



Copley High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106259
Local Authority Tameside
Inspection number 287457
Inspection dates 22–23 February 2007
Reporting inspector Jon Lovgreen

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Huddersfield Road
School category	Community		Stalybridge
Age range of pupils	11–16		Tameside SK15 3RR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 3386684
Number on roll (school)	892	Fax number	0161 3038517
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs A Hill
		Headteacher	Mr Jim Joyce
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	22–23 February 2007	287457

© 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 four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school serving a mixed area, with some students coming from areas of significant disadvantage. The intake is predominantly White British and there are considerably more girls than boys on roll. The number of students entitled to free school meals has risen and is now above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Having once joined the school, few students leave it other than at expected times. The school gained specialist status in mathematics and computing from September 2005, and has also been designated a Healthy School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Copley High School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. However, its self-evaluation is inadequate and this led the school to be over-optimistic about its effectiveness. This was because the many initiatives it has taken after a period of change and difficulty have not yet had time to have the expected impact on students' learning and personal development. The school's specialist status for mathematics and computing is in its early stages in terms of stimulating improvements in teaching and standards. Further, systems for checking the quality of teaching, students' progress, and the consistency of agreed procedures across the school are neither regular nor demanding enough. Students are happy at the school; they settle quickly and feel well cared for. They mix well socially and appreciate the good range of courses and activities which are provided for them. For too many this does not translate into effort in lessons, where a number of students are lazy or inattentive and a minority disruptive. Some teachers show limited skill in tackling this. While teaching is satisfactory, the proportion of good teaching is not high enough to guarantee students' interest and good progress. Students' achievement is, therefore, satisfactory, but rather inconsistent. The upturn in Key Stage 3 results in 2006 was not matched by GCSE results, where some average-ability students did not do well enough.

The school has the confidence of parents and students. The headteacher has the respect of all associated with the school for the way in which he has successfully steered it through a period where major staffing changes, limitations and problems associated with the building, and planning for specialist status have taken much time and energy. Difficult issues over teaching and management capability have been resolutely faced and tackled. The quality of management at senior and middle level is satisfactory but varies in its understanding of the importance of monitoring the school's work carefully, and applying improvement strategies consistently. Hence good ideas are not always effectively implemented. While they are satisfactory, behaviour management, the tracking of students' progress and the general expectation of the progress students could make all vary too much within and between departments. There is, however, clear direction for the future and a genuine willingness to tackle issues. The governing body is beginning to ask the searching questions which will support the school's quest for improvement. Given these factors, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, given a changing student intake and the various difficulties which the school has faced.

What the school should do to improve further

- Regularly evaluate how effective the school is in its work, so that there is a clear view of what needs to improve and precisely how this is to be done.
- Raise expectations of and challenge to students, and particularly those of average ability, by more consistently good teaching and smarter use of tracking data.
- Make achievement more consistent so that standards rise, especially in science at Key Stage 3 and mathematics at Key Stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' achievement is satisfactory, despite some inconsistencies. When they join the school, students' standards are below average, largely because many have weak literacy skills. There are notably fewer boys than girls in the school, and their ability varies significantly from year to year. Standards by the end of Year 9 have improved, but remain below average because teachers do not push students enough to gain higher levels, focusing instead on ensuring that they just reach the national norm. GCSE examination results in both 2005 and 2006 showed students making better progress in Years 10 and 11 than they had done in Key Stage 3. This was because of the considerable staffing changes which had affected them in the earlier years. The 2006 results for Year 9 national tests improved on those for 2005. Although overall targets were met, results in science were lower than expected and students did not achieve as well as they should have. GCSE results dipped in 2006 despite an increase in the proportion of students including English and mathematics in their five A* to C passes. Mathematics results were lower than expected, and were disappointing given the specialist status of the school. Students fared less well in applied GCSEs, and the school has largely turned from these as a result. One of the biggest barriers to good achievement is that too many students and teachers see average progress as achievement in itself rather than as a basis to build on. The difficult attitudes of a minority of students, and the lethargy and lack of diligence of some middle-attaining students, also hinder progress. In contrast, the progress made by lower-attaining students has improved and the proportion leaving school with five A* to G passes remains good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. They are positive about school and appreciate how 'everyone works together' and 'nobody is superior to anyone'. They enjoy responsibilities, and the school council, head students and prefects are influential. Students lead assemblies, for example against bullying, and they organise a 'Grab a bag' tuck shop so that others can take part in lunchtime sport. Council members decided that money from the annual fun run should be shared with others outside school: their imaginatively named 'Running Water' event raised significant funds for their chosen water relief charity. Students generally behave safely and sensibly around the cramped accommodation and site, showing suitable regard for others' needs, although many drop litter carelessly. However, in some lessons students are compliant but show little enthusiasm for learning in response to unimaginative teaching. A minority can become difficult and rude to staff. The level of exclusions is relatively high, although lower in the current academic year. Attendance is broadly satisfactory, and improving because of much concerted effort by staff. Students are well aware of how to stay fit and healthy. Many participate in extra sports activities, some training

as junior sports leaders. All leave school with adequate skills to support their future learning and economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, there is not enough consistently good teaching because senior managers and subject leaders do not check lessons regularly or carefully enough to see how well students are learning. Planning is good and many teachers use a range of methods to engage and sustain students' interest. Good use is being made of the increased information and communication technology (ICT) equipment which specialist status has brought. In the best lessons teachers use probing questions, asked in a variety of ways, to make students think and reflect more deeply about what they are learning. Many teachers make good use of examination criteria to plan lessons and this helps students understand the purpose of what they are doing. In quite a few lessons, however, the pace is slow because teachers expect too little of students, especially in terms of amounts and quality of work. When this happens questioning becomes vague, so students can avoid answering. Students lack enthusiasm in these lessons. This can lead to inattentive or unsatisfactory behaviour which some teachers do not handle well, and which limits learning. Some marking clearly tells students what they have done well and what they need to do better. This helps them know how well they are doing in relation to targets and how to improve. However, not all marking gives this clear advice and in some instances work is not regularly marked.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Ongoing and thoughtful review of the curriculum has resulted in a good range of courses and educational experiences that meet students' needs well. Curriculum is carefully planned to provide courses for students of all abilities, so that the majority leave Year 11 with accredited qualifications. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is appropriate. ICT courses are in place throughout the school, answering an issue from the previous inspection. In Years 7 to 9 all students take drama; in Years 7 to 8 a 'Learning to learn' course. The school's critical analysis of the effectiveness of vocational courses is resulting in new courses better suited to students in Years 10 and 11. Some initiatives are at a relatively early stage, but there are firm and appropriate plans for further improvements. Students' social, personal, health and careers education is well served by the 'Life studies' course in all year groups. Students enjoy the school's extensive range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits, and this is seen in their good uptake.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for students. Staff know individuals and their family circumstances well, so students take any concerns to them with confidence. A typical comment was, 'The school does its best to get what people need because everybody here matters.' Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure child protection and health and safety. Suitable records are kept. Teaching assistants, learning mentors, the learning support centre and outside agencies combine to provide helpful support for vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This enables them to make similar progress to their peers. Older students praise the help they receive when choosing courses for Key Stage 4. The guidance provided for Year 11 means that almost all have a clear idea of what they will do on leaving. Inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking and the setting of targets mean that students are not always clear enough about exactly how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory at all levels. The headteacher has set a clear direction to tackle past underachievement and to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and is supported by the senior leadership team and the governing body. He has worked hard to manage two major building projects while providing a high level of support for all staff and students. He has successfully challenged unsatisfactory performance and has made necessary changes to personnel. Alterations to the working environment, including the installation of air conditioning throughout the school, coupled with changed roles and responsibilities for senior and middle leaders and a series of new appointments, are increasing the school's capacity to drive improvement. New leadership of the mathematics department and of the specialist status are showing the way.

Systems for monitoring and evaluating school improvement are inadequate. Managers are aware of this and new systems are in the early stages of development. These include department reviews by the leadership team and new student-tracking procedures to support the raising of achievement. Some initiatives are already having a positive impact. However, the impact is inconsistent because middle and senior leaders have varying levels of understanding of what needs to be done and their role in it. The school acknowledges the need for further training and guidance in monitoring and evaluation and in using data to steer planning and stimulate learning. It also appreciates that where good teaching exists, it needs to be shared with others to help teachers to improve their craft.

The chair of governors has a clear understanding of the school's position. She is working with the headteacher to increase the confidence and skills of governors, following recent significant changes in personnel. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
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	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

As you know, a team of inspectors recently visited your school to find out how you are getting on and whether the school is giving you the education you deserve. We would like to thank you for the way in which you welcomed us into your school and lessons, and were willing to talk to us about your work.

Yours is a satisfactory school where you make reasonable progress. When you start, you settle into school life quickly and well because routines are clear and fair, and teachers are easy to approach. Most of you behave sensibly around the cramped school site but far too much litter is casually left for others to pick up at lunchtime. Classroom behaviour is reasonable, but varies a lot. Most of you are keen to get on with work, as your books show, but some of you are chatty, inattentive, and sometimes rude to teachers. In contrast, you welcome visitors well. The headteacher and senior staff work hard. They have put a lot of effort into caring for you, while getting improvements to the building finished and widening the range of lessons and activities available to you. This has meant that they have not always checked how well you are being taught and whether you could be making faster progress.

We have asked the school to make improvements by:

- regular and careful checks on how well it is doing - this would give a clearer view of what works well and what needs to improve, so that everyone knows what has to be done and understands their part in seeing it completed
- helping teachers and students, especially students in the middle sets, realise that faster progress and higher standards are possible
- raising standards, particularly in science at Key Stage 3 and mathematics at Key Stage 4, so that your exam results improve.

We know that you enjoy school and that most of you respect how people in it work hard for you. You can make better progress by turning this respect into a determination to work hard, and to be attentive and well behaved in every lesson. We wish you every success.