

Copland - A Specialist Science Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101558
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	323475
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Whittaker

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1865
Sixth form	645
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr I P Patel MBE
Headteacher	Mr P O'Hear (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2006
School address	Cecil Avenue Wembley HA9 7DX
Telephone number	020 8902 6362
Fax number	020 8903 1943

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The college is a very large community college serving a socially and culturally diverse inner-city area. The majority of students are from minority ethnic groups including Indian and Black African. A very large proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. Due to the current absence of the headteacher, the college is being run by an acting headteacher who had been in post for a few days at the time of the inspection. The school achieved specialist science status in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to procedures for safeguarding students as these do not currently meet government requirements.

Inspectors drew the school's attention to its failure to meet fully the current government requirements with regard to safeguarding. Action to tackle this weakness is an urgent priority. The school has also not reviewed and improved the balance and use of resources in order to lift the quality of the learning environment. In spite of these shortcomings, students and staff work enthusiastically to ensure students reach above-average standards and develop into mature, well-rounded young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their education and life. Central to this are the strong sense of community and the good relationships among staff and students that contribute to students' good achievement and enjoyment. Students involve themselves enthusiastically in the life of the school and this results in them taking a pride in their school and being keen to do well. One parent, typical of many, said, 'I am pleased my son is making good progress. This is because of the commitment of the teachers at Copland.'

Throughout their time at the school students make good progress and the results in public examinations at the end of Year 11 are above national averages. Consistently good teaching and the students' positive attitudes are significant factors that contribute to good achievement given their generally below-average levels on entry to the school. Standards are rising because the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Lessons contain interesting and challenging activities to which students respond well. However, in some lessons learning is too dependent on the teacher and does not allow students enough opportunity to reflect on what they are learning.

The curriculum is good. Students are able to choose from a wide range of GCSE and vocational courses. The range of courses available means that students are motivated to succeed. A range of effective strategies to address the low levels of literacy of some students on entry to the school has been introduced. The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. The school has used its science college status successfully to drive up levels of attainment. Curriculum provision has been broadened and has increased the number of students choosing science courses. Students are actively involved in helping primary school pupils to increase their interest in science.

Students feel well cared for and treated as individuals. Teachers know them well and a wide range of support systems is in place. Students particularly appreciate being able to take responsibility, especially when organising activities for younger students.

The senior leadership team has an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has secured satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. In spite of some shortcomings in leadership and management, and in view of the rising trend in standards, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Systems for checking the quality of lessons exist but they are not yet robust enough to ensure that all students are challenged sufficiently to achieve as well as they can, especially the more-able students. The college enjoys a good reputation in the local community and parents are supportive of the school. However, some of them are concerned about the poor state of the school buildings and the lack of resources in

certain areas. The governing body does not have adequate systems in place to keep under review many aspects of the school's work, particularly those related to students' welfare.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The very large sixth form welcomes students with all levels of prior attainment. Over two thirds of the school's Year 11 students move into Year 12 and they are joined by large numbers who come from other schools or abroad. The school meets the differing needs well by offering a range of pathways at various levels. Standards overall are average and, given the very varied starting points, this represents good progress at all levels. Progress quickens as students move through the sixth form. Outcomes in both academic and applied courses are better at A-level than AS level. The school is rightly proud that it enables students with little prior knowledge of English to gain access to further study and large numbers to progress to university. Students speak highly of the care taken by teachers and sixth-form leaders and managers. They feel very well looked after and know their teachers have high expectations of them. Leaders know the students well. They compile good records of progress and involve students and parents beneficially in highlighting the link between achievement and attendance. The records, however, are not detailed enough to show whether students are progressing as rapidly as they should or whether the sixth form is improving from year to year. As in the main school, current requirements in relation to safeguarding students are not met. The poor state of the school buildings and the lack of resources in certain areas are a barrier to learning, but the excellent relationships with staff and good teaching usually enable students to overcome this and learn well.

What the school should do to improve further

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements in relation to the safeguarding of students.
- Strengthen the governance of the school so there is more systematic monitoring of all aspects of the school's work, particularly those relating to students' welfare and the quality of learning in lessons.
- Review and improve the balance and use of resources to improve the learning environment.
- Enhance achievement further by improving the quality of learning and raising the level of challenge for all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment is below average overall when they join the school. Students make satisfactory or better progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly in their literacy skills, as a result of good intervention and support provided. Their progress accelerates in Years 10 and 11 resulting in above-average standards.

Standards are rising, as seen in the increased proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics; this was significantly below average in 2006 and above average in 2008. Girls outperform boys in most subjects but boys do as well as their peers nationally. Indian students attain the highest standards. Although Black African students attain least well, their standards are above those for Black African students nationally. The school adopts a range of strategies to enable all students to do well. This includes comprehensive monitoring and regular target-setting, which has had a beneficial effect in motivating and

raising standards for Black Caribbean and Somalian students in the last year. The majority of students make very good progress in the basic skills of English and mathematics, as well as in science and in information and communication technology.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy school and behave well because of the caring ethos of the school. They speak highly of their teachers and their lessons, and many state that their lessons 'are fun'. Students' adoption of healthy lifestyles is good as they participate in a wide range of sports and physical activities such as netball, football, boxing and dance. They have a good understanding of healthy eating and many choose healthy options at lunchtimes. Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good. Students know about the wide range of cultures represented in the school through personal, social and health education and religious education lessons. Students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds get on harmoniously together. They say they feel safe in school and that they would be happy to speak to their form tutor if they had any concerns. Incidents of bullying and exclusions are low.

Attendance is satisfactory. It is monitored by senior staff and various strategies are in place to improve it, such as sending text messages to parents to alert them of a student's absence and providing reward trips for those students who have good attendance. Students' contribution to the community is good. Older students help organise activities for younger students at break and lunchtimes. Older students mentor new arrivals to the school and participate in fund-raising activities, as well as organising whole school events such as the recent successful 'X Factor' competition. Preparation for students' economic well-being is good, as demonstrated by their good basic skills and the development of leadership and enterprise skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning contribute well to students' enjoyment and achievement. Students are eager learners, helped by the warm relationships between them and teachers. Many teachers have excellent subject knowledge and deliver their lessons with energy and enthusiasm. Typically they plan and structure their lessons well, and use a variety of teaching methods that engage and motivate students. Lessons begin well, with teachers making learning objectives clear and referring to them throughout. The pace of learning is brisk and purposeful, with good questioning, clear explanations and tasks planned to progress students' learning. The effective use of praise and humour puts students at ease, encouraging them to contribute to discussions and express their views. Where learning is less successful, teachers tend to dominate lessons by talking too much, and not allowing students enough opportunities to reflect on what they are learning. The best lessons challenge students of all abilities, but this approach is not widespread enough to meet the needs of all, especially more able students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides well for the range of students' abilities. For example, talented students in mathematics enter the GCSE examination in Year 10, and proceed to AS-level work in Year 11. The low levels of literacy of some students on entry to the school are addressed through a

good range of strategies across the curriculum. Students are well supported to gain essential qualifications in literacy and numeracy. A range of twilight and Saturday classes allow students to gain qualifications in their own or other languages. Booster lessons after school and during holidays give students the chance to catch up on their learning. Alternative arrangements for students at risk of disaffection or exclusion provide them with opportunities to take courses in conjunction with work-based learning.

In Years 10 and 11, the vocational provision is developing well to complement the range of academic courses on offer. Additional courses now include child development and construction. While students are generally happy with the information given to them to make their selection of GCSE courses, a few correctly express dissatisfaction with some restrictions in the combination of subjects available to them.

There is high participation in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs available at lunchtime and after school. Students particularly appreciate the annual 'enrichment week' which provides them with opportunities to try out new experiences both at school and further afield.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support are inadequate because the school does not meet current government requirements for safeguarding students. There are nevertheless some clear strengths in the pastoral and academic support systems within school because staff work hard to meet the individual needs of students. For example, students with specific needs have detailed learning plans identifying the support required with a regular review of their targets, and this helps them to achieve well. Students who are at the early stages of learning English are clearly identified and specific courses are successfully delivered. Well developed transition arrangements, such as the summer school which is run for Year 6 students, ensure they have a comfortable start to their secondary education. The school also runs a highly successful Saturday School for those students who require additional support. The school has developed strong links with external agencies such as social services, educational psychologists and speech and language therapists to meet the needs of students. Weekly inter-agency meetings take place to ensure students receive the help they need, including help from outside professionals.

Academic guidance is good. Students' progress is tracked systematically and the information is used well to set individual targets. Students are clear about their targets and what they need to do next to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The leadership and management of the school are inadequate primarily because governors have not ensured that the school has procedures for safeguarding learners which meet government requirements. Moreover, governors have not managed the resources effectively in order to create an exciting and welcoming learning environment for students. The governing body does not set out measurable success criteria for the work of the school and this means that it is in a weak position to evaluate the impact of the school's work over time.

The leadership team does, however, set a clear direction so that staff successfully focus their efforts on raising standards. There have been improvements since the last inspection in both

raising standards and ensuring that students are more actively engaged in their learning. The leadership team uses every opportunity to instil high expectations for success among students. The value for money provided by the school is satisfactory in view of students' impressive achievements in spite of the poor state of the building.

Monitoring of lessons takes place regularly but does not focus sharply enough on students' learning in order to enable all students to achieve as well as they can, especially more able students.

This is an inclusive school and a variety of well established systems exist to support all students. In the last year a strategic approach has been adopted so that the school contributes well to promoting community cohesion. The school's science specialism is well led and is having a positive impact on students' learning.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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?	4	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

23 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Copland - A Specialist Science Community College, Wembley, HA9 7DX

Following our visit to Copland, we would like to share our findings with you. We thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for the helpful way you talked to us about your school and your work.

The school is a happy and friendly community where everyone is valued equally. Your teachers are very committed to helping you and they give you good support. You have good awareness of how to be safe around the school. Staff are working hard to give you even more opportunities to learn as well as you can.

Teaching and learning are good so that you achieve well, both in the main school and in the sixth form. You clearly enjoy school and the many good opportunities it provides in lessons and in the after school activities. Standards in examinations are above the national average and you make good progress.

Although the school has some strengths, it has been given a notice to improve because it does not meet all the current government requirements in relation to safeguarding. Governors, headteacher and staff must, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements. We have asked them to review the use of resources so as to improve your learning environment. We have also asked them to raise further the quality of lessons so that you achieve even better, and to strengthen the way in which they keep the school's work under review.

We wish you all the very best for your futures and hope that you continue to make the most of your time at Copland.

Yours faithfully

Roger Whittaker

Lead Inspector