



The Corsham School A Visual Arts College

Inspection Report

Better education and care

Unique Reference Number	126454
LEA	Wiltshire
Inspection number	282117
Inspection dates	7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	The Tynings
School category	Community		Corsham
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Wiltshire SN13 9DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01249 713284
Number on roll	1254	Fax number	01249 701102
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Philippa Lynch
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr Martin Williams

Age group 11 to 19	Inspection dates 7 December 2005 - 8 December 2005	Inspection number 282117
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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

The school is larger than average, with 234 students in the growing sixth form. It is located in the market town of Corsham and takes students from the town and surrounding villages. The local area includes a mixture of both the most deprived and most favoured parts of Wiltshire. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students claiming free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. The school has a unit for six students with specific learning difficulties, set up in 2001. There are a few students who speak English as an additional language or who are refugees or travellers. The school is in its third year as a specialist visual arts college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features. It provides good value for money. The school's views of itself and the views of inspectors match closely in most respects. Inspectors feel the school is well on its way to becoming outstanding but its excellent work on improvement has yet to impact fully on teaching and students' achievement. Outstanding leadership and management enable and support students and staff in aiming high, and in being creative and innovative. Partnerships with others to promote students' well-being are excellent. Staff and students greatly enjoy being at this school.

Standards have risen at a faster rate than in most schools nationally. They are above average overall. Students' progress is good and in some cases it is excellent, particularly in visual arts. Students' personal development is good. The main reasons, apart from outstanding leadership and management, for such positive and constantly improving outcomes are that teaching is good and the curriculum, care, guidance and support for students are excellent. The impact of the school's status as a visual arts college is very clear and supports work across the curriculum and with the local community.

The way in which the school identifies its own strengths and areas for development, and then addresses any relative weaknesses is exceptional. The school knows exactly how and where educational provision, academic achievement and students' personal development need to be raised even further to reach and sustain excellence. The capacity to make further improvements is outstanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good with many outstanding features. Standards are above average and particularly high in visual arts. Students make good progress. They are highly motivated, ambitious and generally able to work independently. They make a significant contribution to the school as a whole and are excellent role models for younger students. Teaching is good and students receive outstanding support, advice and guidance. Careers guidance and the tutorial programme contribute well to students' growing confidence and readiness for the next stage of their education or work. The sixth form curriculum provides extremely well for differing aspirations and interests. Leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to raise standards further, the school should:

- ensure that even more of the teaching and learning are of the excellent quality that already exists in many lessons
- raise further students' skills as independent learners by fostering a greater spirit of enquiry and engaging them in more research work, individually or in groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Students achieve well because teaching is good and because the curriculum, support and advice they receive is extremely well matched to their needs. School targets are suitably challenging and met.

Standards in Years 7 to 11 have risen since the last inspection at a faster rate than those nationally. Standards in the sixth form have also been improving. The rate of students' progress has also increased but with some fluctuations. It is currently good and the school is determined to make it even better. Students' progress is exceptionally good in visual arts. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make just as good progress as their peers.

In 2004, standards in the Year 9 national tests were significantly above average showing that students made extremely good progress over Years 7 to 9 in English, mathematics and science. In 2005, the overall results of the Year 9 tests declined slightly although progress for this group was still good. The GCSE results in 2004 were also significantly above average and the 2005 results were similar. The 2004 results showed students' progress from Year 7 to 11 was broadly average although progress over the two GCSE years was above average.

Standards in the sixth form were average in 2003 and above average in 2004. Advanced level results in 2005 showed an improvement, particularly in the percentage of passes at grades A or B. Results in vocational subjects were above average. Progress is good and most students reach or exceed their target grades.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students greatly enjoy being at this school and feel safe and secure. The few instances of bullying are dealt with very effectively. Healthy living is promoted and students generally act on the school's advice. The behaviour and attitudes of students in lessons and around the school are mostly very good although occasional lapses in behaviour affect learning in a few lessons. Sixth form students conduct themselves extremely well. Attendance is above average, and good procedures are in place to ensure this is maintained.

The school enables students to mature well in many ways and acquire the skills they need for their future. Students' spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development is good. Some students demonstrate a great spirit of enquiry while others show less independence. The school is rightly seeking to develop students' personal qualities further in terms of working independently, in teams, as citizens, and in their understanding of how to respond to others in a variety of circumstances. Students, particularly those in the sixth form, make an excellent positive contribution to the school and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. It has some outstanding features including teachers' subject knowledge, lesson planning and the use of assessment to check on students' progress. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning extremely well to elicit or deepen students' understanding. They also demonstrate or explain very well the skills or concepts being developed. In most lessons teachers use a range of teaching methods to suit different students' needs. Some teachers use interactive whiteboards well to add interest to learning. Teaching develops well students' literacy and numeracy skills. Marking is generally helpful. Teaching assistants offer high quality support to students with specific learning difficulties. Occasionally, the pace of learning is too slow, lesson activities do not fully engage the students, or minor disruptions are not immediately dealt with. Students know what is expected of them, how well they are doing and how to improve. They are encouraged to express their ideas and opinions and this enables them to grow in confidence. In the best lessons, students readily put forward suggestions, pose questions and show that they can work independently. The excellent student planners (homework diaries) encourage students and assist them in personal organisation.

The checking of lessons by senior staff ensures that good practice is identified and shared. The school has set out clearly its expectations of high quality teaching and learning. Teachers and students know this and aim to achieve it with increasing consistency.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is extremely well matched to students' differing needs. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided for outstandingly well. A wide range of courses and qualifications is offered, including those arranged in partnership with other local schools and colleges. Such choice and flexibility lead to very high levels of enjoyment and satisfaction amongst students.

In the sixth form, increasing numbers of students are choosing to stay on after Year 11 and fewer students are dropping out of courses than in the past. The sixth form curriculum is constantly being adapted and refined, both to reflect students' aspirations and the school's status as a visual arts college. Students argue convincingly that the curriculum contributes significantly to their positive attitudes to work and their good achievement.

There are high levels of participation in the excellent range of courses, performances, sporting fixtures, clubs and visits that take place outside the school day. Sixth form students also take a full and active part in extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, support and guidance are outstanding and contribute very positively to how well students learn. Students confirm that they feel extremely well supported in all aspects of school life. For example, one said that if students had a problem there were 'masses of people' to talk to ranging from the school nurse, to tutors and the student reception staff. Child protection and health and safety are given a very high priority. Any bullying is resolved very effectively. Using excellent methods, such as the 'green and amber' warning system, staff give excellent support and guidance to students who may have particular behaviour or emotional problems.

Academic support is excellent. Tutors provide one-to-one support, setting and checking targets in partnership with students. Students are aware of what they need to do to improve. Guidance in deciding what path to take after school is very good. Year 10 students are especially impressed with the careers work done.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management reflect the school motto of 'I can inspire'. The headteacher provides an extremely clear direction focused on improvement. He raises staff and students' aspirations with enthusiasm. He has the support and commitment of a strong leadership group that is proud of the school's ethos and of the students' achievements. Improvements in standards, accommodation and facilities since the last inspection are clearly evident and demonstrate the school's excellent capacity to improve. Strong relationships exist throughout the school so that teamwork is a reality. The governors are strongly supportive and bring expertise and challenge to bear on the school's activities and performance. Staff show pride in the school without any sense of complacency. The vast majority of parents and carers express much satisfaction with the way in which the school provides and cares for their children. Resources are used very effectively. Many areas of the school are bright, invite interest and uphold the school's status as a visual arts college. Others, however, await refreshment and are considerably duller.

Planning for improvement is outstanding and shows clearly how the school intends to raise further students' achievement. It is based on highly effective quality assurance and self-evaluation systems that take account of parents' and students' views. Both the broad sweep of innovation and the detail of day-to-day affairs are extremely well managed.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	2
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

The quality of provision

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

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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

The Corsham School A Visual Arts College The Tynings Corsham Wiltshire SN13 9DF

12 December 2005

Dear Students

As you know we visited the school recently. Thank you for the welcome and courtesy you showed us. We appreciate the help many of you gave us by talking about your work and sharing your views. You clearly enjoy greatly being at this good school, which is constantly improving and has many outstanding features.

We think that the following are the best features about your school:

- Your attitudes and behaviour are mostly very good.
- Standards at the school are above average and rising.
- Teaching is good, and some of it is excellent, so that you make good progress in your studies.
- Staff take exceptionally good care of you. You get outstanding support and guidance about your school work and over any personal issues.
- The school provides many excellent activities and opportunities, in and out of lessons, that add greatly to your learning and enjoyment of school.
- You do many things to contribute to the life of the school and to the wider community, through fund raising and the School Council, for example. Sixth form students are excellent role models.
- Your school is extremely well led and managed. The headteacher and his senior team and governors know clearly how to improve the school further.

We have asked the school to do the following things:

- Ensure that there is more of the good or excellent teaching that we have seen in many lessons.
- Help you in becoming more independent in your work so that you can pose your own questions and do more research by yourselves or in groups.

Many of you and your parents or carers told us that you value greatly what the school provides. We know that staff are constantly trying to find interesting ways in which to make the school even better. We wish you all the very best for your own futures and for the future of the school.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Wiola Hola Her Majesty's Inspector