

Colmers School and Sports College

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	103563
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286698
Inspection date	3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1037
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Hughes
Headteacher	Peter Jones
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001
School address	Bristol Road South Rednal Birmingham B45 9NY
Telephone number	0121 4531778
Fax number	0121 4577981

Age group	11-16
Inspection date	3 July 2007
Inspection number	286698

Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than average and is oversubscribed. It gained specialist sports status in September 2004. This resulted in a change of school name and uniform. Most students are from White British backgrounds. A small number are of Black or Asian origin or mixed heritage. No students are at an early stage of acquiring English. Attainment on entry is broadly average; however, many students enter Year 7 with writing skills that are much lower than normal. The percentages of students eligible for free school meals, with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are high. The school has achieved Healthy Schools, Investor in People, Arts Mark Gold and Sports Mark accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Colmers School is outstanding and fulfils its aim to continually improve on its previous best. Since its last inspection six years ago the school has gone from strength to strength and has a very strong capacity to improve further. An innovative curriculum, inclusive ethos, highly effective teaching and first rate partnerships have resulted in students making exceptional progress and attaining above average standards by the end of Year 11. What the school provides adds real value and this means students' performance is much better than expected. It is therefore no surprise that the school's value added score is in the top 4% of schools nationally. Whilst students make good or better progress in English in Years 7 to 9, their standards in writing are not as high as in other aspects of English.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students love being at school and are quick to point out how much the staff do for them, both in and out of school. Relationships between adults and students and between students themselves are exceptional. Students' behaviour and attitudes are excellent and regardless of their background or ability, they flourish in the school's secure and very caring environment. Students arrive in class wanting to succeed. Their expectations are met because teaching is consistently challenging, stimulating and interesting. This stems from all staff being specialists, who have a good command of and know how to teach and assess their subjects. Classrooms, walls and corridors contain vibrant, high quality displays that celebrate students' achievements in school and beyond. Students are good at working independently but in the main they undertake activities that are prescribed by teachers. The leadership recognises that as a result, students are not yet taking sufficient responsibility for what and how they learn.

The outstanding curriculum imaginatively promotes high achievement and increases students' enjoyment and motivation. Carefully managed innovations, such as the introduction of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and the 'Learning to Learn' project are having a very positive impact on raising students' aspirations and attendance. Extra-curricular provision is exceptional and there are a wealth of trips and visits to local, national and international places of interest. Sports status has had a very beneficial impact on standards in physical education. Increased participation in recreation and sporting activities has improved students' health and fitness. Better provision coupled to improved facilities has led to many individuals achieving sporting excellence.

Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The headteacher has a very clear and exciting vision for the school. He delegates well and supports and organises others to realise the vision in practice. The school is ambitious and outward looking. It is keen to learn from best practice elsewhere and uses its expertise to help others improve. Links with parents are strong and they hold the school in high regard. Self-evaluation is accurate because monitoring is rigorous and systematic.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further accelerate students' progress in writing in Years 7 to 9, by refining their spelling, handwriting, vocabulary and grammatical skills.
- Further increase students' independence by encouraging them to take more responsibility for what and how they learn.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students achieve exceptionally well to reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 11. The school sets challenging academic targets and the students generally meet them. All groups of students make good or better progress, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In 2006 there was a marked rise in the percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including mathematics and English, from below to slightly above the national average. The 2007 predicted results indicate a further increase in the numbers gaining the top GCSE grades. Over the past four years standards at the end of Year 9 have risen steadily. Between Years 7 and 9 students make outstanding progress in mathematics and science. Whilst students' progress in English is good their performance in writing does not always fully reflect what the average and the more able students are capable of. Standards in PE have risen since the school gained specialist sports status. Between 2004 and 2006 there was a 16% rise in the numbers gaining A* to C grades and a 7% rise in those achieving A* to A.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students are friendly, polite, welcoming to visitors and extremely positive about school life. They say bullying is not tolerated and on the rare occasion it occurs it is dealt with swiftly. School council members are making their mark. For example, they have improved toilet facilities and are looking at ways to improve car parking. Other students have seen the need to reduce knife crime in society and improve personal safety. As a result they have produced a film to raise awareness about the dangers and consequences of knife possession. Students are actively involved in raising funds for charitable causes. Much needed resources have been sent to the Uroki School in Tanzania and the 'shoe box' collection helped support communities in South Africa. Sports status has led to students being involved in imaginative projects such as the Junior Sports Leader Award (JSLA) which has significantly improved students' teamworking, communication and negotiating skills. Work experience and enterprise events such as a mobile phone company challenge and army training very effectively prepare students for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Students are making exceptional progress because teaching is highly effective. Teachers form excellent relationships with students and this means the atmosphere in classrooms is superb. Teachers plan lessons carefully to take account of the abilities and aptitudes of students and assess work frequently and accurately. Students welcome knowing what they do well and what must be improved. Teaching is challenging and conducted with good pace so no time is wasted. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge, effective questioning, and clear feedback on performance are all key strengths. A relative shortcoming is that in Years 7 to 9 staff could do more to accelerate students' progress in writing. The reduction in class size and the careful deployment of teaching assistants are helping the most vulnerable get the support they need to succeed both academically and personally. Students have plenty of opportunities to work independently,

but mainly on activities directed by the teacher. This means that the school is not fully capitalising on students' capacity for taking even greater initiative and responsibility for their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is rich and varied. All students in Years 7 to 11 follow an interesting and stimulating curriculum that meets their academic and personal needs very well. In Years 10 and 11 there is a good balance between academic and vocational courses and students welcome the greater breadth and flexibility of learning opportunities. A recent review of vocational provision indicated that the practical nature of the courses and the individual teaching students receive increase their motivation, self-confidence and desire to continue their studies post 16. Curriculum innovations, such as the School Sports Co-ordinator Partnership, have widened participation in sports and improved students' health and fitness. The extra-curricular provision is of a range and quality rarely seen. It enables students to take part in music, drama, travel abroad to study and learn, participate in local and national competitions and compete against other schools in a range of sports, including fencing, rowing, football, netball and tennis. The take-up and enthusiasm for these enrichment activities are first rate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff clearly go the extra mile to ensure that the premises and accommodation are clean, bright and fit for purpose, in order that students have the environment and resources to give of their best. Students say that staff are always there for them and are always willing to give up time to help them if needs be. Good use is made of performance data to track students' progress and inform intervention. Academic and personal support is extensive and very effective. Those who are at risk of disaffection or are vulnerable get very good support to ensure they remain in school and succeed. Very effective systems are in place for monitoring how well the students are working towards their targets. Students are aware of their targets and their National Curriculum level and know what they must do to improve. Child protection and health and safety procedures are robust. Staff vetting arrangements are adequate but the required single central record is not kept fully up to date.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher gives a very clear sense of direction and purpose to the school and has created an atmosphere where everyone feels valued, cared for and respected. He is a regular and important presence around the school. He is ably supported by a highly effective senior leadership team that is knowledgeable, reflective, self-critical and open to new ways of working. Staff work in highly effective teams and this ensures expertise and individual skills are best utilised. The newly qualified teachers spoke highly of their induction programme. It ensured that they were well settled and that support from buddies and mentors had been worthwhile and effective. Their morale was high.

In the past two years there has been a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The work has paid dividends with greater consistency in teaching and assessment

which has led to rising standards. Subject leaders are now accountable for standards and the quality of education provided within their departments. Internal reviews with senior managers have been rigorous and useful in pinpointing strengths and relative weaknesses in provision. Targets are set to remedy any shortcomings in practice and systematic checks are made to see if weaknesses have been remedied. Governors are extremely supportive and are fully involved in helping the school achieve its targets, fulfil its statutory responsibilities and ensure finances are deployed to gain maximum impact. Money has been wisely invested to improve the accommodation and information and communication technology provision.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

4 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Colmers School and Sports College, Rednal, Birmingham. B45 9NY

As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found out. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. We welcomed your friendliness, openness and honesty when answering our questions. You will be pleased to hear that we judged that your school was outstanding.

What we liked about your school

- You make exceptional progress and attain above average standards because teaching and the curriculum are highly effective.
- You enjoy school and told us how much staff do for you, both in and out of school.
- The school ethos is first class. Relationships between adults and students and between students themselves are exceptional.
- Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. You work hard and are keen to do well.
- Mr Jones is an outstanding headteacher. The governors and staff work very effectively to make sure you do as well as you can and that you have the best environment to work in.
- You enjoy getting involved in the extensive range of activities available. It was good to hear about all the excellent results gained in competitions and challenges in Birmingham and nationally.
- The large amount of charity work you do helps you to use your skills and talents for the benefit of others. I hope that the knife crime film makes a difference.

What the school must do to improve further

- We want teachers to further improve your writing skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Your spelling, handwriting, vocabulary and grammatical skills need to get even better.
- Increase your level of independence by encouraging you to take more responsibility for what and how you learn.

Best Wishes David Rzeznik Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools