

Cornfield School, Littlehampton

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	126170
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293484
Inspection date	13 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Megee

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Ric Turney
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002
School address	Cornfield Close Littlehampton BN17 6HY
Telephone number	01903 731277
Fax number	01903 731288

Age group	11-16
Inspection date	13 March 2007
Inspection number	293484

Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to a change to the report following a complaint

© 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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cornfield School caters for students who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. About a third of the students also have more complex difficulties such as autism. Almost all the students are from White British backgrounds and only six are girls. All students have statements of special educational need. The headteacher and assistant headteacher have been on sick leave from the school since December 2006 and November 2006 respectively, and a seconded headteacher, appointed in January 2007, is temporarily in charge of the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Although Cornfield School judges its effectiveness to be satisfactory, inspection evidence shows it to be inadequate and that the school is not in a position to improve satisfactorily. The long-term absence of two of the four members of the senior leadership team has taken its toll. Inadequate leadership and management have led to an unsatisfactory quality of education, and the school has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation is unsatisfactory. Leaders have not been able to assess accurately the school's effectiveness or to set out a clear direction and vision for the future because procedures were not in place that would enable them to do this. The temporary headteacher, however, has quickly put together a plan to turn matters around, but this action is too recent to have had a significant impact upon students' achievement.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Standards are very low and students do not achieve as well as they should, especially in English and mathematics. This inadequate achievement is principally because the school leaders have not ensured that there has been an effective system for setting individual targets or for improving the quality of teaching, which is inconsistent and inadequate overall. Such a system is being introduced.

Taken together, care, guidance and support are unsatisfactory and as a result students' personal development is also inadequate. Although there is satisfactory care for students personally, students are not given clear enough guidance about how to improve their school work, or good enough support to lead a healthy and safe lifestyle. Students and parents report that there is persistent bullying by a minority of students. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, with some positive features, such as the arrangements for work-related learning. However, the curriculum is not well matched to the needs, interests and aspirations of the small number of girls in the school, and this hampers what they can achieve.

The school does some things well. There is good achievement in some subjects, including art, science and physical education, where the teaching is effective. Behaviour difficulties are mostly managed sensitively and discreetly so that there are mostly positive relationships between students and staff, with a good deal of mutual respect and trust. One parent said, 'I particularly like the way my child is treated – the staff are more like friends of the family.' Relationships with parents are generally positive. The governing body has suffered some recent severe setbacks, which have resulted in their number being depleted. This has meant that they have been unable to carry out their role effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise students' achievement, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that these subjects are taught well.
- Ensure that girls are given opportunities to succeed in a range of activities which closely matches their needs and aspirations.
- Help students to achieve more by involving them in setting and evaluating their own more precise and challenging targets.

- Ensure that a viable leadership team is installed to achieve the school's aims through a rigorously evaluated improvement plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are exceptionally low across the school. The students very often have significant gaps in their education before joining the school. Although progress in work-related learning, science, art and physical education is good because of skilful teaching, achievement overall is inadequate. Students make insufficient progress in English and mathematics because of staff absences and inconsistent or uninspiring teaching. They do not achieve well against their individual targets in literacy and numeracy because the targets are often too imprecise, rarely reinforced in lessons and students do not know what they are. There is too little time allocated to music for students to make satisfactory progress in the subject. Progress in information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and is now satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Although students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall is unsatisfactory, it is not without some positive aspects. There are good focus weeks which help the students develop their awareness of life in a multicultural society. Students are given opportunities for reflection which allow them to become spiritually aware. The consistent focus on positive behaviour means that most students are polite and often behave very well, although this is marred by persistent bullying and aggressive behaviour by a minority. This means that some students do not act safely and others feel unsafe, and this has in turn led to a relatively high number of exclusions. Students say how they do not like to go into the changing rooms because 'you get flicked by towels and that really hurts.' On the whole, students attend regularly and enjoy the opportunities provided for them, especially in sports and art, and in learning related to the world of work. Students' involvement in the local community and in the life of the school through taking responsibility is limited by the few opportunities provided. Older students achieve well in work experience, but they do not develop enough skills overall for their future economic well-being because of the lack of emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and because of the lack of opportunities for them to assess their own work and develop independence in their learning. Although there are effective college links, there is too little opportunity for students to experience lessons in a mainstream school which could assist their social development further. The school provides healthy options for food at lunchtimes but, as its reward system, allows students who have behaved well to go off-site some use this opportunity to smoke.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Although some of the teaching seen during the inspection was good, the impact of teaching on students' learning over time is inadequate, especially in developing basic skills in English and mathematics. The assessment procedures are unsatisfactory because students' targets are too vague, especially those for improving their literacy and numeracy. Students do not know what they should do to improve. In all subjects, teachers do not focus sufficiently on the

development of students' literacy and numeracy, so that they make insufficient progress with these basic individual skills.

The prolonged absence of the English specialist has meant that students do not receive consistently good teaching in the subject and that their progress has been too slow. They say, 'We have had loads of different supply teachers and so there's no continuity.' Mathematics is not taught well. The activities presented are frequently uninspiring and students become bored and inattentive. Lessons sometimes focus too closely on topics and activities which are of little interest to the small number of girls in the classes. Despite these weaknesses, there are a few better aspects to teaching and learning. Staff generally establish good relationships with students in lessons, manage behaviour well and avoid confrontation with students skilfully. As a result, students develop self-confidence, usually listen carefully and concentrate well. Most teachers have good knowledge of their specialist subjects and course requirements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has some strong features that are well matched to students' needs. In particular, the school is effective in providing a suitable range of opportunities for work-related learning, and has developed the appropriate links with local colleges and work placement agencies. As a result, many older students do well within a range of work-related opportunities which meets their needs and interests. These opportunities motivate students well and help develop positive attitudes. The focus weeks have been successful and students report that they especially enjoyed the enterprise week, which gave them a good insight into the world of business. Links with outside agencies such as the fire service and the school nurse enhance students' personal, social and health development. Students respond well to the residential opportunities provided which help to develop their independence and social skills.

Balanced against these positive features are some weaknesses in the curriculum. The school has not yet fully implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and this limits the impact of provision in developing students' basic skills. Timetabling arrangements limit opportunities to experience some subjects, for example music and drama, whilst at the same time creating opportunities for college attendance. The range of activities is not geared closely enough to the interest and aspirations of the girls in the school. There are too few opportunities for students to learn in mainstream schools, although students and parents say that they would like to see more.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Students are provided with satisfactory personal support, which means that they develop trust in the staff and know who to turn to if they are in trouble. This support is enhanced by satisfactory links with outside agencies. The system for supporting behaviour is consistently applied. However, bullying is not always dealt with effectively and some of the rewards used, such as opportunities to smoke or being given sweets, undermine the development of a healthy lifestyle. Academic guidance is weak. The school's assessments are not precise enough to set clear, challenging targets for achievement or personal development. Individual academic targets are used very rarely, and students are too little involved in setting their own targets or knowing what they have to do in order to improve. The school has recently introduced a system to track students' achievements, but this is a very recent development and has not yet had an impact

upon students' progress. There are some lapses in meeting statutory requirements, including those to do with the recording of incidents and exclusions.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The systems for gathering information about students' achievement, attendance and personal development, and those to evaluate teachers' performance, have been inadequate for some time. This in turn has meant that the school leaders have not been able to identify accurately any weaknesses or gaps and bring about positive changes through an improvement plan. As a result, students and staff have not been given the support, guidance and provision which they have required in order to improve and develop quickly.

The new temporary headteacher has recognised these failings very quickly and knows that fast remedial action is required. He has introduced a practicable framework for action and timetables for the development of these key management systems. However, these innovations have had little time to be implemented, and the long-term absences within the leadership team are a significant barrier to making these developments fully effective. Members of the governing body have suffered a number of recent severe setbacks. This means that the governing body is seriously under strength and is not able to carry out its duties effectively. Some statutory requirements are not currently fully met.

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?	4
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	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The behaviour of learners	4
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 March 2007

Dear Students

Cornfield School, Cornfield Close, Wick, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 6HY

You may remember that we came to see how well you are getting on and whether there is anything that could be better. Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited you, and a special thanks to the Student Council who met with me and gave me a lot of useful information.

We think that your school is not yet as good as it could be and that it requires 'special measures' so that you make as much progress as possible. This means that your school will receive regular visits from inspectors over the next year or two to see how you are getting on. We found out that:

- You do well in art, science and physical education.
- You trust and respect the staff who give you sensitive personal support.
- Your parents are generally positive about the school.
- Because the people who run the school have been away for a long time, they have not done all the things that are necessary to make sure that you, the teachers and the school keep on improving.
- Your new temporary headteacher has started to make improvements but these are very recent.
- Although staff work hard, the teaching and guidance you receive is not as good as it could be and as a consequence you do not make as much progress as you should in both your personal development and in your schoolwork, especially in subjects like English and maths.
- You are not involved enough in setting your own targets so you know what to do next.
- The school does not give you as much support as it should to help prepare you for your future lives or to live a healthy life, and there is too much bullying.
- The curriculum is satisfactory and learning related to the world of work is good.
- There are not enough interesting activities for the girls.

We found four main things that the school should do. It should:

- improve the teaching, especially in English and maths
- make sure the girls have more interesting activities to do
- help you set your own targets
- make sure that the school is well led into the future.

I hope you will do your best in your work, and perhaps those of you who smoke could cut down or even stop completely.

Mick Megee Lead inspector