

# Colne Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115376
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311929
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Grounds HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1225
6th form	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sue Lewis-Evans
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Nardeep Sharma
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	Church Road Brightlingsea Essex CO7 0QL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206303511
<b>Fax number</b>	01206302258

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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Colne Community School is a large and over-subscribed secondary school with an average sized sixth form serving the towns of Brightlingsea and Wivenhoe and the neighbouring villages. Nearly all of its students are from White British backgrounds and there are no students for whom English is an additional language. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances and a significant minority from areas where there is social and economic disadvantage. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average but increasing. Most students enter the school with standards that are at the national average and rising. Some higher attaining students leave at the end of Year 11 to attend sixth form provision in Colchester. The school is in an area where teacher recruitment is difficult and has for some time been a member of the local school-centred initial teacher training programme (SCITT). The school is an established specialist sports college and since the last inspection has taken on two additional specialisms, one of mathematics and computing and another of modern foreign languages. Over the last few years it has received a variety of awards such as the Inclusion Quality Mark, Sports Mark 2006, Arts Mark Silver, the Healthy Schools Regional Quality Mark and International Schools Status. At the time of the inspection the new principal had been only two weeks in post.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Colne Community School is an innovative school with many strengths and is well regarded by its students and a large majority of their parents. At present, its academic performance is close to national averages. Its own judgement, made against the revised national criteria for the inspection of schools, is that its overall effectiveness, efficiency and degree of inclusion in meeting the needs of its students is satisfactory. Inspectors agree with this judgement. The school's self-evaluation clearly indicates that its new principal and its senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths as well as what the school needs to do in order to improve.

Students achieve satisfactorily between Year 7 and Year 11. Progress is better in Years 10 and 11 than in the lower years but by the end of Year 11 standards are close to the national average. There has been a rising trend in GCSE results over the last three years as measured by the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C qualifications. Overall, students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress, in line with other students. Standards in the sixth form are at the national average and achievement is satisfactory.

The academic performance derives from the teaching, which is judged by the school itself and corroborated by the inspection to be satisfactory throughout the school and the sixth form. The great majority of lessons were at least satisfactory; some were good and a small number were very good. The teaching seen was frequently skilful and imaginative but without demanding a high level of challenge or independence on the part of the students. Behaviour was calm and orderly in most lessons, but some low level disruption was seen, corroborating concerns of a significant minority of parents, and occasionally even skilled teachers had to work hard to keep students on task. Notwithstanding these concerns, inspectors found students well behaved in the school's public places and courteous and considerate to visitors. Students' attitudes to school are generally positive in the main school but some do not enjoy school and there is, as the school acknowledges, an element of low aspiration and motivation. Sixth formers are much more positive. Attendance has improved and is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form.

The level of care and support that the school provides for all students is good. Child protection policies are particularly good: they are well planned, documented and promoted appropriately. The school is a safe environment and related procedures and practices are shared between staff and students. A full range of risk assessments are undertaken. There is effective tracking of student progress within a system which has led to increased performance at Key Stage 4. The system extends to students with learning difficulties for whom individual learning programmes and targets are devised and shared with mainstream teaching staff. This relatively small group of students is well supported and monitored by staff as well as by external agencies. There is some lively community involvement, especially in the sixth form. Students are aware of the many opportunities available to them to take on roles and responsibilities, including School Council and Junior, Higher and Community Sports Leaders, as well as the opportunity to achieve awards for European Language Leader for modern foreign languages. There are extensive international links through the school. The range of leadership training opportunities offered by the school for students is a real strength both in relation to their economic well-being and the positive contribution they could potentially make to the community. However, it is evident that such activities are not yet having the desired impact on attainment.

The curriculum is good in the main school and in the sixth form. The school has promoted a successful alternative programme to support a small number of disaffected students for whom the curriculum was not suitable or who were at the risk of exclusion.

The leadership provided by the senior management team is satisfactory. The two vice principals have ably led the school in the period following the resignation of the previous principal. Governors provide outstanding support. The school works well with other partners to promote learners' well-being. Notable are the links established through the Sports College status, the developing links made through the newer specialisms, the outreach of the Advanced Skills Teachers and the participation in the local SCITT. The school has made sound steps to improve since the previous inspection. The impact of this is most evident in the sixth form, with the rise in retention under the new management. Improvement is less evident in the main school, although some is already traceable to the early intervention of the new principal prior to his arrival. For example, the need to improve the school's systems of monitoring and evaluation has been identified. Under the new principal the school is resetting its improvement agenda. However, whilst the actions appear fit for purpose, it is understandably too soon to identify beneficial impact.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

Sixth form provision is satisfactory with a good capacity to improve. The retention rates for Year 11 students have risen, over a three-year period, from 29% to 45%. In addition, the school is attracting students from other schools, including a number from overseas. This is because of strong leadership producing a more rigorous and realistic entry policy and a broader more inclusive curriculum.

Student achievement is satisfactory, with examination results broadly in line with national averages. This is in part due to a significant rise in the pass rate at AS level over the last two years. The teaching and learning observed were at least satisfactory and on a number of occasions good. However, the teaching time allocated to advanced level teaching is below the national average and is a factor in achievement not being higher.

The sixth form has a very positive ethos in which students enjoy their studies. Students' personal development is good and the college offers a wide range of enrichment and other extra-curricular activities which encourage students to participate in the wider community. Care, guidance and support are good. Students appreciate the strong pastoral care and support provided by the head of college and the academic tutoring team.

Leadership and management are good. The head of college has vision and gives direction. He is fully aware that achievement needs to be raised and that in order to do this there needs to be a more robust use of data and target setting as well as a more rigorous review of teaching and learning.

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

- Improve students' attitudes to learning, engagement and enjoyment.
- Improve student progress and standards.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation systems of the school.

A small proportion of 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**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

All students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make satisfactory progress.

In Key Stage 3, the results of the national tests have fluctuated in the last three years, but have been broadly average. The numbers of higher achieving students has steadily risen in English, remained static in science but declined in mathematics. As a result the school's English target was met, but the school fell short in science and mathematics. These results indicate that students made the expected progress in English, but progressed slightly less well in mathematics and science.

At the end of Key Stage 4 there has been a rising trend in GCSE results. For example, the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades is at the national average and has risen from 51% in 2005 to 63% in 2007, with the school meeting its target for performance. Progress is better in this key stage, so that overall, across the years of compulsory schooling, progress is satisfactory. However, the most able students achieve slightly less well, and there is still a marked difference between girls and boys, with girls outperforming boys. Results in GCSE examinations in English were particularly good in 2007, whilst those in mathematics were a relative weakness.

In 2007 the school met its specialist school targets in physical education at Key Stage 3 and almost met them at Key Stage 4. The specialist school targets in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) were not met at Key Stage 3. The mathematics target was almost met at Key Stage 4 and the ICT target was easily met at that key stage. The modern foreign languages targets were met. Inspectors judged the 2008 targets to be appropriately challenging.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Personal development is satisfactory with good features. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is overall satisfactory. Whilst students' spiritual development is confined to what they do in lessons in religious education, their awareness of the international dimension is more marked. Older students on the school council represent the school in outside settings in a number of novel and unusual ways.

Students on the whole are friendly and cooperative. Most students' behaviour in lessons is satisfactory and they behave well around the school. There are some instances of poor behaviour in lessons but relationships with staff and between each other, in recent times, are good. However, a minority of students are not sufficiently thoughtful of each other or their teachers. Attendance has improved as a result of targeted intervention by house tutors. Students are punctual to lessons generally and this reflects on the ethos of the school.

Students are particularly positive about the sporting opportunities available at the school. In discussion, they expressed a value of fair play and their appreciation of feeling safe at school. There are few instances of bullying and there are clear systems to ensure that issues are dealt with promptly. Students and teachers alike are committed to maintaining these.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

In most cases teachers have good subject knowledge and know their students well. Some lesson plans lack detail, especially in the extent to which they ensure that the learning needs of students of differing abilities are addressed. A good feature is that some lessons show an overt attention to students' self-assessment being promoted to assist learning. Teachers frequently make expert use of electronic whiteboards.

In the lessons observed, the learning that took place was satisfactory but there were some missed opportunities for engaging students more independently and actively in their learning and in using assessment better for this purpose. Some questioning approaches did not always engage students. Answers were frequently brief and students' interventions in lessons were limited. Some students are not confident in what they can do and have to be pushed. A good, but comparatively rare, example of more independent work was that of an English lesson in the library where good outlines were set by the teacher and students went on to carry out research in a purposeful and self-motivated way.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Inspectors judged it to be satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good in the rest of the school. It allows higher attaining students to start some GCSE courses in Year 9 and the school is capitalising on its specialisms of physical education, ICT and modern foreign languages by providing additional choices for students.

The school is working towards a coherent 14–19 curriculum. Vocational and link courses are available as well as an extensive range of full GCSE examinations. All students follow a half GCSE in religious studies. The curriculum is enriched by the many trips and visits which take place. The school's well-established links with the USA, China, Egypt and South Africa are a particularly strong feature of provision. Education for health and safety is provided effectively and the school offers a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The take up of these is good, especially in sport.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The level of care, guidance and support the school provides for all students is good and for those with learning and behavioural needs it is very good. The school has a caring ethos and students feel safe and well supported. The arrangements for inducting new students are good as are those for reintegrating those returning from any exclusions.

House tutors have recently prioritised the monitoring, tracking and evaluating of students' academic progress and aspects of students' personal development. Students across each cohort are supported in working toward and meeting their targets and with appropriate challenge such

strategies will impact positively on achievement and standards. The system has had some clear success with Key Stage 4 attainment and the system is being rolled out in Key Stage 3.

Reports to parents are used well and the associated consultations are well attended. Good guidance is offered to students about their future careers and life choices as part of an on-going, planned, work related programme. The procedures for child protection are clear and shared with staff on an on-going basis. A log of racist incidents is also maintained but such incidents are few.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership by the senior management team is satisfactory. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. A newly appointed visionary principal has quickly secured the confidence and support of teachers, parents, students and governors and is driving forward necessary improvements with flair and sensitivity. The school's self-evaluation is realistic and priorities for improvement are accurately identified.

As a Sports College, challenging targets are set and met which help stretch students' performance in physical education. In other areas the more modest targets often have not been met. This is mainly because systems to monitor the work of the school, although largely in place, are not sufficiently robust to accelerate improvement in standards. The school has managed its staff satisfactorily, with good programmes for developing their skills and professionalism. The National College's Leading from the Middle programme is strengthening the quality and consistency of leadership in key departments. However, some aspects of middle management remain weak. The sixth form, which is gaining in numbers, is well led and managed.

The governing body makes an outstanding contribution to the work of the school. It fully understands and is familiar with the new criteria for judging the performance of the school as well as the importance of its strategic role in guidance. It is well organised, incisive and purposeful in steering improvements.



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## 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
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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	3
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
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	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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3	2
The attendance of learners	3	2
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	2

### The quality of provision

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

## Annex A

**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	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	3	
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	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 September 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Colne Community School, Brightlingsea, Essex, CO7 0QL

On behalf of the inspection team may I say that it was very good to meet many of you during the inspection and listen to the many positive things you had to say about the school. Thank you for your participation in our short enquiry.

As you know, the school is an innovative school with many strengths, well regarded by you, its students, and your parents. In recent years it has been very successful in attracting additional funding and in extending what it does as a specialist college. You, as students, make sound progress in the school, taking into account your levels of performance when you arrive from primary schools. Your progress in Key Stage 4 is better than at Key Stage 3 but overall across the main school students' progress is satisfactory. The results at GCSE are also at the national average, although inspectors noted that this summer's results show a welcome upward trend. In the sixth form there has been a steady increase in the number of you staying on and the pass rate at AS level is rising.

The governing body recognises all of the above but wants the school to do very much better. The new principal has already set many new things in train. We know that he is determined that the school will become an outstanding school. Incidentally, we thought it very positive that the school council was involved in the interview procedures for the new principal.

We judged that sound teaching and learning goes on across the school and that much of this is good. We did think, however, that teachers often work harder in lessons than some students. We believe that some of you need to be more independent as learners. To be successful you need to be more self-motivated in your learning in ways that will carry you forward into the post-16 world and beyond. Unfortunately, we noted that a small number of lessons were impaired by poor behaviour. This can distract teachers and slows down the progress of those students wishing to learn.

We judged that the curriculum that you are offered is good. We have commented in the report on the important range of additional opportunities which the Sports College status has brought you. We also judged that the care, guidance and support the school gives you is good. We consider the school to be inclusive in its approach. By this we mean that all students, whatever their academic potential, are able to make progress and enjoy success.

We are in agreement with the senior staff in saying that in order to improve further the school needs to do the following.

- Improve the attitudes of those students whose approach to and engagement with learning is not as positive as it could be.
- Improve the educational standards achieved by all students and the progress that they make across the school.
- Improve the systems by which the school checks and monitors what it is doing in its teaching of students.

You can assist in all of this by helping to improve the climate for learning in the school, becoming more self-motivated and ambitious in your own learning and giving feedback to the principal and senior staff on what you think works well in the school and what does not. We are sure the school will welcome such an involvement.

The inspection team wish you well with your studies and your futures.

**Annex B**

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Grounds (HMI)

Lead Inspector