

Colyton Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113555
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311314
Inspection date	30 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Anthony Shield

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	593
6th form	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Bastin
Headteacher	Barry Sindall
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	Whitwell Lane Colyford Colyton EX24 6HN
Telephone number	01297 552327
Fax number	01297 553853

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated: students' progress through the school including the gains they make in the sixth form; the quality of students' personal development and well-being; the influence of provision on students' progress and personal development; and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from an analysis of national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, scrutiny of policies and other school documentation, observation of the school at work, interviews with teachers, staff and students, and from parents' responses to a questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Colyton Grammar School serves a large area of east Devon, west Dorset and parts of Somerset. Most students are from a White British background, and there are only small numbers from other ethnic heritages. Very few students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Only a very small number of students are eligible for free school meals. The school has science college status. It also has Leading Edge status and is an Ambassador School for the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Colyton Grammar is an outstanding school with some unique and very distinctive qualities. Students flourish in a climate which encourages outstanding personal and academic skills, under the guidance of a leadership team and staff whose appetite for further improvement is undiminished. The school educates some impressively confident and assured young people.

Key to the success of the school and threaded through its fabric is trust. This is evident at all levels. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and know the school does its best for their children. 'There is no better school for my son or any of the students there' is typical of many comments made by parents. Trust is also apparent in the levels of responsibility students are encouraged to take in developing their organisational and learning skills. However, students know that the teacher will always be there to support and encourage, and value the time and energy teachers are prepared to devote to them. Leaders and managers at all levels are also trusted to tackle school improvement within their teams. Middle leaders relish the opportunities for autonomy, often taking the lead in generating ideas for improvement themselves.

The school's culture of high expectations, professional trust and working together is deeply embedded. Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The headteacher leads with authority, insight and integrity. His determination to get the very best from his staff and students means that the school continuously seeks higher standards. As one teacher explained: 'We thought we'd been pushing them hard, but we find there's another gear!' The headteacher is very well supported by his senior managers, and all staff work well as a team. Collegiate values are strong. Curriculum team leaders play a key role in monitoring standards and biennial subject reviews ensure that self-evaluation processes are deep-rooted. Self-review is both rigorous and accurate, and the school benefits from a culture which encourages reflection on practice and the sharing of what works well. Performance management and training are well planned, and teachers gain considerably in terms of professional renewal and satisfaction. Knowledgeable and dedicated governors also play a significant role in keeping the school on track. Resources are exceptionally well managed and the school provides outstanding value for money.

Students attain significantly above average standards. In 2007, GCSE results were exceptionally high against all measures. While performance in art, biology, chemistry, physics, design and technology, English and geography was particularly impressive with over 90% of students achieving an A or A* grade, there is little overall variation between subjects. The proportion of students attaining A* and A grades has been rising steadily in recent years, notwithstanding the fact that students are taking GCSE a year early. Although attainment on entry in Year 7 is high, students make exceptional progress and overall achievement is outstanding. Results in Key Stage 3 tests also improved in 2007 and remain significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. In mathematics, 87% of students reached Level 8, demonstrating very high attainment. In the sixth form, high standards and achievement continue, and the average points score of students is amongst the highest in the country. Results and take-up in science and mathematics are particularly impressive and have improved significantly since the school acquired specialist science status. Challenging targets are often exceeded and both boys and girls make exceptionally good progress. The school has made a singular success of its status as a specialist science college, and has developed strong partnerships with local schools and the local primary care trust.

Excellent and often inspiring teaching ensures that students make exceptional progress. A strong work ethic pervades. Teaching is confident and authoritative, and purposeful learning is based on a partnership between teacher and student. High expectations are the norm, and students respond with determination and pride in what they do. Students comment that it is impossible to take it easy in lessons. They ask as well as answer questions and demonstrate sophisticated critical skills in their work. Teachers frequently adopt the role of facilitator of learning, prompting and probing for understanding. While expectations are high, they keep a watchful eye on any students not keeping up with the brisk pace of learning. Learning is often collaborative with students confidently sharing ideas, and listening with maturity to each other.

A climate of mutual respect and sensitivity towards others reflects the outstanding personal development of students. Their enthusiasm for school is reflected in high rates of attendance and participation in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs. Students behave responsibly and courteously to each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students are encouraged to reflect on the needs of others and they fund raise extensively for good causes. Students are careful with their own and each other's safety in lessons such as science. They especially value the strong sense of community and trust, which, for example, enables them able to leave their bags unattended at lunchtime. The school forum gives good opportunities for their views to be heard and school groups such as the Green Society promote the development of environmentally friendly practice in school. Positive relationships flourish amongst students and they develop the social and personal qualities necessary for their future adult working life. Sixth formers' mature and responsible attitudes are an excellent model for younger students.

Students' enjoyment and excellent achievement are as a result of not only teaching but also in part to the outstanding curriculum. The broad range of programmes is matched particularly well to all students' needs and potential. Driven by the need to challenge students of high ability, the school has introduced an accelerated programme enabling students to take GCSE one year early and spend more time at a higher level following advanced level programmes in the sixth form. This has worked well and students have responded with relish to the intellectual challenges this imposes. Alongside a strong focus on developing problem-solving and enterprise skills, students are very well prepared for higher education and future employment. The school offers a superb range of enrichment activities, visitors and visits, which many students enthusiastically embrace, helping to promote curriculum depth and relevance. Music and sport are particularly popular. An extensive choice of subjects in the sixth form contributes to high retention rates. The increasing numbers of students following science courses in the sixth form are particularly impressive.

Staff at Colyton Grammar School really know their students well and they provide outstanding care, guidance and support for them. The school pays careful attention to every student, respecting their individuality and showing by example how to care for others. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are fully in place. Systems to track students' progress are very effective and give early warning of any potential underachievement. The use of performance data to set challenging targets is particularly striking and embraced by all staff. Measuring students' Response to challenge enables close attention to the individual needs of students. Students are very appreciative of the support they receive, both through marking and the generous way in which teachers give their time to help them if they get stuck. The twice-weekly sessions run by mathematics staff offering additional support are especially valued.

The school looks forward with confidence. Notwithstanding its high standards, the school is committed to further improvement and renewal. It has an outstanding capacity to achieve its ambitions.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The school has placed considerable emphasis on building on the strong foundations in Key Stages 3 and 4. Because of the accelerated curriculum programme, students now spend three years studying at an advanced level. Standards and achievement are very high. The percentage of A and B grades at A level in 2007 (90%) far exceeds selective school norms. Students are articulate and confident learners and this drives their ambition. Students' analytical, discursive and creative skills develop very well. They relish the opportunities for challenging discussions, enjoy the atmosphere of mutual respect and develop exceptional independent learning skills. Scholarly and inspirational teaching provides the foundation for students' excellent progress. Questions are used very skilfully to probe and support. The curriculum is constantly evolving to match the increasing demands of students and the school plans to adopt a Baccalaureate programme which incorporates A-levels in the future. Monitoring of students' progress is robust and students are confident in their teachers. The sixth form is exceptionally well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Inspectors judge that there are no significant areas of weakness in the school or sixth form. Minor areas for improvement are already identified in the school's development plan.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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

3 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Colyton Grammar School, Colyford, EX24 6HN

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and were particularly impressed by the courteous way in which you greeted us and the maturity you showed in answering our questions. It is clear that you take considerable pride in being a student at Colyton Grammar School and enjoy being at the school. Your school is outstanding in all respects.

- Here are some of the main findings from our report:
- The school provides an exceptional climate for learning in which you are able to excel.
- Teachers take considerable care to look after you and ensure that you are well supported through school.
- You are taught especially well and, as a result, most of you are making outstanding progress.
- The sixth form offers very good opportunities for you to thrive and flourish.
- Many of you develop confident personal and social skills, which help prepare you very well for your future beyond school.
- The curriculum is excellent and there is a superb range of clubs and enrichment activities.
- The headteacher, his senior team and all other managers carry out their responsibilities exceptionally well.

Thank you once again for your help during our visit, and best wishes and good luck with your work in the future!

Yours faithfully

Tony Shield Lead inspector