

# Copleston High School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	124842
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328228
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Anthony Knight 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.

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Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1813
Sixth form	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr W Robinson
Headteacher	Mr Shaun Common
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 February 2006
School address	Copleston Road Ipswich IP4 5HD
Telephone number	01473 277240
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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 a wide range of lessons, including 28 which were observed closely, and held meetings with staff, governors, groups of students including the school council, representatives from the Local Authority and a consultant. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence including the tracking system used to monitor students' progress and the questionnaires completed by 429 parents.

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

- the extent to which progress and attainment is improving in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form
- how the quality of teaching and learning has improved
- the impact of middle managers on school improvement.

## Information about the school

Copleston High School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11–18. The proportion of students eligible for free meals has declined and is now significantly below the national average. There are fewer pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than the national average, although an average number of students have a statement of special educational needs. Most of the students are white British but there is a significant number of minority ethnic students and some students for whom English is not their first language. The school has Specialist Sports College status. It works closely with other schools in the area, including sharing the sixth form provision with other secondary schools, and is involved in providing training programmes for new teachers. The headteacher joined the school in September 2008 following appointment in November of the previous year: a process that enabled a smooth transition of leadership and the development of important initiatives.

## 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

This is a good school with several outstanding features. While students' attainment has been good, their progress has been satisfactory in the past. However, recent marked improvements have resulted in students now making good progress in all Key Stages. There is a renewed sense of optimism and excitement that has been generated by outstanding leadership and a committed staff. A skilfully shared vision and accurate evaluation has led to well-focused action that is making a significant difference to the quality of education being provided. Students' behaviour is excellent and they are very happy in this school. They enjoy learning as a result of improved teaching and innovative development of the curriculum which is outstanding. Work is matched more closely to learning needs and more opportunities are given for students to learn in different ways. Nevertheless, while much has been done, the school recognises the need to continue to ensure all teaching increasingly matches the best.

The effective tracking of pupils' progress is also helping to raise standards as students are given additional support where they need it most. Attention this year has rightfully been focussed on helping all students work towards achieving at least five A\* to C grades at GCSE. The school is building the impact it has had already with these students and extending the approaches used to the rest of the school. The greatly improved tracking system provides clear data for each individual student but, while it provides all the information needed for appropriate analysis, it does not yet enable an easy quick check of the progress being made overall and by different groups of students.

The accommodation has been greatly improved and visual displays considerably enhance the learning environment and positively reinforce the emphasis on the celebration of every student's success. The specialist status is being used well to enrich and extend the curriculum and support students and the community. Students play a key part in the development of the school and rightly would welcome even more opportunity to contribute to its ongoing improvement.

The school has made good progress in tackling the key issues for development identified in the last inspection. Recent developments indicate even more rapid improvement and position the school well for even greater success. The headteacher and governing body together have demonstrated good capacity for sustained improvement through the work that has taken place following the headteacher's

appointment in November 2007. Several important changes were introduced during last academic year in preparation for the start of this year. All work is now effectively focused on achieving the shared vision.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the emphasis on increasing the progress made by students by continuing to improve the quality of teaching so that all teaching increasingly matches the best.
- Refine the tracking systems so it is easy to check the progress being made overall and by different groups.
- Continue to increase the opportunities for students to contribute to ongoing school improvement.

## How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2
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Students attain well in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. For example, the proportion of students achieving at least five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics has been significantly above the national average. However, past test and exam results show that the progress made by students was more mixed. While students made good progress in Key Stage 3 they made less progress in Key Stage 4. Good progress was made in English and mathematics, but there was underachievement by some students, including those capable of achieving the highest grades.

The inspection focus on attainment and progress in Key Stage 4 found that all groups of students, including minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now making good progress and standards are rising. This was seen clearly in the accurate tracking data and the high proportion of lessons observed where progress was good. Students commented on how they enjoyed the increased opportunities they had to learn in different ways and how this helps them work hard throughout the whole lesson. Students also benefit from more opportunities to think deeply about the work being explored.

The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are very happy in the school and support each other well. They arrive to lessons promptly and ready to learn. The sanctions used for unacceptable behaviour, when it occurs, rarely need to be used more than once.

Other features of student outcomes:

- the students feel safe at school and are confident that any bullying will be dealt with quickly and appropriately by staff
- regular physical exercise, improved healthy eating options and the recently achieved 'Healthy Schools' award all demonstrate that students adopt healthy lifestyles

- good attendance has been maintained
- the good progress students make in English and mathematics, together with their high social development, enable students to develop good workplace skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Students in the school council have excellent ideas for how the school could be developed further, for example, through making sure all students are aware of the extra-curricular opportunities available. The school is right to be finding ways to involve the council even more in its work.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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?	2
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	2
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?	2

## The quality of the school's work

The inspection focus on the quality of teaching and learning found that this has improved significantly and is now good. Teachers made effective use of lesson plans that defined clearly what was to be learned and sought to include a range of different learning styles within each lesson. High levels of teachers' subject knowledge engaged students in the lesson and helped them develop their understanding. Technology, such as interactive white boards, were also used well to highlight and illustrate key points.

The best teaching:

- engaged students from the very start of the lesson and ensured they were constantly challenged and stretched through skilful use of probing questions
- used excellent marking to help the students understand clearly what they needed to do to improve their work further.

<sup>1</sup> Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

In less effective teaching:

- the work was not always explained clearly enough for all students and as a result the pace of the lesson slowed and less progress was made
- there was less consistent use of data and questions were not always targeted sufficiently to match students' learning needs.

Good tracking systems are used well to provide teachers with data which is used to ensure targets are challenging and realistic. Students know their targets and, in the best lessons, are effectively and regularly involved in peer and self-assessment.

The innovative development of the curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for students to follow a wide range of courses that are carefully matched to their particular learning needs. Students are given increasing opportunities to take qualifications early which enable them to build on their achievement and approach other work more positively. There are also excellent additional opportunities for all students including the well-received programme of extra-curricular activities which takes place on Wednesday afternoons. The specialist status has also significantly enriched the curriculum through broadening the range of opportunities and increasingly involving students in up to five hours of physical education and sport.

Well planned timetabled sessions are provided at regular intervals for students to catch up and improve the quality of their work where it is most needed. Good support is given to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has quickly gained the trust and respect of students, staff and parents through his tireless energy and deep commitment to the school. A clear vision has been impressively shared and developed with all stakeholders and this is leading to marked improvement. Staff, students and parents have been involved and valued the opportunity to help shape the direction of the school. The development plan is being driven forward effectively by the senior management team and supported by all staff including the excellent contribution of the Facilities Manager.

Accurate analysis has identified the areas that require most attention and well chosen actions are starting to make a real difference. Most notable are the programmes that are improving the quality of teaching and the increasingly effective use of assessment data to direct support to where it is needed most. The school has

identified where improvements can be made to overcome any remaining variations in performance and has developed good strategies to tackle them. Understandably the emphasis has been on the most immediate need of helping students in Year 11 achieve at least five grade A\* to C grades at GCSE. The school recognises the need to extend the success it is already having in Year 11 to all other years and to further refine the tracking systems so that, while data is available, it is also easy to quickly check the progress being made by different groups.

The governing body has given strong support to the school and taken bold steps to improve the provision. For example, the need to repair the school after a fire was taken as an opportunity to extend accommodation. Curriculum innovation has also been introduced quickly as part of the impressive drive for improvement.

The focus of this inspection on middle managers found:

- increasing consistency in the way school priorities are being implemented
- greater accountability and shared responsibility
- emerging development of shared planning across subjects
- universal support for the teaching development programme and strong commitment to realising the vision.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and good partnerships have been developed with others. This school is also making a good contribution to community cohesion through, for example, the extended work of its specialism.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

## Sixth form

The sixth form attracts a large number of students from outside of the school and has a deserved reputation for the support it gives students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment overall is about average and progress has been in line with expectations. However, the results for the AS level improved in 2008 and the school's accurate tracking data shows that students are making more progress now and are on line to achieve higher standards this year. The improved quality of

teaching, which included several outstanding lessons, and the high retention rates also support the school's judgement of good outcomes.

There is a wide range of courses available, including apprenticeships developed with joint partners, and this is set to increase further next year. The tracking of students' progress is good and effective measures are used to tackle areas of weakness. There is good leadership of the sixth form and resources are managed well.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

Most of the completed parental questionnaires were positive. Parents commented particularly on the quality of leadership and that their children are happy with the school. Parents also commented positively about the quality of pastoral support and the contribution of all staff including the Heads of Year.

However, around a third of the parents who responded included at least one negative response to the questions asked. Some parents are concerned about the standard of behaviour in and out of school lessons and how the school responds to inappropriate behaviour. The inspection found that students' behaviour was excellent in and out of lessons and that there are good procedures for dealing with less appropriate behaviour. Students also consistently told inspectors how they felt behaviour had improved, especially recently, because teaching was better and they felt more part of the school.

A few parents did not feel that the school kept them informed sufficiently and specific comments were included about not being given enough time at parents' evenings to discuss their children's progress. The school is fully aware of these concerns and is committed to improving communication further with parents. There are appropriate plans to change future parents' evenings.

## 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:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
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.



5 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Copleston High School, Ipswich, IP4 5HD

It was a pleasure to visit your school and meet many of you during lessons, around the school and in meetings. We were very pleased to share the feeling of optimism and excitement that you told us about. You and your parents are right in saying this is a good school.

We also found several excellent features. The way you behave in and around the school and towards each other is amongst the best we see. You have had a key role in helping the school improve and we agree with your school council that there is even more you could do. Please tell your council representatives about the things you think could be even better and how you could help. We have said that your input is one of the three key ways in which the school can get even better.

The range of curriculum opportunities is also excellent, especially in Key Stage 4 and this is just one of the recent changes that are making a big difference to your school. We were very impressed with the way that your headteacher and all staff are working with you to realise the shared vision for the school. We saw many of you in the pictures around the school and know that the aim is for everyone to be helped to enjoy the same feeling of success.

You were also right in telling us how the teaching had improved and how much you enjoy learning in different ways. We know the school will continue to make all teaching increasingly match the best. You can help by letting your teachers know what you find particularly helpful.

Your school has good systems for tracking your progress so teachers can provide help and extra support when, and where, it is needed. We have asked them to refine this further so they can easily check the progress being made by students with similar needs and potentials.

It is clear that your school knows what you need and what to do to improve the school even further. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely  
Anthony Knight  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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