

The Sir John Colfox School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113852
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	378760
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Mary Massey 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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	848
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Stones
Headteacher	Kay Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 December 2008
School address	Ridgeway Bridport Dorset DT63DT
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	23–24 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mary Massey	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kim Bishop	Additional Inspector
Mac Davison	Additional Inspector
David Howe	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 35 part-lessons taught by 32 teachers, and carried out two learning walks to observe the progress of more vulnerable students as well as disabled students and those with special educational needs. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, groups of students and four members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's documentation and monitoring records, students' work, and 39 parental, 116 student and 40 staff questionnaires.

Information about the school

This is a slightly smaller-than-average school serving the town of Bridport and the surrounding villages. There are more girls than boys in the school, especially in the current Year 11. The school is part of the West Dorset Rural Federation of Schools and Colleges which shares provision for some examination courses. It has a combined sixth form with Beaminster School. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum standards for attainment and progress. The majority of students are of White British heritage and very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are being supported at school action plus, or have a statement of special educational needs, is in line with the national average. The school has had specialist status in languages since 1999 and has links with schools in a number of countries.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because there is not enough outstanding teaching across all subjects to ensure consistently rapid progress. The school is in the early stages of developing a consistent approach to supporting students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills across the whole curriculum.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and the curriculum meets their needs.
- The school has a community atmosphere and relationships between staff and students are very cooperative, so students behave well. In classrooms, because there is a safe and secure learning environment, students are confident to respond to questions and ask for help when they do not understand.
- Most students enter the school with average attainment and leave with GCSE results that are significantly above average. Students' achievement has improved steadily over the last five years and the majority of students make good progress, including disabled students and those with special educational needs. The rate of progress is faster in English and science than in mathematics. Students who are in the early stages of learning English and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals make as much progress as their peers.
- Overall teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers provide a wide variety of activities in lessons that encourage students to be actively involved, support one another, discuss what they are doing and ask questions. Students are given regular feedback on their work; they know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. Occasionally work is not closely matched to students' individual needs and lessons do not always include opportunities for students to work independently.
- The headteacher and senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Staff performance is well managed and the training provided by the school is improving the quality of teaching and the skills of subject leaders. The governing body provides effective support and challenge to the school.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a higher proportion of teaching is outstanding by:
 - sharing the good practice in teaching and learning that is already in the school to develop teachers' skills
 - ensuring that all teachers provide learning activities that are accurately pitched to challenge and meet the individual needs of students of all abilities
 - providing more opportunities in lessons for students to take responsibility for their own learning and develop the skills to work independently
 - ensuring that all students are provided with regular opportunities to respond and act on the guidance they are given through marking.
- Promote the further development of students' reading, writing, numeracy and communication skills by establishing a systematic approach across the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Over the last four years attainment at the end of Year 11 has risen faster than it has nationally. Students in the sixth form are currently making good progress from their starting points. The school's predictions have been accurate in the past and indicate that in 2012 students are likely to do even better than in 2011. Students are keen to learn and, whenever they are given the opportunity, work collaboratively together. They make especially good progress in English and science as result of good and often outstanding teaching, supported by very thorough assessment. Some students have low standards of literacy when they enter the school. Recent changes to the curriculum have been introduced to tackle this, including dedicated time to encourage students to read, but there is not yet a systematic approach to developing students' key skills across the curriculum. In mathematics, although students make good progress at GCSE, much of this is the result of efficient systems for identifying under-achievement and then providing focused intervention at Key Stage 4.

All groups of students, including those for whom English is an additional language, make similar progress from their starting points and achieve well. Disabled students and those with special educational needs also make good progress. They feel very well cared for and this gives them confidence in their learning. The school has successfully closed the gap in performance found nationally between students known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers.

Quality of teaching

Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers create very positive relationships in the classroom. One student said that teachers 'care about your learning'. In the many

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good and outstanding lessons, teaching inspires and excites students, making them keen to learn, because the teacher acts as a facilitator, giving students plenty of opportunities to work in groups or independently, and encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. Students are provided with clear guidance about how to succeed in each lesson. However, this is not the case consistently across the school, and when lessons are dominated by the teacher, the pace of learning slows. In the best lessons, creative and stimulating use is made of information and communication technology to enhance learning. Students are set ambitious targets and data are often used very effectively to plan work which matches students' individual needs, particularly for disabled students and those with special educational needs and those who are more able. However, in weaker lessons the plans are not reliably implemented and the work set is not always sufficiently tailored to students' individual ability levels. Students are often given high quality feedback, both orally and through marking, especially in English, science and practical subjects such as art and drama. As a result, they know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. However, they are not always given structured time to respond to guidance they are given. On the few occasions when marking is not sufficiently regular or helpful, students take less pride in their work and the quality of presentation deteriorates.

Some teachers routinely include aspects of literacy in lessons, for example in science where key vocabulary is regularly provided, and others pay attention to spelling and punctuation through marking. A whole school approach to supporting the development of literacy skills is starting to be implemented, but the expectations of the school's leaders in this area are not explicit enough. Individual extra intervention is provided for disabled students and those with special educational needs to develop reading skills, but the school is not consistently monitoring and evaluating the impact of this support. However, the quality of teaching and support for disabled students and those with special educational needs is good overall and enables these students to achieve well.

In many lessons group work encourages students to present and explain their work to others and there are some informal links between the mathematics and science departments for numeracy. Nevertheless, there are not always enough opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills and take responsibility for their own learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' attitudes to learning and conduct in lessons are good, especially when the students are given the opportunity to work independently. They are respectful towards one another and towards adults and behave very sensibly and safely when moving around the school site. Students say that there is no tolerance of racism or homophobia and that they have a high degree of confidence in the school's systems for dealing with bullying. More vulnerable students are particularly positive about the level of care they receive and say that they feel very safe in school. A minority of students who responded to the inspection questionnaire do not feel that behaviour is

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good in lessons. When questioned further, students said that when disruption did occur it was dealt with very effectively and rapidly by the teacher, so it was very rare for learning to be disturbed for more than a few minutes. The school's behaviour management system is effective, although students say that this and the reward system are not always used consistently by teachers.

Nearly all students are punctual to lessons and to school. As a result of rigorous systems, including the involvement of governors, for monitoring and support for individual students and their families, attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now above the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is also much reduced.

Leadership and management

A clear annual cycle of monitoring and evaluation means that senior and middle leaders plan effectively for improvement. Although some recent difficulties with staffing mean that the capacity of senior leaders is currently stretched, appointments have been made with the aim of resolving this situation by the start of the next academic year. Targets are ambitious and focused on improving achievement, with middle leaders increasingly accountable. Since the last inspection a comprehensive programme of professional development has been put in place to improve teaching and the quality of middle management. Although leaders recognise that there is greater scope for teachers across the school to share best practice, actions taken since the last inspection have led to a tangible improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, and thus on accelerating students' achievement over time. Consequently, the school has the capacity for sustained improvement. Equal opportunities are promoted well because rates of progress are good for all groups of students no matter their needs and starting points. Underachievement is tackled very quickly and effectively through an interlinked system involving senior leaders with tutors who monitor the progress of individuals and also with subject leaders who consider the progress of groups.

The curriculum has been developed to ensure that it meets the needs of students in the local area, maintaining a strong emphasis on the school's language specialism, which contributes very well to students' social and cultural development. Nearly all students study a language, and many do two. High global awareness is supported by a wide range of visits and visitors. For example, the school recently hosted a group of young people from Srebrenetia as part of a cultural exchange. A creative system of early entry for the most able students in GCSE subjects other than English, mathematics and science ensures a wide range of experiences whilst maintaining high levels of attainment. In the sixth form the range of courses on offer is widened through the partnership with Beaminster School. The curriculum supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, encouraging high take-up of a wide range of extra-curricular activities especially performing arts and sport.

The governing body actively supports the school, but also challenges the school's leaders effectively. Governors have a wide range of skills put to good use, for example

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in developing the hospitality suite to support catering courses. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure and meet all statutory requirements.

The very small minority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of the Sir John Colfox School, Bridport DT63DT

I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks to those of you who gave up your time to speak with us and those of you who completed the questionnaire.

You attend a good school. The quality of teaching has improved since we last inspected and as a result your achievement has risen so that GCSE results are above the national average. You make particularly good progress in English and science. The school's inclusive ethos means that all of you, no matter your ability or background, have an equal chance of doing well. We found that you behave well and that your attendance has improved very much recently. The school's language status makes it special; we were particularly impressed by the wide range of visits and visitors that contribute to your cultural development.

Although the school is doing well, your headteacher and the staff are committed to continuing its improvement and are all ambitious to make it even better in the future. We have asked the school to:

- improve teaching even more, by giving you more opportunities to work independently and take responsibility for your learning, using the results of assessment to plan work that meets your individual needs and giving you time to respond to teachers' marking
- improve the way in which teachers of all subjects develop your literacy, numeracy and communication skills.

I very much enjoyed visiting your school and am very pleased about the progress you have all made. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Massey
Her Majesty's Inspector

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