

Combe Pafford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113640
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	311320
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	8–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Griffiths
Headteacher	Mike Lock
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Steps Lane Watcombe Torquay TQ2 8NL
Telephone number	01803 327902
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Combe Pafford is a large special school that caters for pupils with a very wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All of the pupils have moderate learning difficulties and a minority have additional physical, medical or other complex needs. A significant number of pupils have autism. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. There are far more boys than girls on roll. The overwhelming majority of pupils have a White British heritage and all the pupils speak English as their first language. A small number of pupils are in public care. In June 2007, the school was granted specialist school status for business and enterprise.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Combe Pafford is a good, successful school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. Parents show overwhelming support for the school, and comments such as 'I never thought my child would do as well as he has done' are common. The links with parents and other partners with which the school has contact are an exceptional feature of its work. Although the school received specialist status only recently, it has made an excellent start in developing this role. During their time at school, the pupils grow into self-assured, mature and socially aware young people. They make good academic progress and this owes much to their excellent behaviour, good attendance, and extremely positive attitudes to learning. The pupils achieve well during their time in the school because high quality teaching and an outstanding curriculum give the pupils a range of activities that enables them to thrive. Lessons have very many positive features although occasionally planning focuses too much on the activities that teachers are going to do rather than on what the pupils are expected to learn. A comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, an exceptionally broad and wellplanned work-related learning programme and detailed careers guidance prepare the pupils extremely well for leaving school. The school provides an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. Systems for pastoral guidance and support are very well established, including close liaison with other agencies to ensure that the particular needs of all groups of pupils, such as those in public care, are very well met. There are good procedures for giving the pupils academic support and guidance so that they can improve the standard of their work, but not all elements are yet in place. For instance, the pupils know their short-term literacy and numeracy targets but the school does not provide them with long-term challenging subject targets based on National Curriculum levels. As a result, they are not as involved in their learning as they could be. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides inspiring leadership. His vision, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills have been the driving forces behind the improvements that the school has made since the previous inspection. He is well supported by other members of the management team, although a number of these staff have only been in these management posts for a relatively short period of time and so their contributions and the impact of their work are not yet fully evident. The school has a planned cycle of self-review that is very efficient in gathering data about many aspects of its work. The collected information is examined and senior staff use the outcomes to guide the direction of change. However, the procedures for scrutinising the information are not as rigorous or analytical as they could be and this reduces their impact. This is reflected in the fact that the school's evaluation of itself in some areas of its work was more generous than the inspection team's judgement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Interrogate more robustly the data that is collected during self-review procedures in order to set increasingly challenging targets to raise standards.
- Ensure that teachers' lesson planning focuses more sharply on what pupils are expected to learn.
- Set long-term academic targets for all pupils and share them with the pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are significantly below those expected of pupils of similar age because of the nature of the pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils, irrespective of the nature of

their learning difficulty and/or disability and including those who are looked after children, achieve well. The school's decision to teach pupils with autism in their own classes is proven to be well founded. They make good progress. They have the dual benefits of specialist staff expertise and learning resources in their base classrooms for most lessons, and the opportunities to work alongside their peers in others. Following the successful implementation of setting in English, mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11, the school has recently introduced this arrangement into Years 7 and 8. The early signs are that this is beginning to have an impact on accelerating the rate of progress that the pupils make. The school offers vocational options in areas such as horticulture, hospitality and catering, construction and hairdressing but most of these are newly established and so pupils in Years 10 and 11 have yet to be accredited in them. The pupils' results in those courses that have been running longer, such as motor vehicle maintenance, and in GCSE and Entry Level examinations are good. An increasing number of pupils are successful in an expanding range of subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has the full support of its pupils. They recognise what the school does for them and they love being there, making comments like 'I can't wait for the school holidays to finish'. The pupils are impressive young people. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a very strong moral sense and are respectful towards adults and classmates, frequently supporting each other, such as willingly helping to push wheelchairs. The pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and a very strong appreciation of how they can remain safe. They know about the dangers of drugs and smoking and they participate enthusiastically in many sporting activities, with many even taking part in the Ten Tors Challenge. They feel very safe and secure in school and confirm that there is always someone to talk to if they have a worry. Particularly impressive, is the way that the pupils begin to assess risk in their own lives, such as on work experience or on visits off site. The pupils make a good contribution to the school and local communities although the school has recognised that this is an area for development. They are extremely well prepared for their future economic well-being, be it through continuing their education or by embarking on a training course.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The pupils are taught well consistently, and in some cases learning is outstanding. All lessons are characterised by excellent relationships, a good use of praise and very high levels of support from teachers and teaching assistants. Staff manage their classrooms and their pupils very efficiently. They have an acute understanding of the nature of the pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities and are knowledgeable in the subjects that they teach. Lessons provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their personal skills too, such as the ability to work independently or with others. The pupils' very positive approach to lessons makes an important contribution to their good rate of progress. The quality of lesson planning is inconsistent and this occasionally reduces the impact of teaching and the pace of learning. Most teachers' planning is based very closely on what the pupils have previously learned. These plans identify very precisely what individual pupils or groups are expected to learn and the different activities that will promote these next steps in learning. However, in a few cases planning is less effective,

especially when it is written some time in advance, as part of a module of work, and is not then modified and sharpened up in response to the progress that different pupils are making. These plans tend to focus on what teachers are going to do in the lesson rather than on the new skills, knowledge and understanding that the pupils are expected to acquire.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is extremely well matched to the ages of the pupils and to the range of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For instance, pupils with autism receive a curriculum that is carefully structured and delivered in ways that engage and interest them. Overall, the school skilfully combines the promotion of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) with personal development through the PSHE curriculum. Individual learning programmes for pupils in Years 10 and 11 enable them to benefit from components of work-related learning, and they each follow a curriculum that is tailored to their needs and capabilities through the availability of options. All of the options lead to a wide range of accredited qualifications. The early indications are that the school is moving forward rapidly with its specialist school action plan in the way that it delivers its curriculum around the three key elements of business and enterprise, mathematics and ICT. For instance, the link with Brunel Manor Conference Centre, its community partner, has provided an opportunity for it to extend its vocational options. The school uses colleges, the local community and residential visits to provide very many opportunities for the pupils to extend and enrich their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The staff are committed to the welfare of every pupil. Those pupils with learning disabilities are treated with dignity and their medical and toileting needs are managed respectfully. The pupils work in a very caring community in which all the necessary safeguarding procedures are securely embedded. The pupils' many and varied needs are met very well through the input of colleagues such as therapists and a counsellor. The pupils receive a very high level of pastoral care. They are encouraged to manage their own behaviour, to take responsibility for their own actions and to develop the communication and social skills that will prepare them for leaving school. The pupils receive very good careers support and guidance and their destinations on leaving school show that they have an excellent understanding of the options that are open to them. The pupils receive good academic support and guidance. Teachers are very adept at using question and answer sessions particularly well to promote pupils' learning and to check understanding. The pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers are becoming increasingly effective in doing this in ways that engage the pupils, by explaining how they can make their work even better. However, the pupils are not so well involved in their own learning in other ways, such as knowing their longer-term targets for learning and being motivated to achieve them by being kept informed as to how well they are doing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. The key issues arising from that inspection have been addressed very well. In addition, the school has also embarked up on a number of new initiatives. Having gained specialist status, it has already

forged very strong links with its community and school partners. It has also established two types of outreach service, both of which are proving very effective. For the last two years, the teacher in charge of autism has operated an outreach service for supporting pupils with autism in local schools. The school employs its own instructors for motor vehicle and construction courses and they may be contracted out to run courses for local secondary mainstream and special schools and pupil referral units. The school is constantly striving to improve and it has a good understanding of where it wants to be. The headteacher has set a clear direction and the staff give him their full support, as does an effective governing body. However the school's systems for analysing the progress pupils make is not rigorous enough and it is not able to show that they have achieved as well as they might be capable of doing. The pupils' achievements are assessed and recorded regularly but the extent of their progress is not evaluated fully. This is because the school does not set long-term challenging learning targets for all pupils and so there is no indication of the pupils' rate of progress towards a long-term goal. Managers do not interrogate assessment data in a way that raises questions and encourages anomalies to be explored. For instance, they do not create their own statistics to see how well the pupils are actually doing compared with the school's overall expectation of the progress that its pupils should make. The school has a strong capacity to improve and it is well placed to bring about the necessary changes.

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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
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

- 11 October 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Combe Pafford School, Torquay, TQ2 8NL Thank you very much for being so kind and welcoming when we visited your school and a special thank you to those who gave up their time to meet with us. We really enjoyed the time that we spent in Combe Pafford. You told us that you really liked your school and enjoyed going there. You thought that it was a good school and that it helped you to learn a lot. We agree with you. Your school does some things really well. It does an excellent job in helping you to grow up as mature young people and to get ready for leaving school. You know a great deal about being healthy and staying safe and you are able to help out in school in many ways. You do a great deal to help yourselves as well by going to school as often as you can. The way that you behave and get involved is especially good. You make good progress in your school work. Lessons are good and you learn a lot. Teachers give you many interesting things to do in lessons and at other times as well, such as lunchtime clubs and the chance to go on visits and stay away from home. The staff take a lot of care of you and look after you extremely well. The senior staff are doing a good job in running the school. They want to make things even better and they have some ideas for doing this. We have given them three more.
- Check that every one of you is doing as well as you possibly can.
- Plan lessons differently so that you can learn even more.
- Set you learning goals that you can work towards and tell you what these are. You can help to bring about these changes by continuing to attend and behave so well and by getting involved in setting your targets. Thank you once again and we wish each of you the best of luck in the future. Mike Kell Lead inspector



11 October 2007

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Mike Kell
Lead inspector