

# The Cornelius Vermuyden School and Arts College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115336
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326183
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Mitcheson 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	904
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jeffrey Stanley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Carol Skewes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Dinant Avenue Canvey Island Essex SS8 9QS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 685011
<b>Fax number</b>	01268 510290

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Cornelius Vermuyden School and Arts College is on Canvey Island. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The majority of students are White British, and there are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or who have English as a second language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the number of students with a statement of special educational need. Attainment on entry is below average.

The school is a specialist Arts College. It holds a number of awards, including the Artsmark, Sportsmark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Careers Education Quality Mark, Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Cornelius Vermuyden School and Arts College is a satisfactory school with a number of strengths, most notably the outstanding pastoral care provided for students that contribute to their good personal development and well-being. The good curriculum is well suited to the needs and aspirations of students. It is an inclusive school that strives to meet the needs of all students, including the more able, its most vulnerable and those that find learning difficult. The school understands its community well; community cohesion is good. Students speak positively about their school, one told inspectors that, 'the school is like my second home. I don't want to leave'. Parents are equally supportive of the school and the commitment made by many of its staff to help their children enjoy school and achieve well.

Standards have risen since the last inspection and the school achieved its best GCSE results in 2007. However, these dramatic improvements were not sustained in 2008. Although results were above minimum national targets, the proportion of students that attained five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, remained the same as in the previous year. The school has now identified a proportion of boys who are underachieving and are responding to their needs accordingly. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make better progress than their peers due to the exceptional quality of pastoral care and support they receive. In some subjects, including science and, to a lesser extent English, a significant number of students did not attain what they were capable of in 2008, partly due to staff recruitment difficulties and also because procedures to track how well students were progressing lacked rigour.

Since then, senior leaders have taken decisive action to raise achievement and eradicate much of the under-performance of students last year. Improved, systematic monitoring of individual student progress is providing teachers and managers with a much clearer picture of how well students are doing. These procedures are thorough, but are relatively new and have not had sufficient time to become firmly embedded and used consistently by all teachers and managers. Current data shows that the school is much closer to achieving this year's target to increase the percentage of students attaining five or more GCSEs. It is exceeding its target for the percentage of students attaining five GCSEs including English and mathematics. Thirty students in Year 9 and 98 students in Year 10 have already achieved a modular grade C in mathematics.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships between teachers and students are good; most teachers manage behaviour well and celebrate students' efforts and successes. The impact of recent initiatives introduced by the senior leadership team can be seen in a rise in the number of good or better lessons. Inspectors found that in these lessons, highly effective teachers encouraged students to assess how well they and others were doing, including reviewing their own work and that of others. Some teachers accurately assess students' progress and use this information to set challenging, attainable targets for improvement but this is not the case in all lessons. Many initiatives are relatively recent and have not been in place long enough and are yet to be applied with sufficient consistency for them to impact fully on raising standards.

Students behave well, show respect for each other and understanding for those less fortunate than themselves. They are genuinely delighted to celebrate the successes of their peers. They clearly enjoy their learning, although this is not affirmed by their attendance, which remains below the national average. Students are satisfactorily prepared for the next stages of learning

and for later life. The vast majority of students leave school with a GCSE grade C or above in information and communication technology (ICT).

Many students participate eagerly in the full range of curricular and enrichment activities, especially in the visual arts, drama and sport. An increasing range of vocational courses are offered and in general, those students that opt for them achieve well. Appropriate alternative off-site arrangements are made for a small number of students not suited to GCSE studies. Guidance is satisfactory overall but students are not well informed about their progress and do not always meet challenging targets. Pastoral record keeping for students who find learning difficult is meticulous, and well-monitored procedures ensure confidentiality and a good match to need; this has led to an improvement in attendance and a reduced number of exclusions. Procedures to safeguard students are firmly established. In this school, 'every child does matter'.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership. She has acted decisively to address last year's under-performance and is providing a clear educational direction for the school. Most specialist school targets have been met and arts status continues to contribute well to student learning and to the local community. New deputy and assistant headteachers have added additional strength and dynamism to the senior leadership team. In a relatively short space of time they have made some significant improvements, most notably improved monitoring of students' progress and more effective teaching and learning. They have the vision, energy and determination to drive further improvements. Whilst senior leaders are demonstrating outstanding capacity to improve, overall capacity to improve is good because, despite an increased level of monitoring by senior leaders, the performance of subject leaders remains too variable. This is starkly illustrated in outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4, where many students achieve well in some subjects but not in others.

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

- Ensure that new procedures to monitor individual students' progress become firmly embedded and evaluate the impact of these procedures on standards achieved in all areas of the school's work.
- Strengthen student involvement in gauging their own progress by setting them challenging targets and asking them to regularly assess how well they are doing.
- Make all middle managers fully accountable for the standards achieved in their subjects, particularly those that are underperforming.

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**

Standards attained by the end of Year 9 are below the national average. The school's own assessment data shows that currently most students in Year 9 are making satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average. However, the school met its target of 34% of students attaining five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics in 2008, and current data shows that this year the school anticipates it will exceed the target it set for itself. Students did particularly well in vocational studies and art and design, where over 93% of students attained at least a grade C in 2008. Similar results were achieved in GCSE catering, and data suggests comparable results will be achieved this year. Significantly, the proportion

of A\* and A grades achieved by students in vocational courses was higher than the national average.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well being are good but attendance is satisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students appreciate art and music. They also understand the importance of eating healthily and of taking regular exercise. Students who are known as, 'Pupil Support Officers' help to avoid disruption in lessons: they carry out their roles with great sensitivity and their work is appreciated by students. Similarly, staff in the Pupil Support Centre work effectively with students who find learning difficult and this has been central in dramatically reducing the number of exclusions. Many students make a positive contribution to the school and to the wider community. For example, students do the catering for the mayor's 'Tea Party' and are greatly respected for the quality of the food they produce. An older learners' group use the school's computers alongside students. Students are well aware of how to stay safe in a variety of settings.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but inconsistent. Teaching is sometimes good and occasionally outstanding. However, although most teachers explain to students what they are expected to learn, not all of them simplify this sufficiently for lower attaining students. Similarly, whilst many teachers plan learning that helps to improve students' essential basic literacy skills, there are still many lessons in which not enough is done. In many lessons, planned activities match well to students' learning needs and abilities but there are times when students of different abilities are given the same work to do. When this happens, the pace of progress slackens. Marking has improved. The best provides students with valuable information about how to make their work better but it remains inconsistent. Teachers do not provide sufficient time at the end of lessons to engage students in evaluating how much progress they have made.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. All statutory requirements are met, including those for work-related learning. It now has greater capacity to support both student achievement and personal development. In Key Stage 3, Year 7 students follow a creative studies programme which focuses on improving standards of literacy and, as a result, monitoring shows that levels of attainment are beginning to rise. In Key Stage 4, three 'pathways' with an element of guided choice ensure that the needs and aspirations of the majority of students are met. The curriculum features a broad range of vocational and GCSE courses, complemented by alternative arrangements for a small number of students to learn in the workplace. ICT is used well to support teaching and learning across the school. However, some curriculum developments are relatively new and do not fully provide opportunities for all students to achieve well. Extensive enrichment in the arts, music and sports adds significantly to students' enjoyment of school.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The school's child protection policy is understood by all staff and its implementation monitored effectively by the inclusion manager. The single central record, which details the police checks made on staff, is accurate and comprehensive. Students who find learning difficult are particularly well supported. External evaluation data shows most of these students, including those with English as an additional language meet their targets. Vulnerable students do well because their specific needs are paramount to the pastoral teams' planning and they successfully help assists them to overcome barriers to their learning. Each student is seen as a unique individual. Early identification of need, well-targeted support and improved teaching improve their learning. Regular assessment that engages all pupils in reviewing how well they are doing is at an early stage of development. Not all teachers have grasped the full value of assessment to inform their planning and there is no consistent pattern of assessment done by students to encourage them to take responsibility for what they need to do to improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher, in conjunction with her good governing body, has ensured that most of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been addressed. They have also ensured that the school is well placed to benefit from local authority proposals to provide new buildings for the school. Some subject leaders are driving improvement because they are highly effective and can demonstrate consistently high standards and achievement by students in their charge, but this is not the case in all subjects. In response, senior leaders are providing additional support and challenge to increase the effectiveness of some subject leaders but considerable scope exists to raise achievement and standards in a number of subjects. Much improved monitoring procedures mean that senior leaders now have a better understanding of how well individual students are doing. Senior leaders rigorously analyse students' performance and show an increasing understanding of the progress made by different groups of students.

Lesson monitoring and additional training for teachers and support staff has confirmed where the strengths and areas for development lie but there is insufficient attention to promoting greater consistency and increasing the amount of good or better lessons.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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
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**

12 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Cornelius Vermuyden School and Arts College, Canvey Island Essex, SS8 9QS

You may remember that three inspectors and I visited your school and found that it provides you with a satisfactory education. Thank you for allowing us to join you in lessons and to talk with some of you. We also spent time meeting with your senior teachers, the chair of governors and read many letters from parents. Throughout the inspection you represented your school well and you made all members of the inspection team feel welcome.

We were particularly impressed with your behaviour in lessons and around school. You get on well with each other and enjoy the many different lunchtime and after-school clubs on offer. The level of pastoral care provided by your teachers is exceptional. This helps many of you to get the most from lessons, remain in school and forge good relations with other students and staff. It was pleasing to see how well many of you achieve in vocational subjects. The results in art and design, information and communication technology and catering are consistently high.

We feel that many more of you could achieve even more than you do so we have asked your senior teachers to make three improvements to your school:

- Ensure that procedures to monitor your progress become firmly embedded and evaluate the impact of these procedures on standards achieved by you in all areas of the school's work.
- Strengthen your involvement in measuring your own progress by setting you challenging targets and asking you to regularly assess how well you are doing.
- Make all middle managers fully accountable for the standards achieved in their subjects, particularly those that are underperforming.

Your school is well led by Mrs Skewes. You can help her make further improvements by attending school every day and asking your school council to share your ideas with her.

Best wishes for the future.

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector