

The Coleshill School - a Maths and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125746
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328395
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1019
Sixth form	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	C Bain
Headteacher	Kate Kearney
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2006
School address	Coventry Road Coleshill Birmingham B46 3EX
Telephone number	01675 462435
Fax number	01675 465232

Age group	11–18
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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 Coleshill School is a medium-sized secondary school and has held specialist mathematics and computing status since 2004. It has a small but growing sixth form. The overwhelming majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Almost all pupils have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals are smaller than average.

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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school's effectiveness is inadequate. It has gone through a period of decline since the previous inspection, influenced by continuing staffing difficulties and a high level of staff absence. It is oversubscribed, but has lost the support of some parents and pupils. However in the last year, the school has begun to reverse the declining trend. Achievement at Key Stage 4 has improved but too few pupils in the main school, especially boys, make the progress expected of them. As a result, achievement is inadequate in the main school. Standards in external examinations at all levels remain below average and do not reflect the capability of pupils compared with their prior attainment.

Teaching and learning are inadequate in ensuring that pupils learn effectively. The high staff turnover has had an adverse impact on the continuity and the effectiveness of too many lessons. Unsatisfactory behaviour causes disruption in a few lessons. Assessment does not support learning effectively and homework is not used consistently as part of the learning process. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of pupils, especially the introduction of more vocational options and the revised approach to cover personal, social and health education with specialist input on non-timetabled days. Specialist status in mathematics has been used productively across the school but the impact of the school's second specialism in computing is less evident.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Behaviour is satisfactory overall although a few pupils do not behave well enough. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for and safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Support to help pupils learn and improve is inadequate in the main school but has improved in the sixth form, where it is satisfactory. The monitoring of pupils' progress is insufficient to ensure that those at risk of underachieving are identified early enough. Pupils are not given clear enough information about the targets they should aim for or their current standard of work. As a result, care, guidance and support are inadequate overall.

While leaders and managers are committed to tackling the challenges the school faces, they have been unsuccessful in prioritising their actions sufficiently to bring about enough improvement across all aspects of the school's work. Capacity to improve within the school is inadequate. Self-evaluation is inaccurate and analysis of data insufficiently rigorous. Boys underachieve compared to girls. The setting of targets lacks coherence and they are not challenging enough. Most targets have not been met in recent years. Governors are supportive but have not exerted sufficient challenge to the school to raise standards. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 4

Students join the sixth form with prior attainment that is just below average. The results they gain in external examinations are below average and very few students gain high grades. Changes in management brought about some improvement in the results and the progress

made by students in 2008 compared with 2007, when students underachieved substantially. Students' achievement over time is inadequate. The retention rate has been low in Year 12 but shows an improvement this year. Retention in Year 13 is high.

Students make good gains in their personal development and make a positive contribution to school and community life. Behaviour is good in the sixth form. Students are motivated and their attitudes to learning are good. Despite a few recent improvements in the quality of teaching, both teaching and learning are inadequate overall. Too few lessons provide enough challenge to ensure that students fulfil their potential and there is insufficient development of analytical and independent learning skills. Leadership and management are inadequate. The recent changes in management have yet to be sufficiently consolidated as the recent improvements are still fragile. Self-evaluation is inaccurate and the analysis of performance data lacks rigour. Guidance and support have only improved recently and are satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory and an increase in the range of vocational courses meets students' needs and aspirations more effectively. Most students move on to further or higher education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teachers maximise the achievement, learning and progress of all pupils in lessons and consistently provide high quality written feedback when assessing pupils' work.
- Ensure there is consistency and coherence in the way that assessment information is used throughout the school to set realistic but challenging targets.
- Monitor pupils' progress rigorously and systematically and make sure that individual pupils know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work in all subjects.
- Increase the rigour and accuracy of self-evaluation and improvement planning at all levels of leadership.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards declined following the previous inspection, but showed some improvement in 2008, especially in the GCSE examinations. The results, however, are still below where they should be. Pupils enter the school with average prior attainment but progress in recent years has been poor. Although the pass rate in GCSE examinations improved in 2008, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics remains below average. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades at GCSE was well above average in 2008. Boys underachieve significantly, as do pupils in Years 7 to 9. The relatively small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well below their predicted levels. Results in the school's specialist subject of mathematics are showing an improvement, but for several years the school has failed to meet its statutory or specialist subject targets. In the current year, the school's monitoring records show that progress in Year 11 has improved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The majority of pupils feel safe and enjoy school. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through the curriculum and the healthier food options available at mealtimes. Some pupils have responsibilities as members of the school council and most pupils contribute well to school life and to the wider community, including raising money for charity. Sixth form

students willingly accept responsibility within the school, acting as role models for other pupils and by supporting staff in organising school events that involve the local community.

Most pupils show satisfactory attitudes to learning and respect for others. They form positive relationships with staff and each other. The revised behaviour procedures are not fully reinforced and there is still a very small minority of pupils who display passive or challenging behaviour that disturbs the learning of others. Attendance is satisfactory. Through work experience and other activities, students understand the attributes required for the workplace. Pupils' economic awareness and well-being are supported by the majority gaining basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Many, however, are not yet developing sufficiently as independent learners.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning varies considerably, and too many lessons are unsuccessful in ensuring that pupils make sufficient progress. Disruptive behaviour by a few pupils affects some lessons. Teachers' skill in dealing with behavioural issues is improving but there is often too little reinforcement of the school's behaviour policy. A higher than average turnover of staff and level of staff absence, along with a previously heavy reliance on supply teachers, have had a negative impact on the quality and continuity of learning in a number of subjects. Parents, carers and pupils rightly voice their concerns about this situation. In less effective lessons, clear and specific objectives are not set, questioning is too superficial to test or extend learning and not enough attention is paid to keeping all pupils engaged. A strong focus now exists on improving the quality of lessons, supported by an improving but not yet rigorous programme of lesson observation.

Assessment is underused in lessons to support and check learning. Consistency and effectiveness in the marking of pupils' work, to include guidance on how to improve and a clear assessment of the standard of pupils' work, have not yet been established. The quantity and quality of homework varies and it is not used productively in a number of subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A satisfactory curriculum meets the needs and interests of pupils. The school's specialist status is used constructively to develop the curriculum, although its impact is more productive in mathematics than in computing. The introduction of vocational options in Years 10 and 11 has increased the breadth and relevance of the curriculum. Enrichment activities are interesting and encourage participation, which is high in sports activities. The recent implementation of a programme of non-timetabled days across the school to cover personal, social and health education as well as citizenship is well planned and has additionally raised the profile of environmental and cultural education. Specialist input into these topics has increased pupils' enjoyment and learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements. Inclusion, anti-bullying, and health and safety arrangements clearly demonstrate a commitment to pupils' well-being. The introduction of an inclusion room has resulted in a reduction in pupil exclusions. Pupils receive helpful advice about their future education and career options. However, they do not receive consistently clear indications about the level or grade at which they are working, what they should aim to achieve and what they need to do to get there. Target setting is unnecessarily complicated and inadequate. There are too many different approaches across subject departments, with ineffective use of assessment information. Inconsistency in the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress across subjects and year groups has meant that underachieving pupils are not identified early enough for effective intervention strategies to be put in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

In recent years, the school has faced considerable staffing difficulties. These problems have deflected the attention of leaders at all levels from a relentless focus on raising achievement. Consequently, pupils do not achieve well enough. Underachievement, especially by boys, means that equality of opportunity is not promoted sufficiently well. Hence, leadership and management are having too little impact on raising achievement and the school provides unsatisfactory value for money. There are indications that the level of staffing difficulties are subsiding and the school offers commendable personal support to staff. Nevertheless, teacher absence remains a concern.

The school has recently revised the way in which it sets targets but on occasion, differing targets appear to be at variance with each other. These differences are not always adequately explained. As a result, targets are not consistently understood nor universally translated into effective action. The school's self-evaluation is insufficiently accurate and rigorous. While the school has identified appropriate areas for action, these are not always analysed to the required depth and the priorities for action are not clearly established. There is insufficient rigour in the way the school monitors developments. Judgements of its performance are not consistently made against appropriate yardsticks. The newly instigated quality assurance procedures seek to tackle this but have not yet sufficiently been embedded into practice to assess their impact.

Middle managers, many of whom are new in post, are supportive of the school and are keen to raise standards. However, day-to-day management, because of staffing problems, often impedes strategic development. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Work is underway to meet the varying needs of pupils from the differing communities served. There are no obvious tensions between groups within the school and collaboration with other schools is being beneficially undertaken. The school has links with a school in The Gambia, increasing awareness of life in other countries, but recognises that it still has work to do in this field. Governors are supportive of the school but have not regularly challenged in sufficient depth to raise standards. The governing body has not yet adopted a policy on promoting equality.

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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?	4	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4	

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	2
The attendance of learners	3	3
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4	4
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?	4	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 February 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of The Coleshill School – A Maths and Computing College, Coleshill, B46 3EX

Thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed seeing you at work and listening to your views about the school. Thank you for the help you gave us in finding our way around the school and answering our questions.

We judged the overall effectiveness of your school to be inadequate. This means that the school will receive additional support over the coming months and will receive regular visits from inspectors to check how well it is making progress and improving. Although GCSE results are improving, these and results in other qualifications are not high enough to reflect your capability. There has been too little continuity in the quality of lessons because of the staffing difficulties the school faces, and too many of you do not learn effectively enough at school. Although many of you have positive attitudes to learning, a few of you have poor attitudes and disrupt lessons through unsatisfactory behaviour. We have asked your teachers to maximise all opportunities in lessons and when assessing your work to make sure you make at least satisfactory or better progress in your studies. Your personal development is satisfactory and it is good in the sixth form.

Teachers care for you well; most of you feel safe. The care, guidance and support you receive in the sixth form have improved and are satisfactory. The academic support provided by your teachers in the main school is not consistently effective enough to help you make satisfactory progress. You are not sufficiently clear about your targets or the grades you are working at. We have asked your teachers to make sure that your progress is monitored very closely across all year groups and that you are clear about the targets you should aim for and how you can achieve these. The curriculum you receive is satisfactory, especially because of the increase in choice available through vocational courses.

The headteacher and managers are committed to making improvements in the school but the impact of their work is not evident yet across all aspects of the school's work. We have asked managers to be very accurate in evaluating the things that are working well in your school and the aspects that are less effective and to ensure that plans for improvement are effective.

You do good work in raising money for charitable events and I wish you well with your plans for fund-raising in the future.

Yours faithfully

Philippa Francis

Her Majesty's Inspector