

8th January, 2010

Dear Parents / Carers,

You will recall that we had a scheduled Ofsted inspection on 3rd and 4th of December. Thank you for the many questionnaires that were returned. I was particularly pleased that more than 98% of you are, **'Happy with your child's experience in school'** – the inspectors described this as an unusually high figure. The report will be published on the Ofsted website next week but I am delighted to be able to send you a copy now.

I am thrilled to be able to confirm that the key overall judgement is a grade higher than previously (despite the new 'harder' inspection framework). The view of Ofsted is that,

"Cox Green School provides its students with a good education."

This is just one grade under the highest possible judgement. Highlights from the report include:

- **"Students' achievement is good."**
- Students telling inspectors that, **"The school had 'turned their lives around.'"**
- **"Behaviour seen ... was very good in class and around the site."**
- When describing lessons, **"Students' relationships with teaching staff are mostly excellent and an atmosphere of trust allows them to respond positively to the challenges set."**
- In praising the school's leadership, inspectors noted that, **"An appropriate focus on improving teaching"** with **"A firm foundation for further school improvement"**.
- The partnership with parents and other partners was praised for the way it supports, **"Students' well-being and learning."**
- The Sixth Form was praised for offering opportunities to many students and for improvement so that, **"Students are making good and better progress in their studies."**

Please read the full report; it is always good to share good news! Over the coming weeks and months the school will be implementing the ideas we discussed with inspectors to improve the school further. We are very ambitious for our school and we are excited to be building on such a strong report. Thank you for your continuing support.

Ian Hylan, Headteacher

Cox Green School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110067
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	337433
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Gale 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	829
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Louden
Headteacher	Mr I Hylan
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 February 2007
School address	Highfield Lane Maidenhead SL6 3AX
Telephone number	01628 629415
Fax number	01628 637383
Email address	coxgreen@rbwm.org

Age group	11–19
Inspection date(s)	3–4 December 2009
Inspection number	337433

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 28 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, risk assessments, policy documents, student questionnaires, staff questionnaires, students' books and 295 parental questionnaires.

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

- whether all groups of students in the school make good progress
- the impact of the school's care, guidance and support on Every Child Matters outcomes in the school for all groups of students, including the most vulnerable
- the capacity of the school leadership to bring about further improvement
- the work of the school's sixth form.

Information about the school

Cox Green School, a specialist performing arts and media college, is smaller than average. Students are of predominantly White British heritage. Very few students speak English as an additional language. Fewer than average have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is much lower than the national figure.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Cox Green School provides its students with a good education. Most parents are very supportive of the school, particularly the work of the specialist departments in adding an extra dimension to the education of their children. One parent, typical of many others, noted, 'We are particularly impressed with the performing arts departments and the range of activities and experience available through them.'

Students enter the school with slightly below-average attainment and make good progress in their time in the school to attain above-average standards. Progress is particularly strong in mathematics. There is no discernible difference in the progress of different groups of students. For example, vulnerable students, including those who are looked after or from Traveller backgrounds, are very well supported and integrated and make progress in line with their peers. Individuals from these backgrounds spoke during the inspection about how the school had 'turned their lives around'. Cox Green has an inclusive ethos and most students behave well and enjoy their time in school. However, the school admits that it has not been sufficiently proactive in promoting equalities and community cohesion through cultural education. A small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds reported unhappiness with inappropriate language occasionally directed at them by a few of their peers, but had not reported it to the school.

The school has worked hard and effectively to improve the quality of teaching. This has resulted in leaders and managers having an accurate grasp of the consistently good teaching going on in the curriculum and where it could be improved. They have correctly identified assessment as a relative weakness. Day-to-day assessment in the classroom through questioning is strong across the curriculum. However, teachers do not consistently use assessment data to plan for the different needs in the classroom and the impact of marking is better in some subjects than others. The curriculum is constantly evolving to best meet the needs of students, and is enriched by a wealth of extra-curricular activities, with good uptake. Changes to the curriculum, including increased vocational opportunities, have assisted improving outcomes for different groups of students.

Cox Green School offers a safe environment. Any reported bullying incidents are dealt with effectively and promptly. Behaviour seen during the inspection was very good in class and around the site but a minority of students, staff and parents expressed some concern about behaviour, particularly on the few occasions when supply teachers are employed. Students respond well to the school's good health

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promotion work.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development that is grounded in careful analysis of its work. They know, for example, that progress in the sixth form is inconsistent across the curriculum. Departmental development plans are integrated into the school plan. However, they lack a clear focus on the key objectives to achieve the school's aims and consistently sharp and measurable success criteria to evaluate whether they are being achieved. The governors have helped support the school's successful drive for improvement in teaching and learning, but recognise that they do not yet challenge the school robustly enough to shape the next stage in its development. The school's progress from requiring significant improvement to providing a good education over the last few years demonstrates good capacity to further improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students making outstanding progress in lessons by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently use assessment data to plan for the full range of learners in their classes
 - written feedback is consistently helpful to students, and that they act on the advice given.
- Improve the cultural education of students from all backgrounds so that racially inappropriate language is not used or accepted by any student.
- Develop a clear strategy to move the school from good to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels, including governors, develop a shared understanding of the key objectives in their areas of responsibility to realise this aim and plan sharply to achieve it
 - inconsistency in sixth form provision, and hence students' outcomes, is eradicated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' achievement is good. In a large majority of lessons observed by inspectors, students' respectful behaviour enhanced enjoyment of and engagement with learning. Students' relationships with teaching staff are mostly excellent and an atmosphere of trust allows them to respond positively to challenges set. Effective specialist support ensures that students with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall. Attainment has been near the national average but improved significantly in 2009, and the standards seen in lessons and in students' books confirmed that it is now above average. Any potential underachievement is identified quickly tackled by careful tracking and intervention and, over time, changes to the curriculum.

Attendance and punctuality have been a focus for the school and have both

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improved. Attendance is now slightly above the national average. Students gain good skills for their life beyond the school as a result of above-average standards, very good careers guidance and developing work-related programmes. This resulted in all Year 11 students going on to further education, training or employment last year. Students adopt safe ways of working in practical subjects and almost all parents consider that the school keeps their child safe.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities gives all students significant opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. Many students, particularly through music and the performing arts, accept these. Activities such as charity fundraising and singing carols for senior citizens also foster their spiritual, social and moral awareness.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of most lessons is good. There are examples of satisfactory and outstanding teaching. Common features of most lessons are good subject knowledge to convey high expectations and plan suitably challenging activities. Relationships are usually excellent and therefore most students rise to these expectations. Teachers structure their lessons well and generally maintain a good pace. They ask questions that make students think hard, check their progress and ensure consistent engagement in lessons. In outstanding lessons teachers carefully plan for the range of abilities in their class so that students' learning is accelerated. However, students say that they often work on the same task regardless of ability. Assessment is not

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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currently used well enough to plan demanding work for everyone. Marking, although of variable quality, is consistently completed but often students are not required to act on suggestions for improvement and therefore the impact on learning is lost.

The broad Key Stage 4 curriculum meets students’ needs well. It offers a wide choice of academic subjects and an increasing and flexible vocational programme based on individual need. Partnerships with other institutions enhance the offer available. The school is working hard to personalise learning. Accelerated routes are available for higher attainers, including early GCSEs and A levels in the main school. The Key Stage 3 curriculum focuses on developing learning skills in Year 7 before following a more traditional path of subject-based learning. The school has identified cross-curricular literacy as an area for improvement and this focus is beginning to permeate teaching. Enrichment opportunities are varied and much enjoyed by students. Parents report that school productions are of a very high quality, for example.

A group of vulnerable students, including students who are looked after or from Traveller backgrounds, spoke highly of the good relationships they enjoy with their teachers and the caring ethos within the school. Students say that staff ensure there are opportunities for them to catch up when they fall behind or miss work. A multi-agency approach to supporting identified students is well planned and effective. Carefully planned transitions are appreciated by students and their parents, and are supported by effective liaison with partner schools. Most students feel they have the right information and time for reflection when choosing options in Key Stage 4 or going on to further education or training.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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?

There is a clear drive from the headteacher and leadership team to improve all aspects of the school. An appropriate focus on improving teaching has established consistently good learning and a firm foundation for further school improvement. Increasingly challenging targets have been introduced in the last few years and the fact that the school is now meeting and in some cases exceeding them has led to staff morale being high. Not all aspects of the school’s work have developed as rapidly but through effective self-evaluation systems the senior team is well aware of what it needs to improve. School and departmental development planning follows a consistent format but lacks sharp success criteria to facilitate easy monitoring. Middle

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leaders say this is mitigated by their link meetings with line managers but these are not available to all.

A new policy is in place for safeguarding and checks on staff are robust. However, although scheduled in the near future, governors had not ensured that all staff had received child protection training at the time of the inspection. The school has developed its provision to improve community cohesion after careful analysis of its context. However, the experience of a few minority ethnic students demonstrates that the impact of this work is yet to be fully embedded for the whole-school community. The school works very closely with parents and other partners to support its students' well-being and learning. The effectiveness of this work can be seen in the positive feedback from parental questionnaires and improving outcomes.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	2

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with below-average attainment and make satisfactory progress to achieve standards that are generally below national averages. Academic outcomes have fluctuated in recent years, with a decline in 2008 and improvement seen in the 2009 results. Open access into the sixth form for the 2008 year group combined with largely level 3 provision meant that a number of students were on inappropriate courses that they either failed to finish or did not achieve at. The school has tightened its guidance procedures and introduced a range of more appropriate applied learning courses. Choice is enhanced by federated provision across schools in Maidenhead. Improvements in teaching and learning in line with those seen in the main school mean that some students are making good and better progress in their studies. However, a small number of quality assurance problems across the federation mean that this is not universally the case, and there is

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considerable variation between subjects. Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. A personal approach means that students value relationships, feel supported and have a sense of belonging. Systems are in place to improve provision and these are beginning to bear fruit. However, they are yet to have a significant impact on outcomes.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
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

The parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire show high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. The small numbers of parental criticisms were offered constructively, and where inspectors agree that these concerns are indeed issues they are included in the main body of the report. Parents responded particularly strongly to the questions regarding the safety their children, the effectiveness of the school leadership and their happiness with their child's overall experience of school. Positive comments were numerous about the school's strength in performance arts and the benefit to students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cox Green 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 295 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 829 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	130	44	151	51	8	3	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	138	47	149	51	4	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	150	51	133	45	10	3	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	143	49	124	42	22	8	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	135	46	150	51	5	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	112	38	168	57	11	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	74	25	192	65	20	7	0	0
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)	103	35	175	59	3	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	118	40	158	54	13	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	100	34	164	56	15	5	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	84	29	178	60	20	7	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	129	44	155	53	5	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	156	53	133	45	5	2	1	0

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 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 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>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 pupils' 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.



7 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Cox Green School, Maidenhead SL6 3AX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and meeting with you. We were particularly impressed by the pride you take in your school.

These are the main points we liked about your school.

- Cox Green School provides you with a good educational experience.
- We agree with the headteacher and senior team that most lessons are good and this is helping you make good progress and increasingly gain good qualifications.
- The school provides you with a good and improving curriculum and opportunities to experience a diverse range of extra-curricular activities.
- The care, guidance and support you receive are good and help most of you develop as well-rounded people who behave well and value the relationships with teachers and each other.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders know the school well.

The inspection team and the headteacher agree that although your school is good it could be even better and we have asked the school's leaders to ensure that:

- teachers consistently use the data they have on you to plan for different abilities in your lessons, and consistently provide quality marking and ensure you act on it
- develop your cultural and social understanding so that everybody understands what is and is not acceptable to say to each other
- leaders at all levels develop a clear understanding of how to move the school from good to outstanding and develop sharply targeted plans to achieve this goal, including plans for improving progress in the sixth form.

You can do your part to help by ensuring that you always behave well in lessons, respect your fellow students and work hard. The team joins me in sending you best wishes for your studies and we hope that you all do very well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

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