



# Cox Green School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110067  
**Local Authority** Windsor and Maidenhead  
**Inspection number** 295369  
**Inspection dates** 5–6 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Sheila Nolan

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Highfield Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Maidenhead
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		SL6 3AX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01628 629415
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	860	<b>Fax number</b>	01628 637383
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	137		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Powell
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ian M Hylan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	5–6 February 2007	295369

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Cox Green School, a specialist Performing Arts and Media College, mainly serves families from surrounding villages as well as from the local area. Students are of predominantly white British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is much lower than average but the percentage of students who have learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to national figures. There are fewer students in Years 7 to 9 than in older year groups because of population shifts.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Cox Green is an improving school that provides a satisfactory quality of education. It has made good progress since the last inspection in February 2006. In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The able leadership of the headteacher, effectively supported by the re-structured senior team and the local authority, has enabled the school to sustain good sixth-form provision and to move forward rapidly on the areas requiring improvement. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory. Personal development is good and attendance and punctuality have both improved. The good curriculum now includes religious education throughout the school. Governance has strengthened so that the school is more rigorously held to account. This clear evidence indicates the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Standards have risen and now match national figures. By the end of Year 11, students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve satisfactorily overall. However, some able students still underachieve because of their low aspirations. Students in Years 7 to 9 also reach average standards but boys in particular achieve less well than they should in English and science, mainly because of their weak literacy skills. Post-16 students achieve well.

The majority of students and parents are strongly supportive of the school. One family said, 'The school encourages and motivates students by alerting us to good progress'. Nevertheless, a small number of parents are concerned that communications between home and school are sometimes confused. They appreciate the improvements made in students' behaviour both on and off site. A real strength of the school is its inclusive ethos and strong community links. Students feel safe and enjoy school, particularly the rich opportunities for out-of-hours activities, many fostered by the developing performance arts specialism. Students are keen to stay healthy and participate well in sports as well as having their say in the excellent catering provision. Many make a difference to others through service in the community. The school jazz band is a clear favourite in local events. Older students support international projects both financially and hands-on in parts of Africa. Others contribute well through the school council and day-to-day duties. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Effective personal and social education and individual guidance prepares students well for the future. The quality of academic guidance at classroom level, however, varies too much between and within subjects.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-evaluation at senior level is robust but the school has accurately identified that the effectiveness of middle managers in monitoring learning is too variable.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of provision in the sixth form is good. Standards are in line with national figures. Students achieve well in their chosen courses, given the school's open access policy. Progress in the sixth form is faster than in the main school because teaching and learning are good and academic guidance is more sharply focused. Students are highly appreciative of their teachers' enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, their subject areas as well as of the encouragement they receive to work independently. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

Half of Year 11 students regularly move onto the sixth form and most remain to complete their courses. The school works well as part of a consortium of five secondary schools so that students have access to a wide range of curricular options, including vocational as well as academic courses. Students are looked after well and their personal development is good. They communicate confidently with adults and feel well supported. Working relationships are good. Some students commented that 'Teachers are always available and willing to help'. Despite these strong features and an already effective support system, students would welcome further targeted guidance, not always readily available in the mixed-age tutor groups.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in English and science in Years 7 to 9 and ensure all able students achieve well enough
- Extend rapidly the capacity of some middle managers to manage their responsibilities more effectively
- Improve the quality of day-to-day information to students on how to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

From a broadly average starting point in Year 7, students reach average standards in the main school and in the sixth form. All students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, now achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 11. Post-16 students at all levels achieve well across a number of subject areas that include art, business, media studies and physical education.

Following a steady rise over several years, test results at the end of Year 9, although remaining in line with national figures, declined in 2006. Students made steady progress in mathematics but less than expected progress in English and in science. Girls generally achieve more successfully than boys whose reading skills on joining the school are lower.

The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE has fluctuated from year to year but has remained at least in line with national averages. In 2006,

half of Year 11 achieved five higher GCSE grades that included English and mathematics, a significant improvement on those of the previous year. Overall, students achieved satisfactorily but some able students made too slow progress because of low aspirations. Students achieved particularly well in art, philosophy and ethics, and in drama, reflecting the school's specialist performing arts status.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The personal development and well-being of the students are good as is their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Relationships throughout the school community are positive. Students feel safe around the extensive site. They enjoy school and show this through their good behaviour, respect for each other, and improved attendance and punctuality. Most are keen to be involved in the school's wide range of activities, many of which reflect the performing arts specialist status. Students are quick to identify that 'there has been a change in the school culture' over the last year and that 'there is now a better climate for learning'.

Younger students welcome the mixed-age tutor groups, finding good role models in sixth formers and other older students. This enables them to make better informed option choices and to consider actively their future economic well-being. Students are proud of their significant involvement in improving catering services. This has encouraged their awareness of healthy eating. 'Food is brilliant' quoted a student. Participation in sporting activities is high. Students take fundraising events very seriously and help to raise considerable sums of money for good causes, both at home and abroad. The school council has an active role in school improvement. Their negotiating and enterprise skills have found fruitful expression in fundraising and 'commissioning' a roof cover for the canteen decking.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school has made good progress in remedying the inadequate teaching reported at the last inspection. Clear guidance, regular monitoring linked to training activities, and accurate judgements on the quality of classroom practice underpin the school's progress.

Warm working relationships are reflected in the positive learning environment throughout the school. Students respond well to carefully paced, challenging tasks and activities in many lessons. In a successful English lesson, for example, the teacher made good use of students' oral responses through role-playing different characters in Richard III. Good humour and active involvement added to students' enjoyment.

Despite these good features, students are not always helped to become effective independent learners. There are still a few lessons where students engage in work less readily because activities are not well enough matched to their needs. The quality of marking is inconsistent across the school. It does not regularly enable students to know how well they are doing or how to improve their work and is often unrelated to students' academic targets.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of students well. A wide range of vocational courses and work-related opportunities at Key Stage 4 offer helpful pathways into training and employment. Provision for personal, health, social and citizenship education is good. It supports students' personal development successfully as well as providing exciting opportunities for enterprise and work-related skills.

Provision for basic skills is satisfactory although the school recognizes the need to enhance literacy skills further. Students' learning is enriched by a wide range of out-of-hours activities, especially in the arts, ICT and sport. High take-up in drama and music enables students to participate in regular public performances. Specialist performing arts status has helped broaden option choices. Students benefit from an interesting range of visitors and speakers as well as from local and international links, including one with a Kenyan school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Students are positive about the effective pastoral system that contributes to the 'family-like' community in the school. They say that this reduces bullying which is always dealt with in a very 'understanding way'. High levels of supervision around the site and throughout the day ensure students' safety. Good links with the local authority and other external agencies support vulnerable students well. Careers advice is good and students are well informed about opportunities available to them for the next stage of education and working life.

Systematic whole-school procedures check termly on students' academic progress. A range of intervention strategies, in place to tackle underachievement, are beginning to have a positive effect on students' progress. However, day-to-day academic guidance to students on how to improve their work is not yet good enough in all areas of the curriculum.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Some aspects are good, for example, the leadership of the headteacher in orchestrating the school's positive response to improve the areas of significant concern noted at the last inspection. The impact of the initiatives is evident in the upturn in examination results at the end of Year 11, in the improved quality of teaching, and in the better attendance and punctuality of students. The restructured senior team supports the headteacher well in systematically monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's work. Progress as a specialist performing arts college is gaining momentum under an able director, and the sixth form is led well. The school has sustained its inclusive ethos with good support for students with particular social and educational needs. Governance has strengthened so that it is now good with governors actively holding the school to account for standards and progress on the school improvement plan. The capacity to improve further is thus good.

Committed middle leaders generally share the senior team's clear vision for school improvement. However, the rigour with which they manage their areas of accountability is too variable and too much monitoring still depends on the senior team. Nevertheless, the school's evaluation of its progress and of the quality of what it provides is generally accurate. It rightly acknowledges that despite improved whole-school assessment systems, weaknesses remain in departmental assessment procedures.

The views of parents, students and the local community are sought regularly, are much valued and used to inform changes, particularly to the behaviour management policy. Students now remain on site, for example, at lunch times in response to local community concerns. Staff, too, have a voice and say they are clear as to what is expected of them and that their contributions to the school community are recognised by colleagues and families alike. They are appreciative of the good professional development activities afforded them from school training sessions and from area-wide opportunities.





## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	3	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	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	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	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 Cox Green we would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome. A special thanks to those of you who took time to talk to us. We are pleased that you enjoy school and the many opportunities it provides, especially in sport and performing arts. We are equally pleased that you behave well in class and are sensible around the site. You attend regularly, know about healthy eating and are proud of your involvement in establishing 'Cooks', your recently-appointed caterers. Many of you are making a difference to others through your good contributions to the school, local and international communities. We heard that you get good experience of working life and enterprise skills and that helpful advice on the next stages of education helps you make sensible choices.

You told us that you find your teachers are very committed to helping you to do your best and that you think your school is improving. We agree with you that your school has made good progress in the last year. Governors are keeping a careful eye on improvements. A good deal has been done to improve teaching and most of you make satisfactory progress by Year 11. We also agree that in the sixth form you achieve well. Some things, however, could be even better. Not all areas of school life are well enough managed and some of you in Years 7 to 9 make too slow progress in English and science. Checks on your academic progress still vary too much from one lesson to another and as a result some able older students do not do as well as they might in GCSE examinations.

We are confident that you will do your best to work with your teachers in trying to improve your class and homework so that each of you can make the best possible progress.

We wish you all the best for your future success.

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector