

Clifton: A Community Arts School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106947
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	309271
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sandra Tills
Headteacher	Mr Patrick Daley
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2005
School address	Middle Lane Rotherham South Yorkshire S65 2SN
Telephone number	01709 515005
Fax number	01709 515015

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves a community with high levels of disadvantage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than in most schools. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is a little above average. Most are of Pakistani heritage, with small numbers from several other ethnic groups. The school has specialist performing arts status. It has experienced considerable changes in teaching staff and at leadership level over the past two years. Around a third of the teachers joined the school during this period. A new headteacher took up post in 2006 and a new deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers joined in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education, which results in students reaching satisfactory academic and personal outcomes. It is currently in a state of transition due to the changes in staff, especially at senior level. A range of new organisational structures and management processes have been introduced to bring about improvement and more are planned. These provide a positive basis for the school to move forward but they have not had time to demonstrate their impact.

Students enter the school with standards that are well below average and levels of literacy are particularly low. They make satisfactory progress during their time in school, although standards remain considerably below average by the time they leave. GCSE results have remained fairly static over the past few years and the school is aware that it needs to address this. Students perform better in some subjects such as mathematics, music and physical education than in others, especially the humanities. Although students' achievement in English is broadly satisfactory, their continuing low levels of literacy hamper their progress across the curriculum.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Additional time has been given to English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 3 and vocational courses have been introduced which are meeting the range of students' needs more fully in Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching and learning is also satisfactory overall. Some teaching is better and enables students to learn well, but the quality is not consistent. Some teaching is well structured, engages students' interest and secures their participation. Other lessons are less well planned and do not ensure that all students are actively enough involved in their learning. A common weakness is that teachers do not take enough account of students' different capabilities and so tasks do not ensure that all make maximum progress in lessons. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Students' progress is checked regularly and the resulting information is analysed to identify where some extra support is needed. It is not used enough to routinely inform teaching.

There are positive arrangements in place to help meet students' diverse and often severe personal needs and there is good liaison with external agencies to provide additional support where required. Students' personal development is satisfactory overall. Most are keen to learn and do what is asked of them willingly and quietly. The majority enjoy good relationships with each other and with teachers. Most also behave appropriately and attend regularly. This is not the case for a significant minority. Some students' attendance is poor, especially at Key Stage 4, and some challenge teachers' authority and disrupt lessons. New arrangements have been put in place to improve behaviour and attendance but these have not had sufficient time to have full impact.

The school has made satisfactory progress in developing its performing arts specialism. New courses have been introduced leading to increased take-up in the specialist subjects and there have been some improvements to teaching and learning in these areas. This has enabled the school to meet some, although not all, of its specialist targets. The curriculum has been enhanced by activities provided through links with theatre in education companies and other arts related organisations. However, specialist subjects currently make a relatively limited contribution to improving teaching and learning and to raising standards across the school. Good progress has been made in the development of its community work, particularly with its primary and secondary partners.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and other school leaders are providing an increasingly clear sense of direction focussed on improving learning and achievement. A well developed system of monitoring, review and evaluation results in a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Clear structures and more robust systems to ensure that the school runs efficiently and effectively have been put in place and there are appropriate plans for further developments. Many parents have positive views of the school but a significant proportion express some concerns. Engaging further with parents and developing a stronger partnership with them is a priority for the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement across the curriculum, particularly in relation to students' skills in literacy.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and ensure that lessons are well matched to students' abilities and involve them more actively in their learning.
- Improve the attendance and behaviour for the significant minority of students for whom they are inadequate.
- Develop a stronger partnership with parents.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although the standards attained by all groups of students are considerably below the national figures at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, the achievement of different groups is broadly satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, there is some difference in performance between groups. White boys, for example, perform less well than others and students from minority ethnic groups perform better. Different levels of motivation play a part in this. The school is taking action to try to ensure that all groups perform equally well, with a particular focus on improving the attainment of White boys. The school sets challenging whole school targets, but it did not meet them in 2007, especially in Key Stage 3. It met some, but not all, of its specialist targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The majority of students say they like school, particularly enjoying practical and specialist subjects. They respond well to teachers and try hard to meet their expectations with regards to learning and behaviour. A significant minority, however, are loud and challenging at times. Their behaviour sometimes intimidates other students and this contributes to some expressions of concern about bullying. The school is aware of this and is taking steps to prevent it and deal with it when it happens. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, although the disruptive students disregard their impact on others. Students develop a secure understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The increased allocation of time for physical education, together with opportunities for extra-curricular sport, helps students to benefit from regular exercise. Students gain a satisfactory understanding of dealing with social issues through the recently reorganised and well planned pastoral programme, but some students lack confidence when contributing to class discussions. Attendance is inadequate despite the best efforts of the school to improve it.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

While the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, it ranges from outstanding to inadequate in individual lessons. Most teachers outline what they want students to learn and the activities to be covered at the start of lessons so students understand what is expected of them. Good subject knowledge is used to give clear explanations of topics. Where teaching is good, the securing of students' interest at the outset, challenging questioning and a brisk pace help students to achieve well. Relationships are generally positive and classes appropriately managed, resulting in most students behaving as expected. A minority of students sometimes disrupt the learning of others. Too often the tasks set in lessons are not closely matched to students' differing capabilities. For example, in mixed ability classes students are often given identical work which means that it is too easy for some and too difficult for others. Teachers do not always ensure students are actively contributing to their learning or participating in class discussions. Some marking of students' work gives good feedback to them on how they can improve it, but not all does this well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Further changes are being made to the satisfactory curriculum to help it meet the needs, interests and abilities of all students more fully. Developments at Key Stage 4 have resulted in a broader range of provision, including individual programmes for students new to the school or in danger of becoming disaffected, and more are planned. Citizenship and personal, social and health education make a positive contribution to students' personal development. Students enjoy the range of activities that take place during the well planned themed days. All students in Key Stage 4 study a vocational course and undertake work experience, which helps them to prepare for the world of work. There is a good range of enrichment activities and a full programme of after school revision sessions. The school has developed good links with its feeder primary schools across all areas of the curriculum and these help students settle down quickly in their new surroundings.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Clear systems are in place to provide the care and support needed to meet students' personal needs. Although some of these are new, they are well founded and aimed at ensuring improvement. Teachers, support assistants, mentors and counsellors all play an important part, linking effectively with a wide range of outside agencies to give students constructive individual help. Good links with primary schools smooth the transfer of students into the school. Students are given useful guidance about subject choices in Year 10 and Year 11 and when making decisions about careers and post-16 courses. Procedures for child protection, including health and safety procedures and risk assessments are in place and are understood by staff.

Students' academic progress is tracked regularly, although its timing and the resulting analysis of information is not always suitably scheduled. Individual and year group targets are set, but not all of the former are appropriately challenging. The resulting information is used in variety

of ways, for example, to identify additional support for students not on course to attain particular levels or grades at the end of each key stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The high turnover of staff has been well managed and used as an opportunity to establish shared aims designed to improve students' learning and achievement. The whole school and curriculum improvement plans are well constructed and focussed on appropriate priorities identified through monitoring. Challenging whole school targets are now set and changes are being made to make systems for tracking students' performance more robust to help ensure they are met. A range of other changes, such as to the structure of the school day, have recently been introduced to bring about improvements, but for many of these it is too early for them to have demonstrated their intended impact. There is a planned budget deficit. Nevertheless, financial management is robust and underpins school improvement. The governing body, traditionally very loyal and supportive to the school, is increasingly well informed and is beginning to hold the school leadership team to account. The school communicates with parents in a wide range of ways and seeks their views on occasions. While many respond positively, there is a significant proportion who are not yet fully supportive. Given the school's state of transition and the fairly recent establishment of strategies for development, its capacity to improve is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

Inspection of Clifton: A Community Arts School, Rotherham, S65 2SN

Thank you for talking with us during the inspection of your school. This letter is to let you know the results of the inspection.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education. This is because the provision it makes for you, such as the curriculum, the quality of teaching and of care and support are satisfactory so you are reaching satisfactory academic and personal standards. Some aspects are positive, such as the way the curriculum is being developed to meet everyone's needs better at Key Stage 4, the enrichment activities offered, some of the teaching and the extra support provided for those of you with additional needs.

Most of you like school, attend regularly, behave appropriately, get on well with each other and with your teachers and do what you are asked to in lessons and around the school. However, a significant minority of you do not attend regularly and do not behave well. We have asked the school to improve these aspects for those of you concerned. We have also asked the school to improve some other areas. You make satisfactory progress in your learning, but the standards many of you reach by the time you leave school are not at the level expected for 16-year-olds. We have asked the school to raise the standards you reach and improve the progress you make; making sure it is equally good in all subjects and especially in literacy. The quality of teaching is variable, and we have asked the school to make it more consistent, ensuring that tasks in lessons take account of your different needs and that you have more opportunities to be actively involved in lessons. We have also asked that you receive more feedback on how to improve your work. Finally, although most of your parents who let us know their views were positive about the school, some had concerns. We have asked the school to develop a stronger partnership with parents.

Your school has had many changes recently, including new teachers and a new headteacher. Some other changes have been made to try to improve the school for you but it is too early for them to have had an impact. You can help by becoming more involved in lessons, responding to the guidance you are given on how to improve your work and by making sure you all attend regularly and behave well.

I wish you and your teachers all the best for the future.