

Corfe Hills School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113864
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	311412
Inspection date	7 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Anthony Shield

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1622
Sixth form	492
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	R Milne
Headteacher	Alan Hinchliffe
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
School address	Higher Blandford Road Broadstone BH18 9BG
Telephone number	01202 656300
Fax number	01202 656356

Age group	13–18
Inspection date	7 October 2008
Inspection number	311412

© Crown copyright 2008

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. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, including the sixth form, and investigated the following issues: whether progress in improving English in Key Stage 3 has been sustained; the key elements, particularly in leadership and management and in teaching that make the school so successful; and whether key elements of the school are outstanding when compared nationally.

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 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 in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Corfe Hills School is in Broadstone, near Poole, and draws its students from a wide area. It is larger than most comprehensive schools, with a particularly large sixth form. Most students are from a White British background, with small numbers from other ethnic heritages. On entry in Year 9, the school loses some able students to grammar schools in the area. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has technology college status. In addition, the school has received several external awards in recognition of its excellence in promoting the arts, healthy schools, information and communication technology (ICT) and international work. Since November 2006, it has had Global Schools Beacon status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Corfe Hills is an outstanding school with some exceptional and distinctive qualities. Students thrive in a climate which encourages both high ambition and high expectations. The school's relentless pursuit of academic excellence is matched by its ethos of care and support for individuals. Despite its large size, the school's attention to individual students ensures they feel valued. The school educates some poised and mature young people, who speak thoughtfully and very positively about their time at school. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior team, the school has made impressive gains and is exceptionally well placed to continue to improve.

Key to the school's success has been the strong sense of community engendered by the outstanding curriculum and culture of the school. Students are exceptionally proud to belong and are keen to do their best. Their confidence in and devotion to their teachers inspires a bond of trust in which common values and purpose are shared. At a school level, students take their responsibilities seriously whether as learners in the classroom or in helping to shape school policy in year and school councils. Parents are actively involved in supporting their children at school, and feel part of the school community. They are overwhelmingly supportive of all that the school does. As one typically remarked to inspectors, 'On joining Corfe Hills, my son woke up to learning.' Students' active involvement in local community service, such as supporting Julia's House Children's Hospice or other charitable programmes, gives them an acute awareness of the community beyond school. In this respect, the school's international work makes a unique and important contribution. Links with schools in Africa, South America and Europe ensure students' global awareness is very pronounced, and their understanding of their responsibilities as global citizens is very good. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding.

The school's high expectations and the students' high expectations of themselves are reflected in the significantly above average standards. GCSE results in recent years have been well above average against all measures, and these have been maintained in 2008. Indeed the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics rose significantly. Around one in four students achieved an A or A* in English and one in five in mathematics. Able students do well and the achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also exceptionally good. At GCSE, performance in art, drama, English and sociology is particularly good, but there is little overall variation between subjects. Although attainment on entry in Year 9 is above average, most students make exceptional progress and overall achievement is outstanding. Results in Key Stage 3 tests also improved in 2008, particularly in English, and remain significantly above average. In the sixth form, high standards and achievement continue, and the value added score of students is amongst the highest locally. Results and course completion rates are very high throughout. 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 technology college, and has developed strong partnerships with local schools. This is having a significant impact on sustaining improvements in the specialist subjects of mathematics, science and technology as well as influencing standards in all subjects.

Excellent and frequently inspiring teaching ensures that students make exceptional progress. A strong work ethic is woven into the fabric of lessons. There is a good emphasis on providing relevant and meaningful activities and learning usually involves students in active participation. The students themselves are perceptive in their own analysis of what makes for effective

teaching: 'an inspirational start, often through a video or role play, followed by opportunities to contribute our own ideas rather than the teachers'. This emphasis on making students think for themselves and solve problems without recourse to the teacher has proved particularly effective. Teaching is well planned and confident, and designed to meet the needs of all students in the class. Incisive questioning by the teacher probes and deepens understanding. Extensive use of ICT underpins the school's approach to developing independent learners. GCSE students are justifiably proud of their high quality coursework presentations. Learning is often collaborative, with students confidently sharing ideas and listening respectfully to the views of others.

The climate of tolerance and understanding towards others reflects the outstanding personal development of students. Their enthusiasm for school is demonstrated by high rates of attendance and their participation in the exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular clubs, particularly those in sports and the arts. Students' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle is excellent. The annual musical, performed at a local professional theatre, is a highlight of the school year. Students behave sensibly and courteously to each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Students are encouraged to think about others and they raise funds extensively for charitable causes. Regular student surveys indicate that students feel safe when they are in school. They know their views will be listened to and respected. Good relationships flourish amongst the students and they develop the good personal and social skills necessary for their future adult working lives. Sixth formers' responsible attitudes are an excellent model for younger students.

Students' enjoyment and excellent achievement are also the consequence of the outstanding curriculum. The programme is increasingly well matched to students' needs and potential. Flexibility through Key Stage 4, for example, to allow accelerated progression to AS level in ICT, alongside the consolidation of skills for others, is the key to this good match. The school is committed to increasing this flexibility and match to personal needs. Students respond with relish to the breadth and depth of the curriculum, and enthusiastically embrace the opportunities it offers. The religious, personal and social education programme makes a strong contribution to students' personal development, including their discursive skills. A responsive attitude to identifying significant employment opportunities locally has helped shape the vocational aspects of the curriculum. An impressive and extensive choice of subjects in the sixth form contributes to high retention rates and the recruitment of additional students at sixth form level.

Teachers know their students well and offer outstanding care, guidance and support for them. The school's careful attention to individual students reflects the inclusive nature of its support. Concerns are picked up quickly and dealt with effectively. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are fully in place. Systems to track students' progress are comprehensive and enable early warning of students falling behind their targets. Personal targets are known by the students themselves, and they appreciate the time given to support them. Marking is particularly helpful with its focus on 'TINTs' (to improve next time). The use of performance data to set challenging targets is very effective and embraced by all staff.

The school's culture of high expectations and teamwork is deeply rooted. Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The headteacher leads with a confident authority. His determined ambition to get the best from his staff and students ensures that the school is continuously seeking ways to refine and develop its practice. Senior and faculty team leaders play a key role. They are trusted to take the initiative and their involvement in monitoring and self-review contributes much to the school's effective self-evaluation. Annual self-reviews are effectively guided by a convincing use and understanding of assessment data to identify

strengths and weaknesses. Knowledgeable and committed governors play a significant role in keeping the school on track. The school is passionate in its commitment to further improvement, and rightly looks forward with confidence.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Sixth formers are powerful advocates for the school. They speak persuasively of the quality of education they receive, and enjoy the many responsibilities and opportunities the school offers. Standards are above average and achievement is outstanding. The exceptional range of courses on offer enables the curriculum to be successfully tailored to the wide range of ability and aptitudes. The school successfully integrates around 70 students who join each year from neighbouring schools, attracted by the ethos and pedigree of all the sixth form offers. Students' ambition is driven by their confident learning and skills of analysis, argument and logic. They delight in opportunities to debate and challenge issues. Excellent teaching underpins students' progress, and they thrive in this atmosphere. The curriculum is constantly under review to match the increasingly diverse demands of students. 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.

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	16-19
---	----------------	-------

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/or disabilities make progress	1	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

8 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Corfe Hills School, Broadstone, BH18 9BG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited. We particularly enjoyed meeting and talking with you. The mature and thoughtful manner in which you answered our questions is a tribute to your excellent personal development. It is obvious you take considerable pride in being a student at Corfe Hills 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 a distinctive and exciting climate in which to learn. This encourages you to do exceptionally well.
- Teachers take care to ensure you are well looked after, in terms of both your personal and academic needs.
- Teaching which gets you actively involved and which makes topics interesting and relevant ensures that most of you make outstanding progress.
- The sixth form offers exceptional opportunities for you to excel.
- Many of you develop confident personal and social skills, helping to prepare you for your future beyond school.
- The curriculum is excellent and there is a terrific 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