

Cowplain Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116410
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326385
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nicola Youern
Headteacher	Mr David Rowlinson
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 May 2006
School address	Hart Plain Avenue Cowplain Waterlooville PO8 8RY
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons, and held meetings with a governor, members of staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence, including information on student performance, students' exercise books and the questionnaires completed by 152 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- current standards and performance in mathematics and the achievement of looked after children
- the effectiveness of curriculum in providing opportunities for students to achieve and improve their well-being and development
- the impact of student support services on all aspects of care, guidance and support.

Information about the school

Cowplain Community School is larger than average. A small number of students are from minority ethnic groups but most students are of White British heritage. A very small proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The number of students taking up free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the national average.

The school has enhanced Healthy School Status, Investors in People and specialist status in Business and Enterprise and is a member of a local federation of seven secondary schools. A dyslexia unit with provision for up to 30 students is located within the Learning Support Department.

Cowplain Pre-School operates on the same site as the school but is not managed by the school's governing body. Currently there are 64 children aged two to five years on roll, including 48 funded places for three- and four-year-olds.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The guiding principle of Cowplain Community School is that 'academic scores open doors but social and work-related skills enable students to walk through'. As a result, students in this very caring and supportive school achieve well both academically and personally. This is reinforced by excellent curriculum provision that, as one parent describes, 'offers a fantastic range of opportunities for children of all abilities and interests from the choice of subjects on offer to the range of after school activities'. In particular, vulnerable students and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support through the very good work of the student support team. The constant drive to ensure all students reach their full potential secures a good capacity for sustained improvement.

From starting points that are slightly below average on entry to the school, students make good progress and reach standards that are now rising to above average. While this improvement is consistent in most subjects, especially those linked to the school's Business and Enterprise specialist status, standards are not rising as quickly in mathematics. Students enjoy their education, are keen to learn and are eager to take part in the life of the school. Their contributions range from acting as mentors for others who are experiencing problems to taking part in international school activities linked to the school's specialist status.

Effective teaching produces good learning in lessons where students are engaged and interested in the wide variety of well-planned activities. Some teachers are very skilful in developing and consolidating learning. Through good use of assessment information they know where each student is in their learning and when they are ready to take the next steps. However, this practice is not consistent across all teachers.

There are very good relationships between staff and students and, overall, students behave well both in and out of lessons. The vast majority of students come to school regularly and on time and overall attendance rates are improving. There is, however, a small group of students who are persistently absent in spite of the school's best efforts to improve their attendance.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas requiring further development. There is a strong focus on developing the leadership

skills of middle leaders and many are growing in confidence as they understand their responsibilities for holding their teams to account for the achievement and well-being of students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate and accelerate the improvements already made in mathematics by:
 - developing more opportunities for solving practical mathematical problems
 - improving younger students' numeracy skills
 - continuing to develop the new Key Stage 4 assessment methods.

- Improve the attendance of the small group of students who are persistently absent from school.

Ensure that all staff use the school's assessment policies consistently so that all students clearly understand the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The school has worked hard to improve students' achievement, especially for those from different groups such as looked after children and those who are more vulnerable or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This has resulted in a steady improvement over the last three years that is set to continue in 2009. Standards in mathematics are improving, although not as fast as in other subjects. Outcomes in the specialist Business and Enterprise subjects are very good and make a significant contribution to helping students gain good life skills that prepare them for education, training and employment.

Students enjoy their learning, especially lessons where they are actively involved, and they are very appreciative of the hard work of their teachers in taking excellent care of them. Students are keen to do well in lessons and are focused on their learning. This is well supported by the good relationships with teachers that allow students to respond very positively to challenges set. Students are also generous in their support for each other and collaborative learning is particularly successful. In the best lessons careful matching of the work to individual need and a variety of tasks ensure rapid progress. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well supported by the Student Support Team and this helps them to make good progress.

All students feel very secure and know how to keep themselves and others safe both in lessons and around the school. They say that bullying is 'not a problem' and both parents and students feel it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Students develop excellent social skills through taking part in the extensive range of extended service and extra-curricular activities involving many different external partners. They have a good understanding of the differences between their own and other cultures. Students are eager to get involved in school life and the school council makes an influential contribution. For example, students are involved in staff recruitment and there are student members on the governing body.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Good quality teaching maintains high levels of challenge in lessons and good pace that keeps students on their toes and focused on their learning. Outstanding lessons are planned to stimulate students' thinking about the way they learn and then put this into action. This is supported by teachers planning different activities for different groups and individuals according to their needs, with consistent use of the agreed lesson planning approach. While behaviour in lessons is good overall some teachers are not making consistent use of the school behaviour management systems to keep pupils engaged with their learning.

Staff know their students very well and regular assessments are used to carefully track progress and identify underachievement. This makes sure that students receive support that is targeted to their needs and helps them to overcome barriers to learning. This support is often related to their learning but the excellent support students receive, particularly from the skilled student support team, also helps them with other difficulties. Parents and carers speak very highly of this support. A typical comment from one parent of a student who has significant behavioural difficulties was, 'I can't commend the school highly enough for the way it actively engages children, is concerned for their welfare and well-being as well as striving to raise standards'.

The written feedback provided to students across the curriculum on a day-to-day basis is inconsistent. Where the school marking policy of giving 'two stars and a wish' is used as intended, successful areas of the work are clearly highlighted followed by clear guidance on how to improve. However, some teachers are giving feedback that is too brief with little advice and consequently students have limited understanding of

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

the standard of their work or how it can be improved.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is used extremely well to support learning with innovative practice in areas such as teaching mental mathematics. Innovative strategies have been introduced into the curriculum. These include special help in Year 7 for students who need to improve their literacy as well as the 'Shine' programme for the more able. Specialist status has improved the range of vocational provision and all students take at least one vocational course with a strong business element. The business centre also runs a range of successful courses with community partners, covering both sporting and academic activities. One particularly successful course was run for parents and their children to support and improve numeracy skills. This has been carefully evaluated and shown to be very beneficial to the students involved when they are back in their own mathematics sessions.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and his very effective senior team have a clear agenda that all students in their care will achieve the best they can and fulfil their potential. This approach has engendered a shared vision among staff to focus on improving provision through raising the quality of teaching and learning. There are high expectations of middle managers for the quality of education in their areas and they are given good professional development opportunities to help them sharpen up their management skills. Thorough self-evaluation draws on a wide range of information to focus on key priorities for improvement.

Any form of discrimination is clearly not tolerated and equality of opportunity is promoted very effectively. This is evident in the good progress made by vulnerable students and those who have complex learning needs. As part of the high-quality care the school takes of the students, robust procedures are in place to ensure their safety and all current legal requirements are met.

The governing body has a good understanding of its role in supporting and challenging the school. Governors are reflective and always consider and evaluate the most effective way they can work with the school.

The school maintains regular communication with parents and reports to them frequently on the performance of their children. There are valuable opportunities for parents to talk to the school at other times through regular headteacher 'surgeries'. Strong links with the local and wider community make a valuable contribution to community cohesion and the school has established a good reputation in this area. This is supported by a strong commitment to successful partnership working in a

wide variety of settings. These range from the local federation of secondary schools to external agencies targeted at supporting vulnerable groups, as well as community organisations in the local area through extended services provision. All of these links make a consistently excellent contribution to students' good achievement and well-being.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cowplain Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

Their responses were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school but especially the support given to vulnerable students and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Several commented on the high quality of this support. Some felt that the arrangement of the school day did not give their children sufficient time to eat their food. However, very few students agreed with this as they enjoyed the extra time for after school activities.

The inspection team received 152 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 898 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	104	47	4	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



25 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Cowplain Community School, Waterloooville, PO8 8RY

After our visit to Cowplain, we would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome and for taking time to talk to us. You tell us that the school is 'great' and we agree with you. Cowplain is a good school and you all make good progress in lessons and do well in your exams. We are very pleased that you all enjoy school so much and make the most of the wide opportunities available to you through the excellent curriculum. You are very appreciative of not only the good teaching but also the sporting opportunities and wide range of clubs.

The school takes excellent care of you. You tell us that you feel very safe and that there is always someone to turn to when you need help. You speak highly of your teachers' readiness to assist you. The leadership of your school is good and works hard to make sure you all reach your potential and learn as well as you can.

Because you cooperate so well with what your school is trying to do for you, we are convinced that you will continue to support your teachers' efforts and go from strength to strength in developing your personal skills as well as your academic prowess. To help you with this we have asked your teachers to:

- make sure you all are given clearer information and guidance on the best ways to improve your work
- continue to improve teaching and learning in mathematics
- help those of you who are absent too often to attend more regularly.

We wish you and your school a very successful future.

Yours faithfully

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

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