

Oriel High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134042
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	328808
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1176
Sixth form	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Strudwick
Headteacher	Gill Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
School address	Maidenbower Lane Crawley RH10 7XW
Telephone number	01293 880350
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Age group	11–18
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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

Oriel High School opened as a new school in September 2004 as part of a private finance initiative. With the opening of the sixth form in September 2008, student numbers are now larger than average. Fewer students than average come from minority ethnic groups, although the number of students with English as an additional language is growing. An above average proportion of students have a statement of special educational needs, and overall the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than that found nationally. The school has a specialist unit for students with dyslexia. The school became a performing and visual arts specialist school in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oriel High School has now almost reached its full growth, with only the upper sixth form to complete next year. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory and there are many good features to its work. The school's current performance needs to be viewed in the context of the many changes that have taken place. It has grown rapidly in size, with a new group of students added each September and many additional students joining existing groups throughout the year. Staff have worked hard to support these students and help them to settle into their new school life. This has been very successful because of a strong emphasis on pastoral care and guidance. Students are well looked after and their personal development is good. There is a growing sense of teamwork among the students as well as the staff, and students make an excellent contribution to both the school and local communities. Behaviour is usually good and students' enjoyment of their school life is exemplified by rapid improvements in attendance, which is now also good. The school deals sensitively and effectively with the few students who continue to present particular challenges. This is helped by the good curriculum, which aims to meet the needs and aspirations of all learners and does so well. The school has good links with a wide range of agencies and provides good support to students, especially the most vulnerable. As a result, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do particularly well. The dyslexia unit gives very effective support to students. One parent of a student with severe dyslexia stated that her son has 'thrived due to the dedication of the SEN department and its staff'. The number of staff has grown along with the size of the school and many teachers are new to the teaching profession. This has presented particular challenges to the school in terms of staff training, and a satisfactory quality of teaching has been maintained. In many classes teachers demonstrate their enthusiasm for their subject and share this with students in an atmosphere of good relationships. However, not all teachers are ensuring that students learn at a sufficiently rapid rate or aspire to high enough standards. Students' attitudes to learning are improving and in most lessons, the students are keen to learn and apply themselves well to their work. Most teachers use assessment information appropriately to set targets for students. However, not all students are clear about the meaning of these targets and what they need to do to improve their work.

The students in Year 11 who took their GCSEs in summer 2008 were the first group to do so and overall the results are just below average. When English and mathematics are included, the results are much closer to average. Similarly, the results for younger students who took the national tests at the end of Year 9 are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement because the vast majority of students have made at least satisfactory progress from their starting points. Specialist college status for performing and visual arts has only recently been achieved and clearly has not had time to impact significantly on provision.

Leadership and management are good overall and there is a clear vision of what the school is striving to achieve, which rests on a strong ethos of 'opening windows of opportunity'. The headteacher and senior leaders have implemented good systems and procedures that guide the school's work and give an accurate view of its performance based on secure evidence. Their enthusiasm is shared by team leaders and shows in the work of other staff, who are keen to do their best for the students. Effective teamwork, including that of the governors, has created good capacity for continuous improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The new sixth form opened successfully this term with a high number of Year 11 students choosing to stay on and take advantage of the good facilities. Students have very positive attitudes to their work and enjoy being at school. They work well together and show a mature approach to their studies. The sixth form council is very active and has a strong impact on the work and development of the sixth form that contributes to a shared vision for the future. Many students eagerly take part in a wide range of voluntary activities that make a significant contribution to community cohesion.

Teachers are rising to the challenge of sixth form teaching. Regular monitoring of progress is providing clear feedback to students on how they can improve their work. The wide range of courses reflects the interests of the students and gives a balance of vocational and academic subjects. Tutors have good relationships with their students and have a clear overview of their progress.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Capacity to improve is good as current developments and future plans are chosen well to meet the needs of the students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching to increase the challenge and pace of learning and raise achievement.
- Ensure all students are given enough information and feedback on their work so that they understand their targets and know clearly what they need to do to improve.

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

Students start school with standards in line with those found nationally. During their time in the school, they reach make satisfactory progress and reach broadly average standards. Many students join the school at different times. For example, 10% of the students joined the school in the current Years 10 and 11. These students are well supported by the school but are finding it hard to catch up in a short time and are not making as much progress as those who have been in the school from the start. In some year groups, particularly in Key Stage 4, relatively few students have higher-level literacy and numeracy skills and this can hinder the progress they make.

In 2007 students made satisfactory progress in the Year 9 national tests. Standards were average overall and better in mathematics than in English and science. Current information from the school indicates similar performance in 2008.

In 2008 the first set of GCSE results for the school were average overall in English, mathematics and science, and above average in some areas such as separate sciences, where more able students achieved well. In other subjects, students performed particularly well in drama, history and music, although results in information and communication technology (ICT) and geography were disappointing. Students from minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language reach similar standards to their peers. Students with learning difficulties make good

and in some cases excellent progress as a result of the good support they receive. Students attached to the dyslexia unit make good progress through targeted support and interventions from expert teachers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students are enthusiastic about the school; they speak in glowing terms about their time there and are sometimes reluctant to leave, and many spend an additional hour per day in the extra activities on offer. They certainly attend school more regularly now, and their enjoyment of many of their lessons and sporting activities is clear. The school has a calm atmosphere and students move purposely around between lessons. Behaviour overall is good, particularly at break times and when students are moving around the school. There are some instances of inappropriate behaviour in lessons and some parents commented on this. However this is clearly linked to weaker teaching, where lessons lack adequate challenge and students can become bored. The number of exclusions is falling and students feel sanctions are fair and adequate. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are active in caring for each other, for example looking after students who are more vulnerable at lunchtimes. Students' awareness of other cultures is strongly supported through the organisation of the school into 'learning communities' that encourage multicultural links.

Students say that bullying is rare and any instances are dealt with very effectively. They feel safe and appreciate the strong adult presence around the school. Students are very active participants in the extensive sports programme and always try to eat healthily. They enthuse at the variety and price of food available. One student was very happy that cake has been replaced with 'healthy doughnuts'. They were not happy with the resulting long queues for food and felt the canteen area was far too small.

There is a high level of participation in a wide range of community-based events such as fundraising for many different charities and working with local primary schools. Students develop an excellent understanding of wider issues through the 'learning community' structure of the school. The associated charitable events and enterprise days means they are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Students feel they have a strong voice in the school. For example, they have made contributions towards the development of the school uniform and extended play areas, and drawn up a student charter about respect and responsibility.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has a clear view of the quality of teaching which is informed by a well thought out monitoring programme. This identifies areas of underperformance in teaching and how to improve them. Good action is taken to address weaknesses and teaching is improving. The most effective lessons are well planned and delivered at a good pace, creating a good climate for learning. Objectives are clear and meet a wide range of learning needs and, as a result, students settle willingly to the tasks set. Teachers make good use of ICT to support learning. Too often, teachers set the same work for all students regardless of their different abilities and students are not challenged. In some classes, students are often required to listen for too long to the teacher talking and not given enough opportunities to be active learners. This allows some more reluctant learners to drift off task and encourages inactivity and disengagement. Students'

work is regularly marked but feedback to students on how well they are doing and what to do to improve varies from the informative and helpful to a tick. Not all students are receiving regular and consistent advice on how well they are achieving and how to improve. Learning support assistants are used effectively to support students who need additional help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A creative approach to the curriculum for younger students develops opportunities to work in a more cross-curricular way ('dunk days'). This helps students to understand the links between different strands of learning and improves enjoyment. The school offers older students a more personalised curriculum and wide choice that includes both traditional as well as vocational pathways. More able students are given the opportunity to take subjects such as humanities early with considerable success. The vast majority of students are able to access their full range of choices. It is too early to assess how appropriate some of the newer courses are for the students taking them, or the impact on standards. Vulnerable students who are most at risk of disaffection are supported through referral to the 'Forest schools' initiative. This is an innovative way to challenge and develop the social and emotional skills of these students in a 'classroom without walls'.

The school works well in partnership with the local community to provide and develop work-related study options, business enterprise opportunities and extended learning. A high proportion of students take up the many opportunities for extra experience in music, drama, sport, and community involvement. Master classes in mathematics and languages are provided in conjunction with local primary schools to support more able students joining the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for protecting students and keeping them safe are robust. Staff are highly committed to supporting the more vulnerable students, promoting students' health, safety and the inclusion of all in the life of the school. There is good liaison with parents and other agencies, particularly for pupils who have learning difficulties or who are at risk. As one parent commented, 'I feel the school values all its pupils, not just those high achieving students, and encourages all of them to achieve their full potential.' Effective strategies have improved attendance, reduced exclusions and promoted learners' social and economic well-being.

The pastoral, learning support and special needs teams are now at full strength and have delivered a comprehensive range of interventions and support that is very successful in meeting the needs of vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students receive good support when transferring from primary school and at transition points within school. There is well planned career pathways guidance beginning in Year 9, and the good support for Year 11 students preparing for the sixth form has resulted in a high number continuing into Year 12. Academic guidance is developing well, although students are not always clear about their targets and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior management team is now up to full strength, giving greater opportunities for devolvement of responsibilities. Its members are committed to a strong teamwork approach that supports the professional development of the growing staff. Middle managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities for oversight of the quality of education in their areas. This is supported by successful self-evaluation strategies and associated monitoring procedures, the interpretation of which gives the school an accurate view of its own performance. The frequent additions to year groups and the increasing size of the school have made it difficult for the senior team to set appropriately challenging targets that are effective in raising standards. The school works hard to promote equality of opportunity for all its students and ensure that the contribution of each individual to the life of the school is recognised. The school engages very effectively with the local community and is active in working with a variety of different local groups. The 'learning community' arrangements within the school are effective in helping students to learn about others and appreciate diversity. Financial management is satisfactory and resources are used well. Governors devote a lot of their time to school activities; they have worked hard to help the school to grow. The challenge for them now is to focus on a more critical approach to support the school in its future development and on improving its performance.

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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?	3	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

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.

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

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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	3	
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**

26 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Oriel High School, Crawley RH10 7XW

Thank you for the welcome you gave me and my colleagues when we inspected your school recently. We appreciated the opportunities we had to meet with some of you and to talk with others in lessons. Your views on life and learning at Oriel High formed an important part of the evidence we used in coming to our conclusions.

We judged that Oriel is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education, and, as I'm sure you know, there is much that is good. A lot of work has gone into making sure you settle into your new school as quickly as possible and that you are safe and well cared for. As a result, most of you enjoy coming to school and are very involved in extra-curricular and voluntary activities, both in school and in the local community. The new sixth form has got off to a good start with many of the last Year 11 staying on.

Most of your teachers make sure that you enjoy your lessons and are actively taking more responsibility for your learning. Sometimes your lessons are too easy and you feel you are not being stretched enough. Staff have worked successfully to get the curriculum right for you. You enjoy the 'dunk days' and you are now able to choose from a good range of subjects in Key Stage 4. We could see that you all get a chance to do enjoyable activities out of lessons. Your school is a caring and supportive place. Relationships are strong and you say you feel safe and valued.

The most important thing to concentrate on now is helping you to learn faster. We have asked staff to:

- make sure all your lessons are challenging so that you achieve as well as you can
- make sure you all understand your targets and know what you have to do to improve your work.

Everyone wants Oriel High to keep on improving. We think if you keep working and learning together, you will do just that.

With very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely Christine Jones HMI