

Coquet High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122363
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340134
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	13–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	547
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Hall
Headteacher	Mr Paul Allen
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ackington Road Amble Morpeth NE65 0NG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent two thirds of their time looking at learning, observed 22 teachers, visited 28 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and analysed 87 questionnaires from parents and carers, 119 from students and 78 from staff. The team also looked at the data the school had collected about students' progress and at the school's records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching.

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

- current attainment and progress, particularly in English and science and of lower-attaining boys
- how effectively teachers use assessment information to help students improve their work and involve them in assessing their own learning
- the effectiveness of leaders' monitoring and evaluation at all levels to identify and address any underachievement and accelerate progress, such as that of lower-attaining boys.

Information about the school

Coquet is a smaller than average secondary school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than average. Almost all students are White British. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average, although those with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school has specialist engineering status and has gained many awards, including the Healthy Schools Award in 2008 for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. At its previous inspection the school was given a notice to improve.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Coquet High School provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education. Leaders and managers at all levels have been successful in addressing the issues for improvement raised at the last inspection. This has helped to raise achievement so that it is now satisfactory. Students enter school with standards that are broadly average and leave in Year 11 with standards that are also broadly average, but which have improved, particularly so in English. The achievement of lower-attaining boys has improved and there are signs that achievement in science is also rising, although it is early days to see the full impact of new courses for Years 10 and 11.

Throughout the school progress is satisfactory and improving and reflects improvements in the quality of teaching. Although teaching is still satisfactory overall, there are now more lessons where teaching is good. Assessment information is used increasingly effectively to plan lessons with work matched to students' needs. However, this practice is not yet consistent and students' progress occasionally slows where work is not challenging enough or is too hard for them. Most lessons are relevant, fast paced and interesting, and students enjoy learning. However, in lessons where learning is less secure, students are not always given clear enough success criteria by which they can tell how well they are doing. As a result of this, progress slows.

The governing body supports and challenges the school well, contributing effectively to its direction. A new management structure has been put in place recently to help bring about improvement and there are signs that the new appointments are being effective, for example in the increased achievement in English. Staff are committed to raising standards and self-evaluation is accurate. This has helped to bring about improvements, such as better lesson planning and a clearer focus on knowing how well students are performing. Safeguarding, care, guidance and support are good and contribute well to students feeling very safe and having a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle. The determination, drive and commitment of all leaders, along with the improvements already made, mean that the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Middle managers are increasingly being given more responsibility and contributing well to the school's improvement, although the variation in their effectiveness is not being monitored or evaluated rigorously enough at present. Likewise, the management of teaching and learning lacks a systematic approach to tackling the areas for development in teaching. Thus the quality of teaching is not rising quickly enough. At present, the school has many systems in place to tackle underachievement, but does not evaluate their relative effectiveness well enough to prioritise its actions to bring about rapid

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improvement.

Overall, parents and carers are pleased with how well the school educates and cares for its students although, like students and some staff, some have concerns about the clarity and effectiveness of procedures to deal with any unacceptable behaviour.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and accelerate progress through ensuring that all teaching is at least good by:
 - giving all students work that is sufficiently challenging and well matched to their individual needs
 - involving students more in assessing how well they are doing so that they know whether they are learning effectively
 - having a consistently rigorous approach to making use of data to inform lesson planning.
- Further raise attainment and accelerate progress through more rigorous and effective monitoring and evaluation which:
 - examines the effectiveness of middle leaders
 - has a more systematic method of following up areas for development in the quality of teaching
 - checks the effectiveness of any strategies put in place to address underachievement or areas for development.
- Provide clearer information on the procedures to deal with unacceptable behaviour so that staff, parents and carers, and students have confidence in their effectiveness.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Inspection evidence confirmed that in some lessons students have good opportunities to develop independent learning skills. This was seen to good effect in an outstanding Year 11 mathematics lesson, where students clearly enjoyed rising to the challenge of applying their knowledge of scale factors to real-life situations. However, some lessons are not as sharply focused on learning as others with too little time given to checking what has been learned. This was evident in a Year 11 science lesson where many students struggled to understand the concept of real and virtual images. The percentage of students working at or towards the higher GCSE grades is better than in recent years and the quality of learning and progress in lessons is satisfactory overall and improving. This is true for all groups of students, throughout the school, including lower-attaining boys. Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least

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satisfactory progress because of good, focused support. Fewer students are underachieving because of the increased attention to the progress of individuals. Relationships in lessons are positive and most students are eager to learn. Their behaviour in and around the school is satisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and they make a satisfactory contribution to both the school and the wider community. There are not enough opportunities for students to take on responsibility at present, although the school has plans to increase this through initiatives such as having older students helping younger students with their reading. Students are prepared adequately for their future economic well-being by having particularly sound information and communication technology (ICT) skills and a keen sense of cooperation and consideration for others when working together. Punctuality to lessons is improving, but this is still not good enough. The school's specialist engineering status impacts well on students' achievement and personal well-being, with targets being met in all specialist subjects apart from science.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

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

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Most lessons proceed at a good pace and varied activities ensure that students are engaged in learning. Although the work usually caters well for students' differing needs, it is sometimes not matched well enough. Teaching assistants provide good proactive support that enables students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to have access to the curriculum. Teachers often use good questioning techniques to challenge students, but at times opportunities are missed for students to think enough for themselves. In many lessons teachers explain clearly to students what it is they should be learning. This allows them to be involved in assessing their own learning. However, in some lessons this is not apparent and, as a result, progress slows. Sound assessment is evident in nearly all lessons and is helping students to improve their work. While most teachers' marking is helpful in making clear the next steps students need to take in their learning, this is not consistent across the school. Some students feel that a few teachers do not apply the procedures for managing behaviour consistently or fairly, but this is improving as the new procedures become embedded.

There is an increasingly good mix of academic and vocational courses and students choose the pathways suited to their aspirations and abilities. However, some of the vocational courses are relatively new and there are not always suitable courses at the next level. Literacy has been introduced well across the curriculum into other subjects, but numeracy and ICT are not seen as extensively. Many students leave with suitable qualifications and nearly all go on to work, training or continuing education.

The personal, social and health education programme contributes effectively to students' well-being. The school is particularly sensitive to students' well-being and provides a wide range of help to students and their families. Support for vulnerable students is particularly good. Guidance for future work and training is good and links with local middle and first schools and post-16 establishments are effective. The school works successfully with families to encourage regular attendance. It continues to make good efforts with the small number of students who are absent too often.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, along with some good new senior leaders, provides clear direction for improvement and he has established a sound drive towards improvement among the staff. Since the school was previously inspected, standards have risen and teaching has improved. Targets set for students are becoming more challenging. Governors are well

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informed and their monitoring of the school's work is becoming more effective at all levels, although their evaluations sometimes lack sharpness. The school is aware of the performance of the different groups of students it serves and ensures support for those who need it, promoting equal opportunity. Racism and bullying are not tolerated at all. Partnerships with agencies to support students' well-being are generally good. This is particularly so for the provision of vulnerable students, contributing well to their raised performance and well-being. Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet all requirements. Links with parents and carers are satisfactory and improving. The school has plans in place to address the concern of some parents and carers that they are not provided with enough information to help their children with their learning. Efforts to promote community cohesion are satisfactory. The school has implemented its action plan, but some of the actions are at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Standards on entry to the sixth form are broadly average. Students make satisfactory progress and reach average standards because of the sound provision. Attendance is average and improving and most students are on track to reach their targets. Progress is best in art, design and technology, and ICT. Many students go on to higher education and the number of students who do not enter employment, training or further education is low. Sixth-form students are very articulate and good role models for younger students. They contribute well to the work of the school, through roles such as mentors. Teachers in the sixth form generally have sound subject knowledge and students'

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progress in lessons is satisfactory. The school recognises that, although teaching has improved, in some lessons students are not guided well enough to think and find out things for themselves. As a result, improvements in progress are not as fast as they might be. The curriculum provides an increasingly wide range of courses at different levels, including those offered through partner schools. Students were keen to tell the inspectors that they enjoy school and appreciate the good relationships that they have with their teachers. Inspectors agree with students that their tutorial support is well organised and makes a good contribution to their academic progress and personal development. The leadership role in the sixth form has been extended recently to include monitoring academic progress and the quality of teaching. Although this role is relatively new, there are signs that it is having a positive impact.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them safe. The inspectors agree with this. A small minority of parents and carers feel that the school does not help them enough to support their children's learning.

Inspectors agree with this and this is something that the school recognises and is taking steps to rectify. A small minority also feel that the school does not deal effectively with any unacceptable behaviour. This view was also backed up by discussions with the students themselves and by a small minority of staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Coquet High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 547 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	33	47	54	7	8	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	32	37	46	53	5	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	31	42	48	12	14	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	28	41	47	14	16	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	25	29	40	46	16	18	3	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	23	44	51	16	18	5	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	22	47	54	15	17	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	24	45	52	8	9	4	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	24	49	56	9	10	4	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	21	45	52	19	22	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	26	42	48	12	14	7	8
The school is led and managed effectively	19	22	46	53	13	15	6	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	32	39	45	11	13	6	7

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Coquet High School, Morpeth NE65 0NG

We would like to thank you for welcoming us when we came to inspect your school last week. We enjoyed our visit and valued the opportunity to talk with you. The school has improved since it was last inspected and is now judged to be satisfactory. The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make sure that the school improves. You make satisfactory progress which is improving and standards are rising notably in English. Most of you attend school regularly, behave well and treat each other with consideration. You told us that you enjoy school, but that some of you lack confidence in the effectiveness and fairness of procedures to deal with any unsatisfactory behaviour. You know how to live a healthy lifestyle and keep yourselves safe. The staff look after you well and give you good support and advice.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked the governors, the headteacher and the staff to raise attainment and accelerate progress by ensuring that:

- all teaching is at least good by giving you work that is challenging and matched to your needs and involving you more in assessing how well you are doing so that you can always tell whether you are learning effectively
- rigorous and effective monitoring and evaluation follows up more clearly on areas for development in teaching and checks how well the various strategies to bring about improvement are working, including how well the leaders in all departments are supporting you.

We have also asked them to provide clearer information on the procedures to deal with unacceptable behaviour so that everyone has confidence in their effectiveness.

You can help by asking teachers to give you clear success criteria so you can judge more easily how well you are doing in lessons. We believe that you want to do well and we would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Alison Thomson

Lead Inspector

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