



Crown Woods School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100189
Local Authority Greenwich
Inspection number 285738
Inspection dates 2–3 October 2006
Reporting inspector Sheila Nolan

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Riefield Road
School category	Community		Eltham
Age range of pupils	11–18		London SE9 2QN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8850 7678
Number on roll (school)	1755	Fax number	020 8294 1921
Number on roll (6th form)	310		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr T Taylor
		Headteacher	Mr M Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	2–3 October 2006	285738

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Crown Woods School, a specialist humanities college, mainly serves students from the local area and from Lewisham. Although the majority are of white heritage, around a third come from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Twice as many as is typical nationally are known to have a home language other than English but most are fluent speakers. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is higher than average as is the percentage of students who have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school hosts units for students with visual impairment and for some with moderate learning difficulties. High numbers of students join or leave the school throughout the year. Three quarters of the teaching staff have been recruited in the last three years. The school has been inspected three times in just over four years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Crown Woods is an effective humanities college that provides a satisfactory quality of education. Because of good leadership and management, particularly the inspirational drive of the headteacher, the school has laid a strong platform for further improvement.

Through unremitting efforts in recent years, and in very challenging circumstances, senior leaders have revitalised the school by recruiting a sufficient number of good teachers. They have established very effective procedures and opportunities to support students' personal and academic development. A highly mobile student population, including many with troubled histories from other institutions, and the non-attendance of a significant number have hampered efforts to improve. Although improving, attendance is below average at just over 90%. Nevertheless, the positive effects of leadership and management on students' progress are evident in the underlying upward trend in external examinations and in lessons, particularly for those attending regularly. Standards, although still below average have risen in three consecutive years. Younger students are achieving satisfactorily overall, though progress in science and mathematics is slower than in English, particularly for more able boys and middle-attaining girls of white heritage backgrounds. Those in older year groups who started in Year 7 and stay until Year 11 make good progress. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well. Achievement in the expanding sixth form has improved and is now good. This clear evidence shows good capacity to improve further.

The effectiveness of middle managers is satisfactory overall but improving rapidly as they are held to account by senior managers. The humanities specialism is well led and is beginning to have an impact on other subject areas through its pioneering support for literacy and good teamwork. A very few middle managers do not manage their areas effectively enough so that not all students make best progress. Governance is good. Governors are ready to challenge the school but also appreciative of the leadership's honesty over strengths and weaknesses. Regular reviews hold departments and year groups to account so that rigorous evaluation underpins the push to 'exceed expectations'.

Professional development programmes are a real strength of the school and have improved teaching so that it is now good, a marked improvement since the last inspection. Learning in lessons is also good for those who attend regularly. The school has benefited from new teachers, who although often inexperienced, are enthusiastic, committed and ambitious for their students. The curriculum has developed well with a wider range of vocational courses than previously. Personal development is good. Students who attend regularly enjoy school, feel secure despite its very large size and are well-informed about staying healthy. There is a calm ethos with the overwhelming majority readily engaged in learning. A good citizenship programme prepares students well for the future as do good care, guidance and support within year groups. Systems to check students' academic and personal development are robust, with exceptional examples of their use in Year 9. Students' and parents' views matter to the school although very few parents responded to the questionnaire.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and improving. Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection and are close to average. Achievement is good with the overwhelming majority of students making better than expected progress relative to their starting points. Consequently, the added value by the school is good. The school is acutely aware of some variation between subject areas and has a robust system in place to remedy weaknesses. Teaching is good because of the effective professional development programme and effective, frequent monitoring of lessons.

Students entering the sixth form receive very helpful guidance on the range of vocational, advanced courses and future opportunities available to them. The expanded curriculum better meets the needs of students than at the previous inspection. This has led to improved staying-on rates in the sixth form and the vast majority of students complete their courses. Students are appreciative of the regular checks on their progress and of interventions to support them. 'I love it here and I don't want to leave' commented a student. Good leadership and management of the sixth form enable staff to work well together as a team and to promote the development of students' independent study skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards for more able boys and middle-attaining girls of white heritage background, particularly in mathematics and science
- Extend rapidly the capacity of some middle leaders to manage their responsibilities more effectively
- Intensify efforts to improve attendance in collaboration with the local authority.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students who spend all their school life at Crown Woods and those who attend regularly achieve well. Hence, although standards remain below average in the main school, overall progress is satisfactory given the well below average starting points. From Year 7 to Year 9 students make faster progress in English than in mathematics or science. Progress slows for older students, partly because of high mobility in Years 10 and 11. Students from across the range of minority ethnic groups make good progress. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities, especially those from the visually impaired unit, achieve well.

Standards have risen gradually over several years with national test and examination results in 2005 a close match to the school's very challenging targets. For the 2006 Year 11 cohort, just over half of those who joined in Year 7 remained in Year 11. Examination results dipped as a result of a high number of students with troubled histories joining the year. Despite very poor and often non-attendance, they remained

on the school roll and had an undue impact on the overall results. A high turnover of teachers in past years combined with a legacy of difficult recruitment in mathematics and science hampered Year 9.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of the students are good. The overwhelming majority of students say they enjoy school, do their best to be on time for lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well, feel safe within the large school site, and are clear about staying safe outside school. Students know how to stay healthy. Many appreciate the new range of lunch options, not least because they have had a say in the choice of menus. High numbers take part in sports and other physical activities during daily enrichment sessions, and this reflects well their commitment to fitness. A significant minority of students, however, miss too much school despite robust efforts by the school to improve attendance and punctuality. Around one in ten students rarely attend which is a higher absence rate than in most schools.

Students accept some excellent opportunities for them to contribute to the school community. An older student, for example, explained in detail the impact of his role as an environmental prefect. Others participate in leadership courses run by the National College for School Leadership. They are also very aware of the wider community, raising money for charities such as Macmillan Cancer Relief. Younger students were seen bringing in gifts for senior citizens during the Harvest Festival. Work experience, good study habits and awareness of punctuality prepare students satisfactorily for life after school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is reflected in the harmonious relationships that prevail in Crown Woods.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good and have improved since the last inspection because of carefully targeted support and rigorous monitoring. Because the majority of teachers plan very well, students respond with hard work and good behaviour. A fast pace, well-judged praise, high expectations and good attention to literacy support students' learning well. Warm working relationships are reflected in students' trust in their teachers and this helps them improve. Teaching assistants play a vital role in supporting a complex range of students' needs and in developing their confidence and self-esteem.

Despite these good features, the school has rightly identified that lessons do not yet benefit from a wide enough range of multi-media and other resources, partly because

of earlier budget considerations. Questioning to gauge understanding and some marking do not consistently match the best practice in the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of students well. Improvements since the last inspection include developing a good range of vocational options. Around three fifths of Years 10 and 11 follow vocational courses. Some new courses are especially popular and offer good routes into post-16 education and training. Alternative programmes benefit some disaffected students and others who find academic work difficult. Students have good opportunities to foster basic skills and employment prospects. Specialist humanities status has improved provision for literacy, citizenship and personal development. Work with other communities, not only in London but worldwide, contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Enrichment and out-of-hours learning offer a good and wide variety of activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students receive good care, guidance and support. 'They deal with any problems promptly and in a very understanding way,' noted some students. They know who to turn to if there is a concern. High quality guidance about choices as they move through the school draws very well on outside agencies when needed. Very thorough assessment procedures check academic progress frequently so that students know how well they are achieving and how to improve. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are given excellent support, enabling them to make good progress. Resources and support staff are deployed extremely effectively to meet their needs.

Rigorous systems identify students who are absent or too often late, following through with interventions as required although these do not always have the necessary effect. This inclusive school make students feel they belong. 'Crown Woods is a very big school,' said a parent, 'but you would think it was a small one in the way the whole staff know everyone and have a really good rapport with both students and parents.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

This exceptionally large and complex school is well led and managed. The visionary leadership of the headteacher has established a very effective senior team and a full complement of committed staff. Leaders at all levels generally understand their roles

and accountabilities although some middle managers still lack sufficient skills for the task. Well-considered coaching and training is speeding their development. Governance is good. Under the leadership of a dedicated chair, governors both encourage and challenge effectively. There is a determination from governors and staff at all levels to sustain and build upon the many gains of recent years.

Very clear strategic planning is enabling the school to improve its current well-worn accommodation with imaginative plans for new buildings. Sharply focused management has achieved greater consistency in school routines so that classroom practice and students' behaviour are good. The school's progress as a specialist humanities college is gaining momentum under able direction. Despite the current full complement of staff, some difficulties remain within science and mathematics.

The rigorous culture of self-evaluation at senior level is based on an incisive and accurate analysis of the challenges facing the school. A rolling programme of departmental reviews contributes well to remedying weaknesses and acknowledging advances and to helping middle managers understand their accountabilities. This on-going programme is increasingly effective. The views of parents and students are valued and inform changes, such as the structure of the day, lunchtime provision, and out-of-hours learning.

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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	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	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	3	

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?	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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

After our visit to Crown Woods we would like to share our findings with you, to thank you for the friendly welcome and to say a special thanks to those of you who took the time to talk to us. We are pleased that you are proud of your school and enjoy the many opportunities it provides, particularly the enrichment sessions. We are equally pleased that you behave sensibly around the site and that you co-operate well with your teachers in lessons.

We agree that your school is providing you with a sound quality of education and that it is improving all the time. There are many very good things about your school, not least that it is a specialist humanities college. Your sixth form has made great strides forward in the last three years. Your teachers are all very committed to helping you and they look after you very well. You have an exceptional headteacher who is well supported by other good leaders and governors. They are working extremely hard to improve things for you, including the present buildings which are well worn. Overall, standards are rising and you are making satisfactory progress. Some of you, however, let the school down by not attending as regularly as you should. Those of you who do come to school daily achieve really well.

We have asked your teachers to work on a number of things to make your school even better:

- Improve the progress of some students in mathematics and science
- Move forward quickly with those areas that could be better managed
- Work further with the local authority to improve your attendance record

With best wishes for your future success

Sheila Nolan

Lead inspector