

Goffs School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117587
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312662
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1331
6th form	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Christina Knight
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Cutler
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Goffs Lane Cheshunt Waltham Cross Hertfordshire EN7 5QW
Telephone number	01992 424200
Fax number	01992 424201

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Inspection number	312662

© Crown copyright 2007

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 five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. It serves a very mixed catchment of urban and rural communities from Cheshunt and its surrounding areas. On balance, students are not economically disadvantaged, but there are far fewer homes than usual with experience of higher education. Attainment on entry is above average. The great majority of students are White British with about 15% from minority ethnic communities. A very small number are at an early stage of acquiring English. The school is a specialist language college and had this status re-designated in 2006.

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's effectiveness is satisfactory, with some good features. It is undergoing substantial improvement in its provision and in the impact this provision has on students. Overall value for money is satisfactory and improving.

While many recent changes are still to impact fully, leadership and management have demonstrated a good effect on raising standards and promoting personal development. The headteacher gives a very clear sense of direction and has significantly raised the expectations of staff and students. A newly formed senior team has acquired fresh expertise and clarity of purpose so that the capacity for further improvement is good and strengthening. Middle leaders make important contributions. Their overall impact is satisfactory, but high quality results and marked recent improvements show that several lead very effectively. Self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses and the school is choosing the right strategies for improvement. For instance, closer monitoring has produced better teaching and new academic tracking systems are helping staff to set more challenging targets and to ensure students reach them. Clearer guidelines on behaviour have had success, though greater consistency is required.

As a result of these changes, standards are rising and are now above average at Key Stage 4. The proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades, including mathematics and English, significantly exceeds national levels. Achievement (students' long-term progress) is satisfactory for the main school as a whole. The progress made in Key Stage 3, once an area of weakness, is now satisfactory, though is capable of further improvement, especially in English. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities make sound progress. Support for them counteracts their weaker learning skills. Gifted and talented students progress adequately, but they gain fewer top GCSE grades than expected. These students are well motivated, but extension work to challenge them is not provided consistently. The extensive provision for languages is now matched by the satisfactory progress made in these subjects.

Appropriate care, guidance and support lead to satisfactory personal development and academic progress. The systems for tracking progress are new and their early impact has been successful. Pastoral care has strengths, especially in the promotion of greater mutual respect between staff and students. The quality of students' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. Students' awareness of cultures other than their own is strong, partly because of language and cultural links with many European countries and Japan. They contribute well to school life and have a sound understanding of how to promote personal safety and a good approach to adopting healthy lifestyles. Their preparation for future economic well-being is also good. Behaviour is satisfactory as a result of recent improvements, but teachers' application of new procedures lacks consistency.

Teaching and learning are good following more rigorous monitoring, good appointments and effective training, especially in the use of data to support planning. Excellent practice is expanding, while inadequate teaching is very rare. Much that was satisfactory is being upgraded to good because of new emphases on using assessment regularly and implementing behaviour management practice. Pace and student's active involvement in lessons are often good. However, teaching has yet to be consistent across the whole school and in all lessons; consequently progress is not always as strong as it could be. Some areas of learning have seen very marked changes. Modern languages, for instance, have acquired renewed staffing stability and

characteristically good teaching across all subjects, leading to significantly better learning in both key stages.

There is a good, well-established curriculum in all key stages. The school has used its specialist language status well and developed effective work-related opportunities and vocational courses. Links with nearby colleges and schools are good and improving further. Post-16 provision forms part of a well-organised range of opportunities offered by several linked institutions, with this school focusing on AS and A2 courses. Whilst actions have been taken to improve the English curriculum, especially in Key Stage 3, it has yet to become as strong as other areas, in particular, mathematics.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students are confident, articulate young men and women with mature attitudes towards their work and independent study. Contributing factors include the school ensuring that students understand the nature and demands of the course they are undertaking and appropriate emphasis on developing learning skills. Above all, students recognise that they cannot be spoon-fed and that they need to take responsibility. They therefore feel well prepared for higher education. There has been good improvement in this aspect since the last inspection. Students feel valued as individuals and well supported by their teachers, academically and pastorally. Formal and informal networks ensure that their performance is monitored closely by their tutors and there are good links with parents.

Students' personal development is good. They get on well with each other and the sixth form is a friendly place. They are provided with good information about local post-16 provision. There is increasing refinement in matching courses to aspirations and ability so that very few drop out of their chosen courses, although not all go on to A2 examinations. The sixth form has broader entry requirements than seen nationally. Standards are above average and particularly strong in some subject areas, which represents good achievement for most students. Progress in lessons is good. Skilled teachers with good subject knowledge have the confidence to engage and challenge students intellectually. Leadership is good with good capacity for ongoing improvement. Links with other institutions are well managed. Sixth formers play a significant role school life, take on leadership roles and take initiative. Through the sixth form council and representation on the governing body, they have strong voice and feel listened to.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement from satisfactory to good, especially in Key Stage 3 English, by ensuring that all staff and students make effective use of target-setting.
- Increase the proportion of the very highest grades at GCSE by providing more extensive challenges for gifted and talented students.
- Establish greater consistency in the quality of teaching by promoting the features that make for excellent teaching, notably the lively pace, active involvement and independent learning seen in the best lessons.

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

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are above average and rising. GCSE results have improved steadily in recent years, especially the proportion of candidates gaining five or more A* to C passes including English and mathematics. Several subjects did especially well in 2007, with more than 80% of candidates gaining high grades, rising to 97% in art and design and 100% in music.

Achievement has been slow to rise, but is now satisfactory, stemming from improvements in teaching quality over the last 18 months. Much teaching and progress in current lessons is now good, but achievement across whole key stages also reflects earlier, less effective teaching. Students have long made sufficient progress in Key Stage 4, while fresh developments have recently secured this also in Key Stage 3. Standards in mathematics in Key Stage 3 have risen particularly strongly because of changes to the curriculum, greater staffing stability and more rigorous tracking. Similar factors are benefiting standards in English, but improvement lags behind that of mathematics. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve in line with their peers. However, too few pupils are gaining the higher grades. There is now a greater focus on provision for gifted or talented students, but the impact of this has yet not been fully seen.

Sixth-form standards are above average overall, with several high-performing subjects in most years. Achievement, while varying from year to year, is generally good in these age groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is improving and has several good features. Attendance levels are satisfactory and improving. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection, though there is still a significant minority of students whose low-level chattering disrupts lessons. The great majority of students enjoy school and work hard. Sixth-form students have a mature approach to learning. The majority of students move purposefully around the school and are courteous and friendly to visitors. A small minority are too boisterous. Students feel that the school deals effectively with the little bullying that exists and that they can always find someone to help with problems. Parents are supportive of the school, though some concerns were expressed about behaviour.

Students gladly take responsibility and work well with others; for example, sixth formers support younger ones in Textile Technology lessons. Many students gain confidence and new skills through involvement in the many extra-curricular activities offered. The development of healthy lifestyles is good and the school prepares students well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Learning is good because most teachers effectively create the conditions in which students' often make good progress. However, there is a need to develop consistency across the school.

Key barriers to learning have been identified and tackled and students' expectations have been raised, along with their academic confidence; teachers now have higher expectations of what students can achieve. However, higher-attaining students are not always sufficiently challenged. Clear academic targets are set, although students say they find it hard to respond positively if the focus is only on the final grades or levels. The target-setting process does not always recognise the stages achieved en route to the long-term targets. Most teachers are confident and skilled in managing behaviour because they make effective use of the school's behaviour system. Students are actively engaged and bring their energy and increasingly positive attitudes into the classroom rather than sitting back and simply absorbing information.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The good curriculum meets the needs of many different groups of students well, helping them to enjoy their studies. A growing range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 has improved the relevance of the curriculum to many. In addition, courses have been introduced to meet the needs of the full range of learners, including AS level Critical Thinking in Year 10 and Asset language courses.

There is very effective cooperation with local schools and colleges over the development of the vocational aspects of the Key Stage 4 and sixth form curriculum. Delivering the personal, social and health education programme through drama and some information and communication technology (ICT) through French are innovative and successful ways of offering the curriculum. Students' engagement is good as a result and relevant links to their everyday life. The work-related curriculum and whole-school enterprise activities are embedded and support students in preparation for their future economic well-being. Those who are gifted and talented or have learning difficulties or disabilities, are monitored and supported through personalised programmes. However, the curriculum is not always adapted sufficiently to extend the most able.

Students enjoy a good range of engaging enrichment activities including sporting clubs, arts and music, along with curriculum-linked trips and visits. The language college status impacts positively in all age groups. Uptake of languages is above national averages and there is wide choice of courses which, linked to the international perspective, works well and is valued by the students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support enable students in the main school to make satisfactory personal development and academic progress. New behaviour management systems are well chosen and have a positive effect, whilst well designed academic tracking arrangements are helping to improve progress. Both initiatives have begun well, but require greater consistency in their implementation and more time to have a full impact. Staff show a very caring approach and are good at giving and requiring respect in their dealings with students. The school is a safe place. Child protection and health and safety procedures are good. Students at risk are quickly identified, and supported effectively. As a result, students feel safe and secure and know who to turn to for help if necessary. Arrangements to remove students for significant offences give

some immediate benefits to the classes they have left, but do not offer sufficient constructive guidance to the individuals removed. Support for those with learning difficulties or disabilities is well organised. It is helping them overcome some of their weaknesses in personal and learning skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher has introduced many measures to improve the performance of the school and has established a very clear vision for the future. Over the last 18 months, these initiatives have lifted overall effectiveness to a satisfactory level, with rising standards, significantly better achievement and more effective teaching. The improving quality of provision is testament to the skilful choice of strategies. The capacity to improve is good and is enhanced by appointments at senior level and greater accountability amongst middle managers. The headteacher and senior managers evaluate performance accurately and areas for improvement are set out clearly in the improvement plan. The process for reviewing the performance of each faculty is proving to be successful, especially in the case of mathematics and ICT. Subject managers and others with additional responsibilities fulfil their duties satisfactorily and provide helpful support for their colleagues.

Governors are great advocates for the school. They are knowledgeable about its work and increasingly well placed to hold it to account. However, they are insufficiently aware of how data about standards and achievement can be used to measure performance. In partnership with senior managers, governors ensure that resources are used wisely. Targets for students' attainment are already higher than in previous years, but the school is rightly planning to make these even more challenging.

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?	3	2
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	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
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?	3	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	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	2
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	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

10 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Goffs School, Cheshunt, Herts. EN 7 5QW

Thank you for your welcome during last week's inspection. Special thanks go to those who gave up part of their lunch time to speak with inspectors and to others who guided us around the school.

Goffs School provides a satisfactory education. We were encouraged by our visit because many aspects of the school's work are good or improving.

- GCSE standards have risen for several years in a row and are above the national average.
- Achievement - the long-term progress you make from Year 7 to Year 11 - is now satisfactory.
- Standards and progress in the sixth form are good.
- The personal development of sixth formers is good and they play a very valuable part in the life of the school and wider community.
- Behaviour is satisfactory and improving; despite some exceptions, the great majority of you are positive and helpful.
- Teaching is good, with an increasing amount that is excellent, which is helping you to make good progress in lessons.
- Staff monitor your progress much more effectively than in the past.
- The head leads the school well, giving very clear direction and setting high expectations for you and her staff.

If the school is to improve further it needs to:

- lift your achievement from satisfactory to good, especially in Key Stage 3, by making sure that all staff and students use targets well
- provide more challenging work for gifted and talented students
- turn some satisfactory lessons into good or excellent ones by making sure they have the lively pace and scope for your active involvement seen in the best teaching.

You can help your teachers in several ways, for instance, by making sure you know your targets and checking what you need to do to meet them. Some of you could also help by contributing more to lessons.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at Goffs School.

Yours sincerely

Robert Drew (Lead inspector)