreciation for it. Standards of behaviour throughout the school are high. Attendance is good. Overall teaching is satisfactory. Although there is much good and extremely good teaching, in some lessons teachers do not give sufficient attention to the learning needs of individual students. The curriculum is good and provides sufficient opportunities and choice. The school is well led and managed satisfactorily. Most of the areas for development identified at the last inspection have been addressed. Some department heads have high quality systems for improving teaching and learning in their subjects, but this practice is not yet firmly established within the school. A noticeable outcome of this inconsistency is that the school's policy on assessment is not implemented evenly across the school. Value for money is satisfactory. Parents take a keen interest in the school and are mostly very satisfied with the standards it achieves. The effective leadership, dedication of the teachers and responsiveness of the students demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve its performance further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence supports the school's view that the effectiveness and efficiency of sixth form provision are good. Increasing numbers of students are choosing to stay on into the sixth form. With much skilful teaching, supported by good care, excellent guidance and encouragement, most students complete their courses successfully and achieve at least as well as predicted from their GCSE grades. The proportion of students who are exceeding expectations at GCE A/AS-level is increasing. Students show maturity and independence and are a good advertisement for the school. The curriculum is good and provides an increasing choice of academic and vocational courses. Although there are good opportunities for enrichment, some GCE A/AS-level students choose not to participate. Sixth form accommodation is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the consistency of the performance of students in core subjects at Key Stage 3
- improve the effectiveness of middle management in the monitoring and evaluation of learning
- ensure that teachers implement the school's policy on assessment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

In the main school, the progress students make and the standards they reach vary across subjects and over time. This variation has been reflected in the results achieved in the last three years, with strong performance in 2004 balanced by satisfactory outcomes in 2003 and 2005. When students enter the school in Year 7 their standards are above average, as indicated by their test scores at the end of Key Stage 2. They then make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3, although the standards they reach in English and science are lower than expected. The progress students make at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory but in 2005 the significant underachievement of a small minority of students depressed the overall success rate. The percentage of students achieving five or more grades A*- C at GCSE is close to the national average but boys make less progress and achieve relatively few higher grades. More than half of the students achieve five or more grades A*- C including English and mathematics, well above the national average. Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and broadly achieve the grades at GCSE which are expected of them. The school has met its targets in relation to its Sports College status and community involvement. In the sixth form, attainment in GCE AS/A-level is good and improving. Most students who start a course complete it successfully. Students are performing at least as well as predicted from their GCSE results. Students who follow vocational courses in the sixth form also do well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school assessed the personal development and well-being of its students as good, and inspectors agreed. Students are proud of the school and enjoy their learning. Although there have been some concerns expressed by parents, during the inspection the students were well-behaved and polite both in and out of lessons. Attendance is good, although a small minority of students arrive late in the morning. Students feel safe at school. If they have concerns, they are readily able to recognise those members of staff they should turn to for support. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students develop a deeper understanding of the diversity of their community, including their own heritage and beliefs through their learning. They have a strong sense of community and readily participate in fundraising projects, school drama and music productions. Older students conscientiously fulfil prefect duties and many sixth formers act as mentors to students in the lower school. The school council has a high profile and is valued by students as an effective means by which to make their views known. Students have a secure understanding of the value of adopting safe practices and a healthy lifestyle. They have been fully involved in the discussions that have contributed to the further development of healthy school meals.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Although many lessons are good or better, inspection findings indicate that due to the level of inconsistency, the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school has a large core of talented and inspirational teachers who know their subjects well and whose high expectations of students are reflected in their teaching. Many lessons use a range of good resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), to promote different ways of teaching and learning. However, the quality of learning varies considerably between lessons and this is hindering the school's efforts to further improve standards. In a number of lessons teachers do not give sufficient attention to the learning needs of individual students. In these lessons, planning is focused on what teachers have to teach in the curriculum rather than what students actually need to do to make gains in learning. This situation arises because there are insufficient checks made on student progress in lessons. Furthermore, although the school monitors students' progress adequately and some teachers use this information effectively to plan lessons others do not. Therefore, good practice is not consistent across the school and some students do not make the progress they should because the school's assessment policy at all levels is applied inconsistently. Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. Students' learning is helped by their hard work and mature behaviour. They develop good independent learning skills, which are successfully promoted by teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which is broad, innovative and complies with all statutory requirements. Provision meets the needs of all groups of students, including those with special educational needs, both through academic courses and in the increasing vocational options which are available for students at Key Stage 4. Plans to extend these options to provide more clearly defined pathways into post -16 education and training are strongly supported by parents and students. Sports College funding has enabled the school to expand and to widen its range of sporting activities, both within the statutory curriculum and in addition to it. More than one half of students attend at least one additional sports activity. A comprehensive programme of personal, health and social education supports the development of the students as responsible individuals. Careers guidance and the work experience programme prepare students well for employment and are much appreciated by them. A good range of extra-curricular activities enrich students' development and enjoyment both at lunchtime and after school. In the sixth form the curriculum is also good and provides an increasing choice of academic and vocational courses.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The high quality care, guidance and support in the school has been a significant factor in providing the friendly atmosphere and positive ethos for learning which students appreciate so much. Students receive particularly good advice to support the choices they make in their future education and training. Child protection procedures are fully in place and well understood. Risk assessments are undertaken for all off-site activities and regular safety checks are undertaken. Students who have special educational needs receive satisfactory support. However, the school recognises that teachers do not always have a clear picture of particular needs accessible through an appropriate individual education plan, and therefore are limited in their ability to always give the necessary specific guidance needed. Students for whom English is an additional language are supported well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school evaluated its leadership and management as good. Inspectors found this to be true of the leadership, but aspects of the management made the overall judgement satisfactory. The school is well led. The headteacher has a clear vision of how to improve the aspirations of students and move the school forward. There exists a positive and supportive ethos in the leadership group with a strong commitment to raising standards. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school are detailed and comprehensive but are not sufficiently specific as to how targets will be achieved. Inconsistencies in the way procedures for quality assurance are applied at departmental level have resulted in variable standards of planning, marking and assessment. Where effective systems are in place, outcomes are good. The school actively seeks the views of students and parents and incorporates them into plans for the future whenever possible. The school's resources have improved since the last inspection, particularly in ICT, accommodation and sports facilities. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The governing body has a good understanding of its role and financial management is good. Governors are highly supportive of the school but also contribute significantly to the debate on any changes which managers propose. The school's self-evaluation provides a detailed and largely accurate analysis of its provision. However, there is insufficient emphasis on the impact made by the school's actions on standards and improvements for the students.

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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	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	3	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	2	
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	2
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	2
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	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	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

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

I'd like to tell you what our inspectors thought of your school when we visited it earlier this week. We met and talked to quite a few of you during our two days at the school. We watched some of your lessons and looked at the quality of your work. We were also pleased that so many of your parents wrote to tell us what they thought about the school. Our main conclusions were that Copleston High School provides you with a satisfactory standard of education overall, and that sixth form provision is good. We saw many good lessons and thought like you that teachers really help you to do your best. You told us how much support they give, both during and outside of lessons. We were very pleased to see high standards of behaviour and noted that attendance has improved since the last time we inspected the school. We were pleased to see that the GCSE results you achieve are above the national average for schools, but we did notice that the girls are doing better than the boys! Your school is well-managed and the headteacher and his senior staff are working hard to make improvements where they are needed. The main areas where we thought the school should improve further were: - improve the consistency of the performance of students in core subjects at Key Stage 3 - improve the effectiveness of middle management in the monitoring and evaluation of learning - ensure that teachers implement the school's policy on assessment. Keep up the good work, and thanks for your help.