

Cockburn College of Arts

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	108065
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309587
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

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	1057
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Westwell
Headteacher	Mr Colin Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2006
School address	Parkside Gipsy Lane Leeds West Yorkshire LS11 5TT
Telephone number	0113 2707451
Fax number	0113 2761853

Age group	11-16
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Amended Report Addendum

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area with higher than usual levels of deprivation in the Beeston and Middleton areas of south Leeds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is high. Most students are White British and the proportion of students who speak English as a second language is lower than average. There is a high proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs and almost a fifth of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is slightly above average. Cockburn has had specialist status in performing arts since September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Cockburn College of Arts is a satisfactory school with a good capacity to improve further. The school has worked very hard to address the issues raised at the last inspection, when it received a Notice to Improve, and has made good progress.

Students enter the school having attained lower than average standards in national tests at Key Stage 2, especially in English. They make satisfactory progress in both Key Stages 3 and 4 but achievement in English is not improving as quickly as in other subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in both key stages.

Standards are improving but they are still below average. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 has been carefully adapted to meet the needs of all students more closely and to give them access to a wider range of nationally recognised qualifications. Students are now better qualified when they leave school. In 2007, 86% of students achieved five GCSE passes at grades A* to G which is an increase of 10% on the previous year.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with areas of good practice, but insufficient emphasis is placed on improving literacy skills across the curriculum. In the better lessons, students are actively engaged in a variety of interesting tasks and are learning to evaluate their own work. Arts subjects are used very imaginatively within school to support and enliven other areas of the curriculum. Specialist arts resources are shared with community groups and the school has many well-established links with external organisations that enhance the arts curriculum.

The personal development and well-being of students is good and they behave well in lessons and around the school. There are strong links with partner primary schools to ease the transition to secondary school, and careers guidance is strong. The system for setting and monitoring academic targets for students was strengthened considerably this year and is robust. The school is working extremely hard to improve attendance. It uses a very wide range of strategies to reduce the number of absences and the overall attendance rate has increased but there is still too much absence amongst a minority of students in lower ability groups.

The school is well led by an experienced headteacher, capably assisted by a strong leadership team. Their evaluation of the school is accurate and they have clear plans for improvement. Managers are supported effectively by a governing body that knows the school well. The school is being managed very efficiently through the current period of major building work. Most parents are strongly supportive of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement particularly in English.
- Make effective use of all curriculum areas to improve students' literacy skills.
- Improve attendance especially in lower ability groups.

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

Achievement is satisfactory and improving. The overall progress made by students from entering to leaving the school is satisfactory. Students' achievement at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and students who left the school in 2007 made significantly better progress in Key Stage 4 than students in similar schools. No specific group of students underachieves and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Standards are improving but are still lower than average. In 2007 the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C rose by 12% to 50%. Early data indicate that standards in Key Stage 3 have continued to rise but are still below average. Standards in mathematics are improving well in both key stages but standards in English have not improved.

The school is setting challenging and realistic targets for students based on prior attainment and national achievement data, especially in English, mathematics and science. All the targets set for the school's specialist subjects have been met or exceeded except for GCSE art.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students enjoy school, especially when lessons are practical and interactive; they work hard and are friendly and polite. Students feel safe and secure and behaviour around the school is good, any disruptions to lessons being swiftly and consistently dealt with. Students say that there is some bullying in school but far less than in previous years and they know where to turn for help. The few racist incidents that occur are dealt with appropriately and students from minority ethnic groups feel safe and secure in school. Students know how to stay healthy. They eat healthy lunches and appreciate the opportunities to take exercise. Attendance is still lower than average, particularly in lower ability groups, although the measures put in place have led to good improvement. There are good opportunities to contribute to the school family and links with the local community are good. Students care about those less fortunate than themselves and regularly raise funds to help them. Students appreciate the school council and its recent successes, especially in obtaining new lockers. Enterprise activities are good. Students value the range of work placements available and the advice given about future options.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree that teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well structured with clear learning objectives. Relationships between students and staff are good and lessons are managed effectively. The most productive lessons contain a range of activities that interests and motivates students and encourages them to participate. Too often though, teachers talk for too long and do not allow enough time for students to discuss issues or work in groups. High achieving students are not challenged sufficiently in a minority of lessons.

Assessment is increasingly used to support learning in many areas of the school. A number of subjects, such as art, provide very good opportunities for students to learn from appraising

each other's work. Literacy is not being developed sufficiently across the curriculum and opportunities to improve reading and writing skills are missed in many subjects.

The quality of marking varies. Students' work is sometimes marked superficially, with little feedback given and insufficient attention to correcting spelling mistakes but there are pockets of good practice where detailed comments are given telling students how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. The curriculum is organised in 'routes' at Key Stage 3 and 'pathways' in Key Stage 4, ensuring that students are on a programme of study that is appropriate to their needs. The 'Live and Learn' scheme, for example, develops the teamwork and problem-solving skills of those students who need it the most.

Specialist arts status is having a good impact on the curriculum. Arts subjects are used well to enhance other areas of the curriculum. For example, drama is used to enliven history lessons. Extra-curricular arts activities are used effectively to involve many students who are hard to engage through conventional methods. A close partnership with a specialist technology college benefits both schools. Specialist staff from one school teach in the other and vice versa. Arts-based activities, such as a drama project on the topic of 'transition' for primary pupils, helped ease their move from primary to secondary school. The range of courses in the arts has expanded and is good. All Year 9 students take a GCSE qualification in expressive arts.

In Key Stage 4, the school has developed impressive links with outside agencies, providing a wide menu of courses for the different abilities of students. Lessons in Key Stage 4 are organised so that students can work intensively on one subject for a half day or a full day. Students say this helps them make faster progress, and collaboration with outside providers is simpler to organise.

All students in Key Stage 4 take a basic literacy and numeracy qualification when they are ready. This boosts confidence and helps to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills. Students in Key Stage 4 also take qualifications in citizenship and physical education. Those students in Key Stage 4 who are difficult to engage through a conventional curriculum follow a 'skills force' course tailored to their specific needs, which includes an interesting range of options such as first aid, sports leaders awards and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Students enjoy a good range of clubs and activities that support their academic and personal development well. Students speak highly of them and attend well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Key members of staff know the students well and are aware of their individual needs and how to address them. Disaffected students are supported well. Support for looked-after children and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is both sensitive and effective. Students who have recently arrived in the school from other countries are supported well both socially and academically. There are effective relationships with many outside agencies who work with the school. The health and safety of all students are paramount and all necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are met. A good personal, social and health education programme is effective in supporting students'

personal and emotional development. Students are well supported when they join the school, as they move between the key stages and as they prepare to leave the school. Strong links with local primary schools, colleges and training agencies ensure students are well prepared for their next phase of education. Reports for parents are clear and informative about students' progress and targets for improvement. Processes for tracking students' progress are comprehensive and used, by teachers and managers, to target academic support effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The positive impact of the work of leaders and managers is clear in many aspects of the school particularly in the recent improvements in achievement and standards. Increased curriculum breadth and personalisation combined with activities related to specialist subjects are making a good contribution to this improvement. The capacity to improve further is good. Leadership roles and responsibilities are clear and there is a high degree of commitment from all staff involved in the school to improve outcomes for learners. Middle leadership is getting stronger through professional development and peer support. Governors have a good understanding of current priorities and regularly challenge the school to improve further. Managers and governors have worked hard to maintain the quality of provision, including specialist facilities, during extensive building work.

Managers have a number of effective strategies for checking what is going on in school so that they can address any issues quickly. For example, senior managers take regular 'learning walks' around the school and look in on lessons. Good communication across the school also helps managers to respond quickly. Targets are used well to monitor the performance of students and subject areas. Recently introduced key assessment points are strengthening these processes across all subjects. Well developed links between home and school and well established partnerships with many outside agencies are having a positive impact on the development and well-being of most learners.

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

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

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?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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
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 contributing to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. We would particularly like to thank those of you who met us when we arrived or took the time to speak to us in lessons, around school, and in meetings.

Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

We were delighted to see that GCSE results improved considerably this year; many more of you are now leaving school with useful qualifications. There is still room for improvement, however, especially in English and we are asking teachers in every curriculum area to think of ways to improve your reading and writing skills.

Your behaviour in and out of lessons is good and you are dealing very sensibly with the disruption caused by the building work. You are all well aware of how to stay fit and healthy and many of you take part in sports and other activities. We were pleased to see that many of you help to raise money for charities.

Teaching and learning in school are satisfactory and there are areas of good practice. The 'routes' and 'pathways' ensure that you are on a programme of study that meets your needs. The specialist arts curriculum is especially good and we were particularly impressed with the way that drama is used to enhance other subjects.

You are well cared for in school and you know where to turn to for help. You settle into school quickly and receive good careers advice and guidance to prepare you for when you leave.

Mr Richardson is a very capable and experienced headteacher and he has a strong team of managers. They know exactly what needs doing and they are working hard to make sure that the school continues to improve.

We would like to thank you for contributing to the inspection and for being so polite and helpful. We hope that you will continue to play your part in improving the school and wish you well for the future.