

## The Corsham School A Visual Arts College

Inspection report - amended

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126454
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328502
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nick Green 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1395
Sixth form	256
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Philippa Lynch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Martin Williams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 December 2005
<b>School address</b>	The Tynings Corsham SN13 9DF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01249 713284
<b>Fax number</b>	01249 701102

<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2009
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## **Amended Report Addendum**

Report amended due to Ofsted notification

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is a larger than the average secondary school. The great majority of students are of White British heritage and come from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is around half the national average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is a little below average. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The school has had visual arts specialist status since 2003 and was granted a second specialism in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) in 2008. It achieved the Specialist Schools and Academy Trust Individual School Award for Achieving Excellence through Creativity and Enterprise in 2006. It has the status of a High Performing Specialist School and holds many other awards including Sportsmark and several awards for the best results in Advanced level photography in any English school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The school's motto is 'I can inspire' and it achieves this aspiration very well. The quality of the education provided in both the whole school and the sixth form is outstanding. Underpinning the improvements made since the last inspection are outstanding leadership and management, driven by the clear vision and direction of the headteacher. These are focused firmly on raising students' achievement and their personal development and well-being through a creative curriculum, high quality teaching and enabling students to thrive in a caring and supportive environment. The school has very thorough systems for reviewing its work and evaluates its performance comprehensively. This leads to the clear and precise identification of priorities for development. The improvements made in sixth form students' achievement, in all students' personal development and well-being, in teaching and in strengthening leadership and management show the school has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 over the last three years have been above average. In 2008, results were exceedingly high in the sixth form and in mathematics and in art and design in Year 11. In relation to students' starting points when they enter the school, this represents good achievement by the end of the upper school and outstanding achievement in the sixth form. Current assessments of students' performance indicate they are continuing to make at least as good progress now. Students' extremely positive attitudes to learning, good and increasingly outstanding teaching and the highly effective curriculum are key factors in the school's success.

Exemplary relationships at all levels are a hallmark of the school's ethos and make a great contribution to the quality of students' learning across the whole school. Coupled with excellent care, guidance and support, this ensures that students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students very much enjoy school, are extremely well behaved and adopt very healthy lifestyles. They have a strong sense of belonging to the school, which makes them feel immensely safe. Most make significant contributions to the local and wider community and the school's specialist status has a very positive impact in this respect.

Teaching and learning are good across the school and it is outstanding in a significant number of lessons. Teachers' strong subject knowledge, highly effective questioning and the personalised guidance they provide successfully develop students' ability to learn independently. Academic progress is monitored very effectively and students are set challenging targets. However, the school is aware of the need to ensure that the quality of all teachers' marking and assessment to inform students' learning is as high as the best practice in the school. The curriculum is outstanding and includes excellent enrichment activities. There is high participation in the wealth of visual art, performance, sport and other subject-related extra-curricular activities provided by the school. These make a significant contribution to students' enjoyment and achievement and enhance their personal development and well being.

Parents' support for the school is overwhelmingly positive. This high level of satisfaction is summed up by one parent's comment that, 'Corsham is a fantastic school where my children have achieved great things.'

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

Students' standards have improved over recent years, especially at AS level. The number who attained A and B grades in A-level examinations in 2008 was well above the national average. Most current sixth form students are on track to attain similar results. Students make excellent progress and by the end of their studies their achievement and personal development are outstanding. They develop as considerate and articulate young people who relish responsibility. Their sensitivity and good manners are demonstrated consistently by their highly developed capacity to listen thoughtfully to each other's opinions. They conscientiously take leadership of many school activities, for example as peer mentors and paired readers for younger students. Students serve the school and wider community admirably through, for example, regular art exhibitions, their creative work that adorns the school, their contribution to charity work and the arts outreach projects they undertake in local primary schools.

Teachers exhibit strong subject knowledge and adopt methods that effectively help students to learn independently. The quality of relationships between students and their teachers is excellent and an important factor in students' considerable enjoyment of their education. Teachers listen carefully and comment constructively on students' contributions in lessons. Students are very well informed about their target grades and their progress towards them. The inclusive curriculum is outstanding. It provides avenues for progression that meet the needs of all students exceptionally well. Students are provided with the opportunity to study a wide variety of academic and vocational subjects, which are complemented by an extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. As one parent commented, 'Opportunities and facilities in the sixth form are excellent.' Students speak very highly of the outstanding guidance and support offered to them by the personal tutoring programme and the extensive advice on careers and higher education.

The strength of the sixth form is in many respects due to the outstanding way it is led and managed, evident in the drive for continuing success in all areas. An important part of the school's search for continuous improvement is the way in which managers listen very carefully to the students' views to identify the sixth form's strengths and areas for development.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of all teachers' marking and assessment to inform students' learning is as high as the best practice in the school in order to raise students' achievement and standards further.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Although standards in Year 9 have fluctuated during the last three years, they have been above average over this period. They were well above average in science at the end of the last academic year. Given the starting points of students when they join the school, their progress and achievement are good. Standards in GCSE examinations have also been above average during this time. In mathematics and in art and design, students' standards have been exceptionally high. In 2008, students' results in their best eight GCSEs were not as strong as in previous years. These results are explained because of factors relating to this particular year group, including their personal circumstances, over which the school had no control. In relation to Year 11 students' starting points when they entered the school, their progress and achievement were

good over the last three years. In mathematics and in art and design, they were outstanding. All groups of students perform well and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make as good progress as other groups. Students' current standards in Year 9 and 11 are also above average and their achievement is at least good. This is due to effective teaching, an outstanding curriculum and the excellent support and guidance they receive.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Students enjoy their education, speak very positively about their school experience and display exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning. Attendance levels are good and improving. Students are open, friendly, welcoming to visitors and excellent ambassadors for the school. They develop exceedingly well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, as exhibited by their thoughtful responses in discussions and their considerate attitudes towards each other and adults. Students exhibit a strong sense of belonging to the school. Racial intolerance and bullying are rare and students are confident that should any incidents arise they will be dealt with effectively. Students say they feel very safe in school and know to whom to turn if they need help or advice; they are safety conscious in practical lessons and around the school. They show an excellent awareness of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle through a good diet and high levels of involvement in physical exercise.

Students develop strong responsibility and leadership through their membership of the school council, their work in local primary schools, their mentoring of younger students and involvement in the Youth Parliament. Their contribution to local community events and international activities is outstanding and enables them to develop a clear understanding of other people's backgrounds. Students' capability in literacy, numeracy and ICT, and the skills they develop in teamworking, research and independent learning, prepare them very well for their future working lives. Parents recognise the school's impact on their children's personal development; one student's parents wrote that 'he has gained in confidence and is motivated and keen to do well'; another commented that 'the school is outstanding in its cultivation of the emotional and social well-being of its pupils'.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Most teaching is consistently good, and a significant proportion is outstanding, which enables all groups of students to make at least good progress. The positive relationships between staff and students create a mutually supportive atmosphere in lessons that is highly conducive to learning. Teachers exhibit strong subject knowledge and lessons are well planned. A variety of teaching methods engages students in active and independent learning, which is an improvement in teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers have excellent relations with students, set challenging expectations and provide work at appropriate levels. Students' understanding is developed and consolidated successfully by teachers' effective explanations, instructions and questioning. As one parent commented, 'The teachers are very enthusiastic and always looking at innovative ways to engage pupils.' The school website is an excellent resource, as is the internal school electronic network, which supports learning very effectively in both the school and at home. The exemplary practice in the school's specialist subjects is used widely across

the curriculum to enhance students' learning. A designated 'making' room effectively supports the use of visual and practical teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Assessment of students' work is rigorous and used effectively to plan and monitor students' progress. Many teachers provide extensive written comment and guidance on students' work and hold detailed discussions with them about the results from assessment. Most students know their current grades, targets for improvement and what they need to do to achieve them. However, the quality of marking and assessment to inform students' learning is not consistently high across the school, although some is exceptionally good, and this restricts the progress some students make.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is broad, balanced and well matched to the capabilities and aspirations of all groups of students. In Years 7 to 9, students have a personalised curriculum that gives them the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects. Excellent opportunities are provided for smaller group work in science, mathematics and English for students who need more support. In the upper school, the curriculum is structured flexibly to meet students' personal needs and interests. Suitable vocational alternatives to GCSEs and more work-related pathways utilising courses in local further education colleges are provided and there is good provision for literacy and numeracy. The school's specialist subjects have a very beneficial impact on the curriculum. Over half of Year 11 students undertake courses in the school's specialist status visual arts subjects in which they achieve very well. The range of these courses has been extended in the upper school and sixth form to meet the different needs and talents of pupils.

There are a large number of wide-ranging extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities available to students including sporting activities, performance and visual arts activities and subject clubs. The level of students' participation in them makes a good contribution to their overall enjoyment and achievement. Parents say they are impressed by the 'challenging programme of activities' and 'fantastic creative ethos' of the school. Local community events and a host of United Kingdom and foreign trips enhance students' personal development and promote community cohesion.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Students feel very well cared for and know they can seek help and support when they need it, especially from their trusted teachers. Staff know their students well, which can be most tangibly seen in the excellent relationships in the classroom, which make a significant contribution to the promotion of equality across the school. Students have exceptionally good access to information, advice and guidance, especially through the school website and electronic learning environment. The school identifies learners that are more vulnerable speedily and provides excellent support and intervention. There are close links with outside agencies and parents to ensure all students' needs are met and that they make good progress. The school complies with current government requirements for safeguarding children, and health and safety.

While there is inconsistency in the quality of short-term marking and assessment, academic monitoring and mentoring and the resulting long-term guidance students receive are strong. Students' progress is regularly reviewed and they are set personalised challenging targets. The school has highly effective systems in place to identify and tackle underachievement. Successful

strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour have seen a marked reduction in the number of exclusions over recent years. Very effective recent action has been taken to improve attendance.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher's exceptionally clear vision, the strong direction he provides and his effective communication underpin the improvements the school has made since the last inspection. In conjunction with the highly effective senior leadership group and a strong team of middle managers, he analyses the school's performance accurately and implements strategies that are very successful in raising the quality of care and education. This is underpinned by an ethos of what the school calls 'teamship' that is fully shared by all staff. The outcomes are evident in particular in the raised achievement and standards in the sixth form, students' improved personal development and well-being, an increase in outstanding teaching and strengthened leadership and management at all levels. As one parent wrote, 'The leadership team are highly enthusiastic about the children's education and their commitment to them is exceptional.' The governing body discharges its responsibilities highly effectively and holds the school's leaders and managers to account for the school's performance while providing valuable support. Lessons are monitored and evaluated very thoroughly to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A range of effective professional development activities is enabling staff to enhance their teaching and share good practice. The school has used increasingly challenging targets, including those for its specialist subjects, which have contributed to raising standards. The use of performance data and other information on students' achievements, to track the progress of students, to identify those who are underachieving and to prompt intervention to improve their performance, is exemplary. However, the school recognises that there is potential to improve further the use of targets to help individual students to do even better. The school's self-evaluation takes account of a wide range of views, particularly the students' voice, and these evaluations are used very well to inform its impressive improvement planning.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. The school has a clear understanding of what is required to promote strong cohesion in the school community and with local communities. A range of activities is used to do this very effectively. Links with schools in other countries, visits and visitors to the school are also used very well to develop students' understanding of the United Kingdom and global communities. As a result, they gain excellent skills that enable them to participate very well in society, to understand others' lives and appreciate diversity. The school's leaders and managers promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination highly effectively. They have created an ethos of inclusion that has enabled all students to flourish and progress. This is underpinned by the excellent deployment of the school's resources, particularly its staff, to ensure the school provides outstanding value for money.



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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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

## Achievement and standards

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

<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.

<sup>2</sup>IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	IE <sup>2</sup>
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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	

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

2 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Corsham School, Corsham, SN13 9DF

Thank you for the help you provided for the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting members of year groups and we learned a great deal from our discussions with many of you in lessons and around the school.

Your school, including the sixth form, has improved since it was previously inspected and we judge that it is now outstanding. This is because excellent care, guidance and support ensure that your personal development and well-being are outstanding. This is demonstrated by your enjoyment of school, outstanding behaviour, adoption of healthy lifestyles, willingness to take on responsibility and significant contributions to the local and wider community. Above average standards and good achievement have been maintained by students in Years 7 to 11 over recent years including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Last year, in the sixth form, in art and design and in mathematics, standards were exceptionally high and students' achievement was outstanding. Currently, you are on track to achieve as good results by the end of this academic year. Teaching and learning are good and improving. Your teachers use effective strategies to help you learn independently. However, the quality of marking and assessment is not yet consistently high across the school.

The curriculum is outstanding and meets your needs and capabilities very well. The school's visual arts specialist status and the rich variety of extra-curricular activities you participate in have a very beneficial impact on your enjoyment and achievement. The outstanding leadership and management shown by your headteacher and senior teachers are driving the school's improvement. In order to raise your standards and achievement further, we have asked them to ensure that the quality of all teachers' use of marking and assessment to inform your learning is always as high as the best practice in the school. You can help by working hard to ensure that you all attain your potential in national tests and examinations this year.

Best wishes with your studies.

Yours faithfully

Nick Green

Her Majesty's Inspector