

The Vyne Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116440
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	357967
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	710
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Crook
Headteacher	Peter Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 34 lessons taught by 32 teachers and held meetings with staff, governors and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including those relating to students' attainment and progress, their safeguarding and welfare and to development and curriculum planning. Inspectors scrutinised the outcomes of questionnaires completed by staff, students and 121 parents and carers.

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

- students' attainment and achievement, especially in English, mathematics and science, and of groups of students including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the behaviour, safety and attendance of students and the impact of strategies to improve these
- the quality of teaching and the impact of steps taken to improve it
- the quality and impact of monitoring and evaluation including the integration and remit of senior staff new in post.

Information about the school

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Over the last three years, the attainment of students in GCSE and other assessments at the end of Year 11, especially in English, mathematics and science, has been low. Provisional indications are that there is no significant improvement in the attainment of those leaving in the summer of 2010. Some students make good progress in their work. These include the more able students, especially girls, and those with statements of special educational needs, including those who benefit from the specialist provision for speech and language difficulties. More generally, students of average and lower attainment achieve less well, and their progress is inadequate, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

There are two main reasons for students making slow progress. First, the quality of teaching is variable. Some is good, as seen by inspectors in history, geography, the arts and physical education. In these subjects, students make better progress and attain higher standards than in other subjects. Second, the work does not always match students' needs and interests, teachers talk for too long and, as a result, behaviour deteriorates. The school has addressed identified weaknesses in students' reading, speaking and listening, but has paid too little attention to developing their writing skills. For example, in some subjects written work is not monitored by teachers and as a result, the quality is poor. While some aspects of students' preparation for adult life are good, such as the development of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, weaknesses in writing mean that this aspect of their achievement is inadequate overall.

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Attendance has improved markedly over the last year and the number of persistent absentees has reduced. Students feel safe in school and have a satisfactory understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. A majority take up the wide-ranging opportunities offered to contribute to the community, for example through mentoring younger students or by taking part in performing arts productions. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection, although students' generally good behaviour around the school and in most lessons is spoiled by the disruption in a few lessons. A small minority of parents, carers and staff expressed concern about the way poor behaviour is managed by senior leaders, but inspectors found no direct evidence to support this view.

School leaders and managers have successfully put in place a number of strategies to tackle weaknesses in relation to behaviour and attendance identified at the last inspection.

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A wider range of subjects that motivate and interest students has been introduced into the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. For example, a diploma in creative and media arts is open to students from other schools. The school's specialism is integral to curriculum development but the strengths in teaching in performing arts are not used sufficiently to model good teaching strategies widely across the school. Since the last inspection, the school has made less progress in tackling the other key areas for development. While steps have been taken to improve teaching across the school, these have yet to have a full impact on accelerating all students' learning. For example, while the school has a better understanding of students' progress, this information is not used consistently to plan lessons that meet their individual needs or to show them how to improve their work. The governing body meets all statutory responsibilities and monitors and supports the school's work, but there is little sense of urgency or clear longer term vision for its future development. Leaders' and managers' own evaluation of the school's effectiveness is not precise in some areas, for example in identifying and tackling weaknesses in writing. Overall, leaders and managers have not demonstrated the capacity to make the necessary improvements with sufficient speed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise students' attainment, accelerate their progress by:
 - ensuring that weaknesses in their writing skills are identified and tackled effectively
 - monitoring students' written work and giving them precise strategies for improving it.
- Raise the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - lessons are planned to meet students' individual needs, based on assessment of their abilities and need
 - students are offered a variety of activities that enhance their motivation and interests in all subjects
 - effective teaching strategies, apparent in some subjects, are used widely across the school.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - improving the accuracy of evaluation and planning
 - setting a clear long term vision for the future of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Students start at the school with levels of attainment in national tests taken at the end of Year 6 that are below average, and tests, set by the school early in Year 7 confirm this. Since 2007, students' attainment at the end of Year 11 has been well below average and declining relative to the national picture. Preliminary results for 2010 suggest this pattern has not changed. There is significant variation in the progress of different groups and in subjects across the curriculum. For example, attainment in art, drama, modern foreign languages and geography is consistently higher than in other subjects. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work showed that those of average and below average

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attainment make slow progress because of weaknesses in their writing skills particularly in mathematics and science. The school is setting more demanding targets than in the past, although these are not yet being met. While the students benefiting from the enhanced provision for speech and language difficulties, and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, make at least satisfactory progress, some students with moderate learning or behavioural difficulties do not.

Students, teachers and parents say that the school is a safe place to learn. However, a small number of students whose circumstances have made them potentially vulnerable feel less safe. Students and teachers alike recognise that behaviour, while satisfactory, is an area for improvement. The school has recently achieved healthy schools status and made a number of changes to promote healthy living, including healthier food options and the promotion of cycling as a method to travel to school. However, the majority of students still do not believe that the school helps them to be healthy and do not make healthy lifestyle choices. Participation rates in physical education lessons and sports activities, which are of outstandingly high quality, are high.

Students make a positive contribution to their school and community. They are trained as peer mentors to support other students and take part in a range of fund-raising activities for local and national charities. Levels of attainment in English and mathematics remain low and as a result, they are not adequately prepared for the world of work.

Spiritual, moral and social development is strengthened by the school's performing arts status which enables students to work well with each other and develop self-confidence and self-esteem. Students have a satisfactory understanding of other cultures and respect differences.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are variable in quality and inadequate overall. In the best lessons, there is a range of interesting activities that excite and motivate students. Teachers use questioning skills well and students give extended, articulate answers whilst their classmates listen with interest. These features are particularly evident in some history and geography lessons. In such lessons, assessment is used well to identify the next steps in students' learning. Teaching assistants, especially those attached to the speech and language resource base, are effective in supporting the learning of the students they help. Where teaching is inadequate, teachers talk for too long and tasks do not gain students' interest. Work is not planned to extend students' learning and assessment lacks detail, failing to identify how the work might be improved, especially through higher quality writing. In the satisfactory lessons, while the work set is appropriate, the pace is not maintained and students engage in idle conversation when it is complete. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of their own subjects, but their understanding of how the subject might be used to develop students' basic skills is less well developed.

The satisfactory curriculum has some notable strengths. Students say they value the good level of choice they are offered in Years 10 and 11 and the guidance they receive for their future education and careers. Information and communication technology skills are developed and applied well and the performing arts specialism is used effectively, for instance in developing speaking and listening skills in younger students. There is a good

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range of additional activities offered in sport and the performing arts and through the combined cadet force. Some progress has been made in identifying and rectifying weaknesses in reading, through small group and individual tuition, but this has yet to be extended to other areas such as writing and numeracy.

The quality of care, guidance and support that students receive is improving. More students now attend school most of the time due to the appointment of an internal education welfare officer who manages attendance effectively. This focus on identifying and supporting individual students has begun to reduce the numbers that are persistently absent although too many pupils still miss too much school.

Strategies to improve behaviour are beginning to have a direct impact on students' taking responsibility for their actions. For example, a code of conduct developed by staff and students and the use of counsellors provide good quality support for students with behavioural difficulties. The school has good links with external agencies, including a speech therapist. The after-school care provided for younger children, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is of good quality and meets all requirements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The recruitment and retention of effective subject leaders and teachers in some subjects have proved a long-term challenge for the school. New senior leaders have recently been appointed and thought has been given to developing their roles and responsibilities. There is some evidence that their work is having a positive impact, for example, attendance has improved, but there has not been sufficient time since their appointment for these changes to have a full impact on students' attainment and achievement. Clear vision and direction, which would enable the school to improve, have yet to be incorporated in school improvement planning. This is because on-going daily challenges, such as ensuring that all classes are taught by suitably well-qualified staff, have limited senior leaders' and managers' opportunities to tackle much needed developments. As a result, a small minority of staff lack confidence. This, combined with the school's track record of low attainment, means that the management of teaching and learning is inadequate. Additionally, effective strategies such as the appointment of teachers known to have particular strengths have yet to have an impact on improving the overall quality of teaching. These factors combine to show that the school's capacity for further improvement is inadequate.

Governors are committed to the school and work hard on its behalf. They understand their duty to monitor and to challenge senior leaders, but do not fully appreciate that the rate

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of improvement in teaching and in students' achievement has been too slow. Requirements to keep students safe are satisfactory. The necessary checks are carried out on adults, and the building is well maintained. Equality of opportunity is promoted in a satisfactory manner and there is little evidence of discrimination. There are strong partnerships with other local schools and the school makes a positive contribution to community cohesion. However, these stronger features have yet to have a notable impact on students' attainment and achievement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are generally positive about the school. A large majority say their children enjoy school and, as inspectors found, are safe there. Parents of children receiving extra support for speech and language difficulties are rightly satisfied with the quality of education their children are receiving. A few parents and carers have concerns in a number of areas, including support for their children's learning, the way unacceptable behaviour is dealt with, and the quality of teaching and leadership. Inspectors found evidence to support these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Vyne Community 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 121 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 710 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	26	77	64	11	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	22	85	70	5	4	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	15	76	63	12	10	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	17	66	55	19	16	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	9	7	81	67	14	12	7	6
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	9	71	59	22	18	6	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	7	71	59	22	18	7	6
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)	22	18	74	61	9	7	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	15	75	62	17	14	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	11	64	53	14	12	12	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	7	72	60	16	13	9	7
The school is led and managed effectively	10	8	76	63	14	12	8	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	17	78	64	12	10	5	4

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. 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.

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.



19 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Vyne Community School, Basingstoke RG21 5PB

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school recently, especially those of you who gave up your time to speak to us.

We found that your school needs some extra help to improve. Some of you are making good progress and are on track to achieve good GCSE results and other qualifications at the end of Year 11 but too many of you are not making enough progress. An important reason for this is, as you yourselves told us, that the quality of teaching is too variable. In some subjects, it is good and you enjoy the lessons and make good progress, but in others the work does not always interest you and you are not engaged in learning. You generally behave well, but in a few lessons that are not stimulating, some students misbehave and stop the rest of you working. Too many of you are not given enough help to improve your writing and this slows your progress in a number of subjects.

There are some things about the school that are better. For example, there are interesting courses to choose from in Years 10 and 11. There are also many activities available to you in areas like sport and the performing arts. Your attendance improved a lot last year and fewer of you are staying away from school when you are well enough to come. Well done to those involved in this improvement. Those of you who get extra help for your speech and language difficulties do well.

We have asked the school to make sure that you all make good progress in every subject by helping you to improve your writing. We have also asked that teaching and learning be improved. Additionally, we have requested that the leaders and governors improve all areas of the school's work more quickly. Other inspectors will be checking whether this is happening. Those students who misbehave can help by always cooperating well in class. You can all ask for help when you get stuck and politely talk to staff about any problems with your learning.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler

Lead inspector

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