

The Causeway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131669
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	341189
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Taylor-Bennett 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	774
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hines
Headteacher	Terry Boatwright
Date of previous school inspection	7 September 2006
School address	Larkspur Drive Eastbourne East Sussex BN23 8EJ
Telephone number	01323 465700
Fax number	01323 740097
Email address	office@causeway.e-sussex.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Inspection number	341189

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 26 lessons and held meetings with staff, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and action planning documents, its policies, the minutes of meetings, analyses of pupil outcomes, including test and examination results produced by the school and the local authority, the outcome of pupil and staff questionnaires and the 248 parental questionnaires returned.

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

- whether the indications of improvement in the 2009 examination results are convincing evidence of improving attainment and progress of pupils overall
- evidence of the school's capacity to sustain improvements, given the nature of the leadership arrangements currently in place
- the attendance of pupils.

Information about the school

The Causeway School is a slightly smaller-than-average community school whose pupil numbers have fallen over several years. It has had considerable changes to its leadership over the last four years but there is now a very close working relationship with a neighbouring secondary school involving shared executive leadership arrangements. The proportion of its pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is greater than average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is relatively low. The school holds the Sportsmark and Healthy School awards, and the Investors in People standard. The school shares a site with Hazel Court, a special school for children with complex learning difficulties.

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

2

Main findings

- The quality of education provided by The Causeway School is satisfactory and there are clear indications that it has improved over the last year and can continue to improve.
- Although attainment is low overall, it is improving quickly.
- Pupils' progress and the quality of their learning are satisfactory and improving rapidly and securely.
- Pupils work well in lessons but many do not enjoy being challenged by more difficult work, or applying skills in unfamiliar situations. This lack of self-confidence limits the progress they can make and results in low aspirations.
- The improvements are driven by an executive headteacher, executive team and senior team at the school who have commitment and passion to achieve the highest quality outcomes for pupils.
- The executive headteacher's vision for the school is strong, clear and very well communicated. Many staff, pupils and parents commented on this, and attributed the improvements they have seen directly to it.
- Teaching is satisfactory and it is improving. Important techniques, such as marking pupils' work to guide future progress and using individual targets in a focused way, are inconsistently applied across classrooms.
- The school cares for, supports and guides pupils well, and pupils feel safe and looked after.
- Behaviour around the site and in lessons is good. However, many pupils find it difficult to learn collaboratively and to engage in lessons actively without continual support from their teachers.
- The school works well with a range of partners to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The school sets accurate and useful targets for pupils to achieve in each subject but they are not always used effectively in lessons to inform teaching and as the basis of useful feedback to pupils about their work.
- The curriculum is good and strongly supports the current improvements evident in pupils' attainment and in the quality of their learning.
- Attendance is low.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance by the end of the academic year 2009/10 to at least the national average (91.6%) by
- using the strong partnerships established with outside agencies such as the

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

education welfare service and national challenge adviser to complement the school's existing good systems

- working with some parents and carers to help them to see the benefits of sending their child to school more reliably (and not, for example, take their children out of school for holidays in term time).
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that by September 2010 it is consistently good across all departments by
- using the clear and accurate targets the school produces for each pupil to inform teaching strategies and the use of resources in lessons
- improving the quality of teachers' written feedback on pupils' work
- providing more structured means of developing pupils' capacity to learn cooperatively.
- Raise attainment to match national average standards at Key Stage 4 in all important respects by
- providing a broader range of activities, both in the classroom and beyond, that will develop pupils' self confidence as learners
- ensuring that the many routes for success offered by the school's curriculum raise aspirations by engaging and motivating pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The examination results for 2009 showed significant improvement on previous years. Many more pupils obtained C grades at GCSE, or their equivalent in vocational qualifications and the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more grade C passes including English and maths was not significantly different from the national average. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. Those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress satisfactorily because of the good support they receive. The quality of learning in classrooms across the school is improving rapidly because of aspects of good provision and the good leadership and management of the school. Pupils work willingly and cooperatively in lessons but too often miss opportunities to cooperate productively in their learning and make good progress together. This combination of low but rapidly improving attainment and satisfactory and securely improving progress means that pupils' overall achievement and enjoyment is satisfactory.

Pupils feel safe and secure at school. Many new Year 7 pupils made a point of saying that they and their parents had reservations about coming to the school, but they were already enjoying it very much and had settled in well. One summed this up by saying, 'All the teachers are fab. I really enjoy it here.' Older pupils show a good appreciation of the opportunities that the school presents for them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Although not everyone takes part in sports after school and chooses the healthy options in the canteen, pupils consistently express a good level of understanding about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils show good awareness of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and many choose to take advantage of special provision, for example the smoking cessation courses and the fitness and nutrition club. Despite an element of

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

concern in some parent questionnaires, behaviour around the site is generally good and pupils feel that they have a good level of physical and emotional security. Pupils are welcoming and friendly and, although boisterous sometimes, often behave thoughtfully towards each other. Bullying is regarded as rare and, as one pupil put it 'gets sorted once your head of year knows'. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory, although attitudes towards learning are too passive to enable good progress to be made often enough, and group work rarely stretches and extends understanding.

Pupils enjoy contributing to the school community and many senior pupils act as good role models for younger ones. The school council is active and makes a difference, for example in the provision of more healthy food in the dining room. Many pupils express their views in focus groups that discuss all aspects of the work of the school. The links with Hazel Court School are particularly valuable and enjoyable and many pupils described how much they have learned and benefited from working alongside their peers there. Pupils develop an appreciation of wider cultural experiences through the music, drama and art clubs and a Year 8 trip to Spain. They develop a satisfactory awareness of the spiritual aspects of their lives in assemblies, in some lessons and in tutor time by taking advantage of the opportunities for personal reflection on relevant issues, sometimes comparing their situation with children in other cultures.

Pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory. They appreciate the good information, advice and guidance provided at key transition points. The school is aware that pupils' level of basic skills and their capacity to apply these in the range of experiences to be encountered post-16 are areas for further improvement. Attendance is significantly below the national average and the leadership of the school has targeted this for urgent improvement, especially in its work with those parents who do not appear to appreciate the importance of their child attending school regularly.

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	4
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	3

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

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	
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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The school accurately gauges the quality of teaching and the use of assessment as satisfactory and improving. Sometimes the satisfactory teaching does not promote a sense of self-motivation and the skills to enable cooperative learning. This limits progress. In addition, written feedback following assessment of their work is felt by pupils to be of variable quality across departments and too often does not point the way to improvements clearly enough. Where teaching is good it is because the outcomes for pupils' learning are clearly explained at the outset and allow for pupils of various abilities to make progress. These lessons provide a variety of activities, with well-managed transitions between them. In addition, the teacher has good subject knowledge and shows enthusiasm for the topic, and there is time given at the end of the lesson to reflecting on the learning achieved. This good teaching is always based on teachers using their knowledge of each pupil's potential and regularly checking on individuals' progress throughout the lesson.

The improvements in the quality of learning and the teaching seen in classrooms around the school, and improvements in recent examination outcomes, are closely connected to improvements in the range of courses and qualifications now available to pupils. This good curriculum provision enables pupils to match their personal strengths and interests more closely to what they learn and how they are required to demonstrate their learning. The range of available qualifications is impressive. Horse care, motor vehicle maintenance, wider key skills and BTEC physical education (PE) for all sit alongside more established GCSE courses. It is not unusual for there to be several pathways available within one subject area, for example in science. The accelerated learning course in the lower school eases the transition from primary to secondary school well. It allows for pupils to develop important literacy skills and provides flexible opportunities for smaller groups to enjoy wider experiences such as Spanish conversation and music performance. Pupils learn to express their views and attitudes through art and dance in, for example, the accelerated learning course in Year 7. Social development is woven throughout the curriculum, for example, in personal, social and health education and history. Pupils in all year groups were keen to tell inspectors how much they enjoyed this variety of provision.

Pupils are cared for, guided and supported in an organised and very effective way throughout their time at the school. There is a wide range of good quality provision for vulnerable pupils, and for those who need extra care and attention at certain times. 'The Sanctuary' is a haven for those who have emotional or physical health issues or who

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

sometimes just need 'time out'. It is a valuable way of ensuring that some pupils do not choose to stop coming to school because they find being in lessons difficult for some reason. Staff work closely and in a well-coordinated fashion to enable pupils to be happy and successful. For example, the pastoral assistants have improved punctuality significantly, and this is reinforced by all staff through the behaviour-for-learning code. Staff are generous with their time and there is frequently someone around after school to help pupils catch up with missed work or provide extra support with homework.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Soon after their arrival at the school the executive headteacher and his team ensured that staff felt supported to deliver the high expectations of pupils they communicated. There is a clear sense across the school of a focus on pupil achievement in its broadest sense. Good management systems are in place to maintain high levels of accountability for driving and maintaining improvement in the quality of provision and outcomes. Staff training is systematic and effective, and it is built into the school's everyday work. Because of these systems and the ethos established, the improvements made so far have already had some significant impact. Improvement strategies have also been designed to be secure so that, very importantly, they give the school a good capacity to improve further. For example, improvement in the quality of teaching results from a whole-school drive for consistency in the application of certain techniques in classrooms, good quality staff training, and enabling teachers to inspire and motivate pupils through a good quality curriculum. The school has a sophisticated approach to establishing performance targets for pupils that takes into account their previous achievement and their individual situations, but also what the school can do specifically for them.

The governing body shows consistent and resolute support for the work of the school. Through a very good knowledge of current strengths and development needs, governors actively support the work of the executive team and the senior leadership, and provide appropriate and determined challenge leading to further improvement. Governors have provided vital continuity during a time of significant change over the last few years, and have consistently acted in the best interests of the pupils and their families. They ensure that satisfactory value for money is achieved by the school.

The school works very closely with a wide range of partners and this has had significant impact in securing improvements in the quality of the curriculum and in the quality of

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

care, guidance and support. For example, there are coordinated timetables to allow for joint provision in examination courses across several local schools and colleges. Coordination with a range of care and advice providers such as education welfare services, Connexions and the on-site drop-in centre for older pupils operating in liaison with the local primary health care trust extend opportunities for pupils to access good quality care and advice. Safeguarding has an appropriately high priority in the school and all aspects are managed satisfactorily. The 'Keep Kids Safe' texting service now in place has already demonstrated its usefulness with regard to checking absence and quickly conveying short, simple pieces of information. The school is aware of many parents' wish to have more frequent and clearer reports about pupils' progress, and has plans to address this.

The school has a good level of awareness of the achievement of different groups of pupils, for example, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and monitors their progress closely. Discrimination is tackled satisfactorily and many pupils have an interest in, and a positive view of, ethnic and cultural differences. The school has a wholehearted commitment to serving the needs of its community. It has a detailed knowledge of the degree of local community cohesion and has taken steps to respond in practical and useful ways such as through the provision of a parents' support group and a Dads' and Lads' Club. It is beginning to use its evaluation of the impact of these activities to inform future strategies to further improve community links.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

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

Several parents expressed their strong approval of the improvements they felt had come about since the new executive leadership arrangements were put in place. Many parents of the new Year 7 were particularly pleased with how happy and enthusiastic about school their child is. A significant minority of parents feel that communications between home and school could be better. Inspectors are satisfied that the school is aware of this and has begun to address it successfully. The feeling of the significant minority who have concerns about the school's provision for a healthy lifestyle for its pupils is taken seriously by the school and this is also associated with communication issues. Concerns about how the school deals with poor behaviour were apparent in some returns but did not emerge as an issue during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Causeway 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 248 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 774 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	34	144	58	18	7	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	67	27	155	63	17	7	4	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	20	145	59	29	12	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	23	146	59	21	9	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	56	26	148	60	18	7	4	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	18	143	58	35	14	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	9	159	64	37	15	11	4
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)	44	18	148	60	27	11	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	18	160	65	20	8	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	22	124	50	36	15	12	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	9	150	61	27	11	8	3
The school is led and managed effectively	53	21	164	66	16	7	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	77	31	137	55	19	8	7	3

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.



2 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Causeway School, Eastbourne BN23 8EJ

Thank you for welcoming us into your school during the recent two-day inspection. My team and I enjoyed meeting you and finding out about how well The Causeway is meeting your needs and caring for you. It is our judgement that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education, and that it is an improving school.

We were particularly impressed by the wide range of courses and qualifications available to you, and how well the curriculum can meet your needs and interests. Other strengths included how well you are cared for, guided and supported. There are many support mechanisms in place to help all of you be as happy and successful as you can be, and several of you were keen to let us know how much you appreciate them.

Many of you, and a lot of your parents, commented on how much the school has improved over the last year. This is because of the good leadership of your executive headteacher and his team, and because the governors and staff are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that you do well.

I have asked your executive headteacher to improve the school in three ways. He was already aware of their importance and we were able to agree them very easily.

- Attendance is low. The school is working hard to improve this and there are signs of success, but a lot of the responsibility lies with some of you and your parents.
- Teaching is satisfactory but could be better in certain ways. These include giving you better feedback on your work, encouraging you to work more cooperatively in lessons, and teachers using their knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses to plan lessons more carefully.
- Many of you like to work well within your 'comfort zone'. I have asked that teachers encourage you to accept more of a challenge in lessons and so to improve your chances of getting higher grades in your exams.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to the inspection. Very best wishes for your future happiness and success.

Yours faithfully

Alan Taylor-Bennett HMI

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.