



The Coventry Blue Coat Church of England School and Music College

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 103745
Local Authority Coventry
Inspection number 286743
Inspection dates 21–22 September 2006
Reporting inspector Ted Wheatley

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Terry Road
School category	Community		Coventry
Age range of pupils	11–18		CV1 2BA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	024 76223542
Number on roll (school)	1343	Fax number	024 76550927
Number on roll (6th form)	295		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Tim Pullen
		Headteacher	Stephen Timbrell
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001		

Age group 11–18	Inspection dates 21–22 September 2006	Inspection number 286743
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. An above average proportion of pupils, about one third, come from minority ethnic backgrounds – mainly Indian, but also small numbers from other backgrounds. Only a few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils are recruited from a very large number of primary schools and from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds although less than the average proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. Numbers in the sixth form have more than doubled in the last six years. The school was designated a specialist music college in 2005.

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 some outstanding features. Standards are above average overall and many pupils and students reach well above average standards. Achievement is good. The great majority, whatever their prior attainment or ethnic backgrounds, make good progress.

This is a direct consequence of good leadership and management which has a sharp focus on raising standards. The headteacher provides clear, sensitive leadership, good support for individual members of staff and provides good direction for further improvement. Senior staff have a good understanding of how well pupils and students achieve and this information is used to good effect to plan improvements. There is a good programme of lesson observations but feedback to teachers does not always spell out clearly enough how effective the lesson has been. Some heads of department are more effective than others in evaluating the success of their subjects and are therefore better placed to plan and bring about improvements.

Teaching and learning are good and focused clearly on the importance of examination success. Successful individual support is based on effective tracking of pupils' and students' progress. Underachievement is usually recognised and dealt with quickly although there is some variation between departments.

Pupils' and students' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Their extremely good attitudes lead to a personal desire to achieve well. Pupils enjoy being in school. Older pupils support and help each other and younger pupils effectively and sympathetically. Pupils readily take on responsibilities and respond well to the school's drive to encourage healthy lifestyles. However, pupils feel frustrated that their voice is not always listened to through the school council and the school recognises it could do more in this respect.

The curriculum is good and improving with an increasing range of vocational subjects and involvement in the federation of local schools. The range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding with a high level of pupil involvement. The impact of the music specialist college status is satisfactory with good and improving links with other schools and a widening range of activities in the school, all being reinvigorated under new leadership. The school has excellent partnerships with feeder primary schools, external support services, business and further and higher education.

Support, care and guidance are good. Academic monitoring and support are very good in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form and careers advice and preparation for work and further and higher education are a significant part of this. Arrangements to ensure the safety of pupils are secure.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

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What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the effectiveness of consultation to ensure pupils' and students' views are taken into account.
- Ensure that heads of department use consistent methods to evaluate their work so all are equally well placed to bring about further improvements in pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

In Years 7 to 9 standards are above average overall with significant numbers reaching well above average standards. Pupils achieve well from broadly average levels of attainment on entry to the school. A small number of lower attainers do not achieve quite as well because of specific learning difficulties. However, staff work hard to help these pupils overcome their difficulties and these pupils achieve as well as could be expected. A small amount of underachievement by highest attaining pupils in science has been resolved and achievement is now consistently good.

In Years 10 and 11 pupils make good progress. GCSE results show well above average standards for many pupils and have steadily improved over recent years. Occasional underachievement is dealt with effectively. For example, underachievement by a small number of the highest attainers in English has been dealt with effectively by the introduction of 'booster' classes and now these pupils are starting to achieve well.

Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who have English as an additional language make good progress. The school has monitored their performance carefully and successfully provided support where necessary. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress overall.

In the sixth form students make good progress and reach above average standards. Students on vocational courses have a high level of success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Positive attitudes and a willingness to make the most of the wide range of activities provided by the school reflect the pupils' good personal development and well-being. Most pupils are eager to learn. Pupils' enjoyment of school leads to good attendance. Pupils behave well, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils treat each other respectfully, so that incidents of bullying and racial harassment are very rare. They value contributing to the school community in various ways, such as older pupils providing support for younger ones. However, the school council and other pupils and students in the school do not feel that their voice is listened to or acted upon, which they find discouraging.

Pupils' awareness of health issues is demonstrated well by their choices in the canteen and the good levels of participation in sport. They also understand the dangers of drugs. They show independence and, for example, run the Christian Union themselves. By Year 11 pupils are knowledgeable about their future educational and career options. They have good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills and a good grasp of citizenship issues. Their understanding of enterprise skills or personal finance is satisfactory, and improving.

The personal development of sixth form students is good. They are responsible, support younger pupils effectively and participate in the wide range of activities available. The great majority have a wide range of personal and academic skills and are well prepared for life after they leave school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it skilfully to provide clear, accurate information and explanations to help pupils learn. This is particularly good in preparing pupils for examinations. Where support assistants work with pupils, learning is good and pupils achieve well. However, occasionally teachers do not utilise support staff well enough.

For the most part, teachers include a wide range of interesting, engaging activities in lessons and pupils enjoy their learning; in the very best lessons teachers use effective discussion and questioning that helps pupils learn really well. Lesson planning occasionally focuses too little on what pupils should learn and too much on how the activities are organised, with the result of small numbers of pupils not achieving their full potential in such lessons. Relationships are good and pupils rely confidently on staff to help them understand work. They enjoy their learning in the arts and relish the opportunities to discuss learning with others. Pupils' good attitudes to learning occasionally lead them fruitfully to challenge teachers to further explanations, as seen in a science class when seeking further clarity on how heat travels through graphite. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is good so that pupils understand what their standards are and what they need to do to make further progress. Marking mostly indicates areas for immediate improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is broad and caters well for the needs of all learners and leads to pupils' good progress. The most able pupils are stretched through courses that prepare them for early entry for examinations and additional support helps lower attainers make good progress with very few exceptions. In the sixth form the curriculum has a wide range of academic and vocational programmes and caters well for students' needs. This is enhanced by effective links with the federation with local schools. The range of vocational courses is improving as the school identifies students' needs with greater accuracy. Links with universities and commerce are excellent, enabling students to be well informed about future opportunities.

The school is a specialist music college. The range of activities currently offered is satisfactory, but improving under new leadership and with detailed plans for further developments as new facilities are completed. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and has led to improved understanding of the skills required in adult life. For example, pupils learn mentoring skills that 'make them aware of what happens in school' and 'are valuable life skills to have'. The inclusion of work-related learning in the curriculum is at an early stage but is improving. However, pupils benefit from good opportunities for work experience and the chance to learn from adults in local business. There is an outstanding and wide range of choice of after-school clubs, whilst the Young Enterprise company in the sixth form is strong, giving experience of business development and management.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of support the school provides for pupils' learning is good and pupils are highly appreciative of the advice and guidance they receive. The very effective checks on pupils' progress, especially in Years 10 to 13, ensure that underachievement is dealt with effectively. The same approaches are not quite so effective in Years 7 to 9, but are improving. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. They value the opportunities they have to catch up on work or seek further help. This is also true of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with English as an additional language. Sixth form students feel very well advised about next steps in their learning and career options.

Secure systems are in place to ensure the health and safety of pupils and their good attendance. Rules for behaviour around school and in practical subject areas are clear and pupils feel safe and secure. The pastoral system functions well and pupils appreciate the personal support from teachers, the 'peer mentors' and, where available, more individual support from the 'year chaplains'. Effective careers advice helps pupils gain life skills and an awareness of opportunities in adult life.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher provides clear direction focused on raising standards in national examinations and in ensuring all pupils achieve as well as they can. The substantial increase in numbers in the sixth form has been well managed. The capacity for the school to improve further is good and issues from the previous inspection have been fully dealt with. Senior managers have clearly defined responsibilities, and their knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement is very good, particularly in evaluating the achievement of pupils. However, overall, the quality of self-evaluation is satisfactory, because some heads of department lack the skills and

training to monitor performance effectively and this leads to some inconsistencies in the pace of improvement from one subject area to another. There is a comprehensive programme to monitor the performance of teachers. As a result the school constantly, and in most cases successfully, works to improve the performance of all pupils despite some feedback to teachers on lessons not being sharp enough on the quality of teaching and learning which has taken place.

Heads of years and tutors play an effective role in supporting the pupils to do as well as they can. They usually respond quickly to parents' concerns and the great majority of parents are pleased with this. Governance is good. The governors strongly support the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Financial management is good.

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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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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?	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	
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?	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	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, 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

Thank you for the welcome you gave my colleagues and me when we visited your school. We spoke to many of you and we appreciated hearing your views about the school. We think this is a good school with several outstanding strengths.

We feel that you achieve well and reach above average standards. Much of this is as a result of your positive attitudes, but also of good teaching. Teachers keep a close watch on how well you do, especially in Years 10 to 13, and plan work to help you do even better. A small number of pupils underachieved recently, but the school dealt with it well. The curriculum is good and is steadily improving, with courses to suit everyone.

You enjoy school and we saw this in lessons. Many of you take part in the excellent range of out-of-school activities and you have responded well to the school's efforts to encourage healthy lifestyles. You also develop a good range of academic and social skills to prepare you for life after school. You are not impressed with how well the school listens and acts on your opinions. We agree with you on this and note that the school has recognised this as an area for improvement. The school is a safe place and it has secure systems to make sure this remains so. The support and guidance you receive are good and the links with other schools, social services, business, universities and colleges are excellent.

The school is well led, with a clear view of what needs to improve. The way the school checks how well it does is fairly thorough but is done in varying ways throughout the school.

We are asking the school to improve ways to ensure your views are taken into account, and make sure that departments use consistent ways to check how good their work is so that standards can continue to improve.