

Campion School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122063
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314208
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1493
6th form	301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Baylis
Headteacher	Bob Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Bugbrooke Northampton NN7 3QG
Telephone number	01604 833900
Fax number	01604 833906

Age group	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

The school is situated in a village six miles southwest of Northampton. It serves a rural area in which deprivation rates are lower than the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those who are at an early stage of acquiring the English language are much lower than found nationally. There is also a lower proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school has been awarded specialist status for modern foreign languages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement especially in English. The main school provides an acceptable standard of education, but students make inadequate progress in Years 7 to 11 in English, and in mathematics and science the progress they make is significantly less than similar students make in similar schools. The effectiveness of the sixth form, in contrast, is outstanding.

Students' personal development is good. Students are sociable and friendly and they enjoy their time at school. Their attendance and behaviour are good. Students say that they feel safe in school and any bullying that occurs is generally dealt with effectively. They make a good contribution to the community and develop good skills to help them achieve economic well-being. Some parents expressed concern about 'low level' disruption in lessons, but the evidence from the inspection does not support this.

A close eye is kept on the progress students are making. The school works effectively to support those students who may be at risk of leaving without qualifications. For example, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a good range of options, including vocational courses and work-related training, and so provides well for the range of students' interests and aspirations. The school's specialist status has had a positive impact in terms of enriching the curriculum and supporting the teaching of modern languages in local primary schools. Nevertheless, the progress that students make between Years 7 to 11 in the core subject of English is inadequate. It is insufficient in mathematics and science. This is because although the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory overall, there are unsatisfactory aspects. For example, there is too much variability in the quality of the marking students' work. Whilst there are examples of some rigorous marking, some books seen during the inspection had not been marked recently, and some had not been marked since September. The result is that some books contain uncorrected work, do not guide students on how to improve, and some students are not taken to task about large amounts of incomplete or scrappy work. The setting of homework varies too much in frequency. Policies for ensuring that homework is completed are not consistently enforced. In addition to this, lessons often start late and those students who turn up even after the lessons have started lose even more time. The work set in lessons is not consistently matched to the different abilities of the students in the group.

The headteacher has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Parents commented positively on his influence in the school. He has introduced a number of significant changes to the way in which the school works. For example, a faculty structure has been introduced with faculty leaders charged with monitoring the work in their area and reporting progress to a senior leader. However, this practice is not applied consistently and the unsatisfactory aspects of teaching reflect the inconsistent monitoring of the day-to-day work of faculties. Procedures for assessing students' work have been developed and improved and training provided so that teachers are more accurate in their assessments. Most importantly, other steps have been taken to improve the quality of teaching, for example through the appointment and use of lead practitioners to lead the way. However, it is too early for these steps to have made a significant impact on students' progress.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Standards in the sixth form are significantly above average and students make outstanding progress. Their social and moral development is good, and they take advantage of a good range of opportunities for cultural and spiritual development and extra-curricular activities. A good number have healthy lifestyles, participating in sports and through healthy eating. Sixth formers contribute well to the community, for example through community projects, charity events and supporting younger students in their work. They work hard and enjoy their studies.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the progress made by students in Years 7-11, especially in English, by ensuring that more teaching is of good or better quality.
- Ensure that, through more regular marking and monitoring of students' work, teachers advise students how to improve their work.
- Ensure that all faculty heads regularly and frequently monitor the work of their faculties.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 1

Achievement in the main school is inadequate overall; students do not make sufficient progress. In the sixth form, it is outstanding.

Students enter the school with above average standards of attainment. Their standards remain above average overall when they leave. However, they make inadequate progress in English. In mathematics and science, students make progress which is significantly below that of similar students in similar schools. In 2007 the school missed its relatively unchallenging target for the percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE by a wide margin. There was a big difference between the proportion of boys and girls who achieved five A*-C grades that was well above the national average. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The targets for the specialist subjects of modern foreign languages were not achieved.

Evidence from the inspection showed that current progress is showing some improvement. Nevertheless, scrutiny of students' work and observations of their learning in lessons clearly indicate that progress is too variable in different lessons and subjects and from student to student.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most students enjoy school and are keen to learn, especially when their lessons are lively and interesting. The school has taken steps to find out about students' views of school. Although progress has been made, some students and a number of parents say that the school does not take sufficient account of their views. Most appreciate the school's messages about healthy eating and many take advantage of the healthy food choices available to them.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Although there are limited opportunities for spiritual reflection, they benefit from teaching programmes designed to help them understand and appreciate the breadth and diversity in our culture. Students make a good contribution to the community, with many young people taking the opportunity to be involved in extra-curricular activities, fundraising, becoming young sports leaders, and attending concerts and theatre productions. They develop good skills to help them prepare for future economic well-being through a comprehensive programme of enterprise and work-related activities.

The good number of links and connections with other schools, including schools abroad and visits to France, Germany and Spain, increase the students' knowledge of culture, customs and life in the wider world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teachers know their subjects well and have good relationships with students. Questioning is generally used well to summarise learning. In some lessons, students are not given sufficiently precise learning objectives or enough time to reflect and learn independently. Teachers have good assessment data available to them but do not always use it as a focus for raising achievement. This means that in such lessons, the most able students are not sufficiently challenged and the less able are not always best supported in what they need to learn. There are some good examples of students assessing their own and each other's work, but there are inconsistencies in quality. Teachers' expectations and assessment practice are also inconsistent. Not all students are aware of their current working levels and target grades and teachers' marking too frequently fails to give them sufficient information about what they need to do to improve. The school has recently provided training to enhance teachers' effectiveness through improved planning and clear expectations of the features of successful lessons. Where these principles are consistently applied, lessons meet students' learning needs well and the results can be very good. For example, in a lesson on Richard III, which focused on a detailed examination of the characters of Richard and Anne, the teacher's succinct explanations and her high expectations of students resulted in learners being engrossed in their work and making very good progress. In the sixth form, teachers' very good subject knowledge, evident enthusiasm and use of a wide range of resources mean that lessons show good pace and challenge. Students enjoy their lessons and engage well with their teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is broad and meets statutory requirements. There is a good choice of subjects for Years 10 and 11, including vocational subjects. There are good opportunities for students to study these subjects further, either in the school's sixth form or at college. All students gain from work experience in Year 11, and those whose interests and abilities lie outside purely academic subjects are able to take a range of work-related courses at a local college.

The 'Opening Minds' course in Years 7 and 8 develops students' awareness of wider issues and their ability to work collaboratively. The school is less successful in teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy across the different subjects of the curriculum.

The school's specialist status is reflected well in the curriculum. A good range of languages is taught and all students study at least one language. A key feature of the school's work is its provision of support for the teaching of modern foreign languages in primary schools, for example by helping train primary language teachers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for students is good. The arrangements for safeguarding meet legal requirements and the school has set up comprehensive systems for ensuring students are well protected. There are good procedures in place for ensuring that the needs of all students, including those in care, are provided for well. Students who attend college for part of the week have their attendance there carefully monitored. Any absences are reported on the same day to the school, which then contacts parents.

Students at risk of disengagement are identified so that effective action can be taken to keep them engaged. In 2007, all students left with at least one GCSE qualification.

The system of assertive mentoring is helping to bring about improvement; more students are aware of their targets but some are given insufficient guidance on how to attain them. The arrangements for informing parents about their children's progress through annual reports and review meetings are satisfactory; this was the highest area of concern for parents regarding their children's learning. However, the number of reports to parents has now increased.

The school has effective links with local further education and other post-16 providers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

There are some good strategies for bringing about improvement. The school's 'assertive mentoring approach' has been widely praised by both parents and students, who feel that it helps students to improve in their work. Challenging targets have now been agreed with the governing body for students' achievement. There is some evidence that the strategies are having an effect, and this shows that the school has the capacity to improve. Students' achievement in Year 9 science, for example, is improving and there is evidence of some improvement in English. There is, however, a legacy of underachievement which is not being removed rapidly enough. The school's judgements about the overall quality of teaching are accurate. However, in some cases, the school's judgements are too generous because the focus is too much on what teachers are doing rather than on how effectively this is helping students to learn.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school and are concerned to bring about improvement. They are now providing the necessary challenge but are not sufficiently engaged in finding out through their own visits how well the school is developing.

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
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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?	4	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	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?	4	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	1
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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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?	3	1
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

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?	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	3	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	4	
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?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Campion School, Northampton NN7 3QG

Thank you for the help you gave us when we inspected your school. We met a good number of you and spoke to more of you in lessons and around school. We found you to be polite and helpful. Those of you who attend the sixth form make outstanding progress in your work. However, in the main school we found that some improvement is needed.

We found that your school takes good care of you all and gives you good opportunities to develop well as individuals, for example through trips abroad and through discussion in personal education lessons. These help you to develop an understanding of the world and of people with ideas and backgrounds different to your own. Your behaviour is generally good, both in lessons and around the school. We did find that too many of you are late to lessons, however, and the quality of some of your work is not what it should be. These factors, along with others such as inconsistencies in the setting and doing of homework mean that while the standards you reach in your work are above average, you are not making the progress of which you are capable. For this reason, we are giving your school a 'Notice to Improve'. This means that an inspector will visit the school in a few months' time, for one day, to see how well things are improving and there will be another full inspection in the next 12 to 18 months. In order to improve, your school should ensure that more teaching is of good or outstanding quality, make sure that careful checks are made on the quality of the work you do and that you receive good advice on how to improve it, and ensure that all heads of faculty regularly check the quality of what they provide.

You can help, too, for example by making sure you get to lessons on time and making sure that you complete all the work you are asked to do to the best of your ability.

Best wishes for your future,

Alan Alder Her Majesty's Inspector

25 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Champion School, Northampton NN7 3QG

Thank you for the help you gave us when we inspected your school. We met a good number of you and spoke to more of you in lessons and around school. We found you to be polite and helpful. Those of you who attend the sixth form make outstanding progress in your work. However, in the main school we found that some improvement is needed.

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Alan Alder
Her Majesty's Inspector