



The Causeway School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131669
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 293807
Inspection dates 27–28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Anne Feltham HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Larkspur Drive
School category	Community		Eastbourne
Age range of pupils	11–16		BN23 8EJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01323 465700
Number on roll (school)	868	Fax number	01323 740097
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Steve Thornett
		Headteacher	Alison Dearden
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	27–28 September 2006	293807

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Causeway School is an average size secondary school situated to the east of Eastbourne on the south coast. This new school was opened eight years ago, co-located with Hazel Court secondary special school. Most students are of White ethnic origin, with a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. A growing number of students have English as an additional language. Students enter the school with standards which are just below average. The school has a higher than average number of students who are eligible for free school meals and an above average number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities. In the school year 2004-05 the school experienced a turbulent period, characterised by instability in its management, finances and staffing. This resulted in significant intervention by the local authority in order to bring about stability of teaching and to secure a firmer foundation for students' learning and achievement.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

It is now recovering well, following a troubled period of financial, management and teacher recruitment difficulties. Students are now making satisfactory progress although standards are just below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good work takes place in many classrooms. Recent key staff appointments and the improved quality of teaching and learning have contributed to securing a rise in students' achievement. There remain, however, weaknesses in science, where the school found particular difficulties in recruiting teachers. There are also general weaknesses in assessment and the use of data, which the school is beginning to address in order to raise standards. The new headteacher and senior team are leading the school with increasing effectiveness. They have notably put in place a number of necessary measures to improve students' attendance and behaviour and to reverse the decline in students' achievement. These are already showing an impact on students' learning. The school is also beginning to work successfully with parents to establish shared high expectations. The majority of parents are supportive of the school, and the school has rightly identified ways of addressing the concerns of a minority who would like improved communications with senior staff. The school takes caring for its students very seriously – one head of year commented 'the school is now driven by pastoral care and nurture' – and dedicated pastoral staff help teachers support those students who need additional care. Monitoring students' academic progress more effectively to drive up standards is now the urgent priority. The school provides a curriculum which is suited to the needs of its students, and has good plans for developing this further. The school is working hard to develop closer links with other local schools – including its co-located special school and three main primary cluster schools – in order to help Causeway students progress faster and contribute positively to their community. The school recognises its strength and weaknesses and that knowledge, combined with the commitment of its staff and governors, makes the school soundly placed for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further, by more rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure consistently good practice.
- Improve subject leaders' skills in the analysis of assessment data, to enable them to monitor students' progress more effectively and track the progress of specific groups of students.
- Raise standards and achievement in science.
- Involve students – and their parents and carers – in target-setting, giving students regular written feedback on how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students start at the school with levels of attainment that are below average, although the range of ability is similar to that found in most schools. In 2006 the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades was below the national average but represents an improvement in achievement compared to the previous year, given students' starting points on entry to the school. The proportion of students achieving A* to G grades also improved on the previous year, but results again remain below the national average. Standards in science are well below average. Very few students achieved the highest grades and the proportion who did not achieve any passes at GCSE was too high in some curriculum areas. The current progress made by students in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Students with learning difficulties make similar progress to that of their peers because of the effective levels of support. Students with English as an additional language make good progress. The tracking of the progress of individual and groups of students, including higher attaining and gifted and talented students, is at an early stage of development in some curriculum areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory and the majority enjoy many aspects of school life. Particular favourites include practical subjects such as physical education and Spanish and the range of activities offered outside the classroom. Most students feel secure in school, and they value what they regard as the supportive ethos and the rapport they have with many staff. Most students also appreciate the increasing emphasis the school has put on healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle generally, as was reinforced effectively in a Year 7 assembly attended during the inspection. Students also welcome the opportunity to take on responsibility: for example, younger students work with their counterparts from the co-located special school and senior students are enthusiastic about their role in helping others. However, despite recent improvements, some weaknesses restrict their progress: the school has worked hard, with some success, to improve attendance, but it is still below average. Students testify to improved behaviour and there are now fewer exclusions, but there are also still examples of poor behaviour, which restrict progress in some lessons. Not all students and parents are confident that the very occasional incidents of bullying or racism are effectively resolved. Despite the school's efforts, communications between the school and some parents do not run smoothly. Students enjoy expressing their views in lessons, but do not always value the personal, social and health education programme. They do value work experience and careers advice, but lower attaining students sometimes make limited progress in developing the basic literacy and numeracy skills essential to future success in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspection evidence confirms the school's judgment that teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall. The school's own monitoring, and that of the local authority, shows that teaching has improved over the last year but there is still some way to go to achieve the school's aim of making teaching good overall. There are, however, some effective measures in place to achieve this. The best lessons seen were characterised by careful planning to provide work which challenged all students and enabled them to make good progress. Teachers use a good range of methods to motivate students, including imaginative use of interactive whiteboards. They conduct lessons at a brisk pace and check learning at frequent intervals, summarising effectively at the end, and often consolidating with appropriate homework. The recently introduced use of setting in most lessons enables work to be broadly matched to the ability of the majority of students. However, in the very few unsuccessful lessons seen, teachers did not motivate and challenge all the students in the class. This led to students losing concentration and some unacceptable behaviour; although teachers tried to apply the school's behaviour management procedures, learning in these classes was disrupted. The quality of assessment varies between different subject departments, although some teachers are beginning to use National Curriculum levels and grade descriptors well to help students make progress. Most teachers mark work regularly, but do not always give comments to enable students to improve their work, or check that students have corrected errors and learnt from their mistakes. Teaching assistants give good support to students with learning difficulties and disabilities and are very effective in helping with classroom management.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has recently put in place a system of setting to enable the curriculum to meet the needs of all its students, but this is at an early stage of development and is not yet fully understood by all teachers and students. Younger students receive appropriate additional support where necessary, through special groupings for English, mathematics and science. There is a good range of vocational courses on offer in Years 10 and 11, and work-based learning motivates older students well. They value opportunities offered, for example, through leisure and tourism and the applied information and communication technology courses. Several subject departments have identified appropriate applied courses to offer alongside the traditional GCSE curriculum. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities such as visits to local and London theatres, an annual cross-curricular trip to Spain, a range of field trips and involvement in The Prince's Trust. Older students value good careers education and work experience which prepares them for life after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is rightly proud of its considerable investment in the care and welfare of all students, but particularly of the vulnerable members of the school. The school's use of a range of groupings and support strategies has given these students more security and confidence. For example, students with English as an additional language are well supported with specialist help and consequently make good progress. However, academic support for students is much less developed and does not yet match the quality of pastoral support. Marking is inconsistent in quality, and students – and their parents and carers – do not feel very engaged in the target-setting process. The process of identifying and tracking the progress of groups of students, and using this to promote higher achievement, is still in its infancy. The school makes good use of personnel such as the pastoral support assistants to improve attendance and contact with parents. There are also very good links with outside support agencies. These provide appropriate support for vulnerable students and this support is further reinforced by robust child protection procedures.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Following a period of significant change the new headteacher and her senior team give sound leadership and are implementing increasingly effective measures to raise students' achievement. They are supported by committed governors who have played an active role during the building and expansion of this new school and are now beginning to challenge effectively issues around students' learning and achievement. Senior leaders have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and self-evaluation is honest and realistic. The school has recognised the need to improve communications with parents and is implementing a range of strategies, such as a regular newsletter, parents' forum evenings and the appointment of a full-time community assistant. The school has rightly prioritised the improvement of teaching and learning, and improvements in the quality of teaching in many areas of the school are now beginning to show the successful impact of these measures. Teachers have responded positively to a range of support from the local authority and they develop professionally through contact with other expert teachers in local schools. Changing the ethos of the school, including tackling poor behaviour and attendance, has proved challenging but there is evidence of increasing success. The majority of subject leaders are well qualified and have benefited from leadership training. They are beginning to monitor systematically the work of their teams and seek better ways of tracking students' progress and setting clear targets for improvement, but this work is at an early stage of development. The school has identified weaknesses in the leadership of a small minority of subjects and has put appropriate measures in place to address them. A new line management structure for subject leaders is bringing about greater consistency of practice. A key planned area for future development will be developing an increased understanding of how to use data effectively to improve students'

performance. Following recruitment difficulties, the school is now fully staffed, and good measures have been implemented to recruit and retain appropriate staff, both teachers and those working in a support capacity.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. I should like to thank you for your warm welcome. You helped us, for example, in finding our way around the school and by giving us your views and answering our questions. We enjoyed visiting your school. Here are our main findings: Your school is improving rapidly, after a difficult time when it was hard to get teachers. Your headteacher, her senior team and governors have made sure that the school is fully staffed and are now concentrating on improving your learning. Your teachers are working hard with other school staff to make sure that you attend school regularly and that you learn well when you are there. You are well cared for and you contribute to this care by the jobs you do, such as senior students looking after younger ones and your work with students at Hazel Court. In many of the lessons we saw your behaviour was good, and everyone was making progress. In a very few lessons, some behaviour was poor and this limited everyone's learning. The majority of your parents are happy with the school, although some would like communications with the school to be improved. The school's curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is expanding to offer you a greater choice of subjects. We have asked your school to improve teaching further, to enable you all to do as well as you can, and to make regular checks to make sure this happens. There need to be improvements in your learning in some subject areas, particularly science. You – and your parents and carers – need to be more fully and regularly involved in reviewing your progress and planning how to improve. Most of you are rightly proud of your school, and we wish you well as you continue your learning, working hard and aiming high.