

Codsall Community High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124400
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314919
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Frank Knowles

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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1192
6th form	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trefor Williams
Headteacher	Marjorie Tunnicliffe
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Elliotts Lane Codsall Codsall WV8 1PQ
Telephone number	01902 434200
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Age group	13-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Codsall Community High School is above the average size and serves a mixed area of South Staffordshire. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the percentage eligible for free school meals. Students come mainly from White British backgrounds, with about 16% from a range of minority ethnic groups, mainly Asian and Black Caribbean. After the new intake every year into Year 9, very few students change school before they leave at age 16 or 18.

The school became a specialist school for mathematics and computing in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Codsall Community High School is a satisfactory school that is improving through the effective work of the senior leadership team. Students' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory, their behaviour is now good and attendance has improved over the last year. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory, and the school's records show an improvement from the autumn term 2006. Most importantly, grades on modular GCSE courses in Year 11 for completion in 2008 show a significant rise in standards.

The improvements of the last few years have come about because the headteacher and governors have successfully taken action to create a better school. Staff changes and changes in roles for existing staff have revitalised senior and middle leadership teams and have refocused their work firmly on teaching and learning. Teachers' planning now uses a common format across the school, including in the sixth form. Lesson structures, however, are not always planned well enough to support assessment or learning and the pace of lessons varies from class to class. Some work is not matched well enough to the needs of all the students in a class. This means students are not always challenged enough and they make only satisfactory progress. The proportion of good teaching throughout the school is not high enough to accelerate students' learning to the point where they make faster progress.

The drive for a better school has already seen improvements in students' personal development and well-being, which are good. Students enjoy school and are active in contributing to a wide range of school, charity and community activities. Good relationships between students mean that they feel secure. One student reflected the views of many when he said, 'This school is a community where everyone gets along.' Parents are supportive and they, too, have noticed improvements in the last few years, with one commenting that 'the school has made great strides forward... and improvements in almost all areas are very noticeable.' Parents also commented, however, on areas of weaker teaching and behaviour that have now been tackled successfully by the school.

A move to mixed-age vertical tutor groups in September 2007, initially not universally welcomed by students, is proving as popular with them as with staff. More challenging targets, enhanced where staff think they are still too low, are regularly reviewed to identify where students need support and rewards are now given much more prominence than sanctions. Governors, too, have been strongly involved and have made significant contributions to a newly introduced range of policies to tackle discrimination and ensure equality of access to education and support. Recent improvements as a result of all these changes show the school is well placed to improve further.

The school's actions and the resulting improvements stem from accurate evaluation of its performance and provision. This is a strength of the school, and especially since September 2006 with the appointment of several new members of the senior leadership team. The way the school uses its analysis of assessment data to challenge and support individual students is good. However, this does not extend to analysing the progress of groups of students to enable senior leaders to identify quickly areas of underperformance.

Since its last inspection, the school has moved forward in almost all the areas identified for improvement. It has made good use of its specialism in mathematics and computing to improve mathematics, which is one of the more successful subjects in the school. However, in information

and communication technology (ICT), staffing difficulties, which are now resolved, have meant that the school has made slower progress and too little use is made of ICT in many subjects.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory because, as in the main school, students make satisfactory progress, reach average standards overall and their achievement is broadly as expected. Sixth-form students enjoy coming to school and their personal development is good. They appreciate the courses and activities provided and feel that the school has achieved a good balance between academic work and social and cultural activities. They are enthusiastic learners and are keen to make a significant contribution to the school, charity work and the local community. Students take up a range of curriculum opportunities and these are enhanced by collaboration with other schools, although no students at present join courses provided by the partner institutions. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with similar features to those found in the main school. The support and guidance provided for students are also satisfactory. The senior leadership team has not placed as much emphasis recently on the development of the sixth form as on the main school. It has accurately identified strengths and areas for development in the sixth form, but has not taken as much action to bring about improvement. Overall, the leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the structure and pace of lessons, with a clear focus on students' learning.
- Ensure that teachers' planning includes differentiated approaches and activities that meet the needs of all students in the class.
- Improve the use of ICT in all areas of the curriculum.
- Introduce clear measures of progress to support the early identification of potentially underperforming subjects and groups of students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Senior staff have an accurate view of the school's performance and share the view of the inspection team that, overall, standards are average. Following a dip in 2004, results in external tests and examinations have picked up again, and remained steady in 2006 and 2007.

Students make satisfactory progress through the school. This represents satisfactory achievement, given their average starting points. Students of different abilities make similar progress in Year 9, but not all average and lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11 achieve as well as they should. In the sixth form, average results in examinations and satisfactory progress again confirm the school's view that students' achievement is satisfactory. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to others in their age group.

The school uses data well to provide support where individual students are falling behind and might not reach their target. Senior leaders have also worked to increase the proportion of good teaching, and this has already led to improved standards, for example in GCSE modular subjects where students have completed parts of the assessment.

The school's system for setting and reviewing students' targets has been improved recently by using more challenging targets and, where staff feel that they are still too low, raising these

further for about a third of students. This change has not had time to show its full potential impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are positive about the school. They enjoy their learning, feel safe, and are comfortable about approaching staff if they have any personal problems. There is very little bullying, and when it does occur students are confident that it will be dealt with effectively. Attendance is above average. Students value the emphasis the school has placed on rewards and they are complimentary about the new vertical grouping system that has been introduced for tutor periods. Younger students say that older students in their tutor groups help and care for them. Behaviour around school and in lessons is good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good and is supported through the curriculum, trips and overseas visits.

Students contribute well to the school and wider community through the school council and their engagement in extra-curricular activities. They show concern for others through their involvement with charities and their participation in cultural, music and drama events which they present to local community members. Recently students have enjoyed working with retired engineers in a project to bridge the generation gap.

Students are benefiting from measures introduced by the school to promote healthy lifestyles, including work on health and fitness awareness in the curriculum and through the promotion of sporting activities. The provision of a different range of food at break and lunchtime has resulted in increased numbers of students making healthy choices.

Students are prepared well for some aspects of their future life through work experience and the school's strong links with the careers service. Their ICT skills are not well enough developed, however, to support them as they take up future education and employment opportunities. This point is recognised by the school in its accurate evaluation of its work as a specialist school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teachers follow a common whole-school approach to planning lessons and display a good knowledge of their subjects. Demonstrations and explanations provided by the teachers support learning and teachers are very keen to ensure that the learning helps students to achieve the lesson's objectives. Relationships between staff and students are overwhelmingly positive and students generally enjoy their lessons.

Good or better teaching makes good use of time-constrained activities and tasks that challenge students to think in different ways. These approaches help teachers assess how well students are doing and increase the pace of learning so that students make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding. In a psychology lesson, for example, the majority of the lesson was given over to the students demonstrating their understanding to the rest of the group, questioning each other and being challenged by the teacher.

Too little teaching has these positive features however, and students experience a considerable amount of satisfactory teaching that does not promote the good progress that they make in other lessons. The pace of learning varies and is not always fast enough. Activities do not always challenge students sufficiently and the way some lessons are planned means that the teacher dominates the lesson, with too few opportunities for students to engage actively in their learning or to complete tasks in a specific time. In addition, teachers do not differentiate tasks sufficiently to match the needs of all students in the group, so some struggle while others coast.

Teachers' mark students' work regularly, although some marking does not help students to understand what they have to do to improve their work. Marking concentrates too much on celebrating what has been done well without the constructive advice that would help to raise standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum in Years 9–13 adequately matches students' needs throughout the school. It is better for higher-attaining students but has just been revised to provide more suitable arrangements and choices for average and lower attaining students. Vocational courses have been introduced but in the past have not always been well matched to students' abilities. A broader range of courses is now offered to improve this match, including those involving other schools such as hairdressing and construction. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good curriculum support. From Year 10 they have access to a range of accredited courses selected with their needs in mind, for example, ASDAN and other Level 1 courses. The few students at the early stages of learning English receive good support. Collaboration also ensures a broader range of courses is available to sixth-form students but at present no students take advantage of them. Well-planned courses for personal, social and health education and citizenship, together with work-related learning, make good contributions to the curriculum. A wide range of popular extra-curricular activities supports students' personal development well. Extra classes outside the normal school day also provide valuable support for students.

The school has made use of its specialist status in computing to improve resources for ICT, which were inadequate at the time of the last inspection. Staffing difficulties, now resolved, mean that students are not sufficiently skilled in the use of ICT across the range of subjects they study. One outstanding response to this situation has been the introduction of an online course, including assessment for national accreditation, to develop ICT skills. The fact that this has been developed in half a term and involves schools in other parts of the country is all the more impressive.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school has good systems for regularly monitoring and reviewing students' attendance and well-being, including those in the sixth form. A group of trained staff meets regularly to identify students' needs and any action required to tackle problems is taken swiftly and effectively. The systems for monitoring students' academic progress have improved and procedures are in

place to identify students who are not making the expected progress. The pastoral and academic procedures and systems are new however, and the full impact of them has not yet been seen.

Students know there is always someone to turn to if they need help. Vulnerable students receive good support and this results in the development of their academic and personal skills. These students are very well known by their teachers. A range of strategies have been used to improve students' behaviour in the last few years. In the eyes of students, the use of pastoral managers in corridors during lesson time has been particularly effective. One student said, with the agreement of his peers, that, 'one of the best things about the school is that teachers are friendly and treat us like adults.'

All staff have received training in child protection. Rigorous health and safety checks are carried out regularly. Satisfactory information and guidance are given to students to help them to make choices when selecting courses and transferring to employment or the next stage of their education. The school has effective working links and partnerships with other organisations, such as health and social services, to promote learners' well-being. The views of students are taken seriously and the school has incorporated their ideas in, for example, the refurbishment of the library.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher and the newly appointed senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are determined to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to raise standards. School self-evaluation is accurate and, in addition to contributions from staff, involves the opinions of students and parents. A new system for monitoring teaching and learning has been introduced and senior staff have an accurate view of their quality. Significant improvements have been made in the use of data to identify students who are underachieving and to set challenging targets for future improvements. The school does not have however, any simple measures of progress to complement these approaches to allow senior leaders to identify quickly any subject or group of students making slow progress. The impact of recent initiatives from the senior leadership team has been to improve behaviour, attendance, teaching and learning, and achievement in some subjects in the main school. However, these initiatives have not had sufficient impact on achievement in the sixth form.

The role played by middle managers in raising standards has improved. They are held accountable for the performance of their areas of responsibility by the senior leadership team and they, in turn, hold others accountable. A robust system of performance management for teaching staff is closely linked to improving achievement. Professional development opportunities for the staff are well structured and linked to improving teaching and learning.

Governors are well informed and supportive of the school. They are effective in challenging the leadership team to improve standards and have played a significant role in developing policies which tackle discrimination and promote equal opportunity within school. The school manages its finances carefully and has recently received national recognition for the financial systems that are in place.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ 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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

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?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	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	2	
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

9 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Codsall Community High School, Codsall, Staffordshire WV8 1PQ

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we inspected your school. We spoke with many of you in lessons, between lessons and in several different groups, and we valued the contributions you all made to the inspection. You expressed your views openly and clearly and this helped us a lot in our work.

We decided that yours is a satisfactory school that is improving. You told us about improvements in behaviour recently and we found that your headteacher and other senior staff have worked hard to improve teaching, learning, target setting and attendance. You were very positive about the new vertical grouping for tutor groups, despite some of you originally not liking the idea. The way older students now help younger students more is good.

Two of the main strengths of the school are your personal development and the school's leadership and management. Your charity work makes a good contribution to the community and the school council works well. The way many of you contribute to department reviews shows a good level of maturity. The school's new senior leadership team understands well what needs to be done to make the school better and has successfully taken action to improve teaching and raise standards.

There is more to do, though, and we have asked the staff to make changes in four areas:

- tell you clearly how much time you have to complete tasks in lessons so that you make faster progress
- make sure that all of you are given suitably challenging work, including the most and least able of you
- use information and communication technology more in all subjects to help you learn
- do some different analysis of your assessment results so that they can quickly help groups who are slipping behind.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Knowles Lead inspector