

Fort Hill Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116444
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	357969
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Daniel Burton

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	705
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Wolstencroft
Headteacher	Lesley Lawson
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 25 lessons and 24 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, data and analyses, including the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, and 129 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also looked at questionnaires completed by staff and students.

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

- Students' attainment and achievement in science.
- The extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of less able students.
- Students' behaviour and the proportion of students subject to fixed-term exclusion.
- The effectiveness of school strategies to raise attendance.
- The accuracy and impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels in driving improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average secondary school with the large majority of students being of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very low and none is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although the school provides dedicated provision for 20 students with specific learning difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The school hosts onsite provision for Castle Hill pre-school, though this provision is not managed by the school's governing body and was not included as part of this inspection.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Fort Hill Community School provides a satisfactory quality of education. While the school's overall effectiveness has declined since the last inspection, leaders and managers have begun to tackle key areas in most need of improvement, with the result that the decline in overall attainment and achievement in recent years is now being successfully addressed. The school has a number of strong features.

- Students feel extremely safe, are well cared for and enjoy coming to school. They appreciate the good pastoral support they receive from their teachers.
- Students get on extremely well together and readily support each other in lessons and around the school. Younger students appreciate the school's small size as this ensures that they settle in well and get to know older students quickly.
- Students are proud of their school and make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community.
- Systems to tackle previously low attendance have proved to be successful, with the result that attendance is satisfactory and rising strongly.
- Leadership and management of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have been strengthened and have ensured that students using the specialist resource base make good progress in developing their literacy skills.
- The school has secured year-on-year improvement in increasing the proportion of students who attain five or more good GCSEs including in English and mathematics. As a result, students' achievement against this measure is good and their attainment is now average.

However, leaders and managers recognise that the achievement of some groups of learners has not been good enough and, despite the school's recent success in addressing the decline in students' overall attainment and achievement, there remain some key areas in need of improvement.

- While over half of lessons are well taught and secure good progress, too many lessons secure only satisfactory progress. Strategies to share the best practice in teaching and learning have not yet had sufficient impact in raising the quality of teaching overall. Teachers do not all plan consistently well to meet the needs of all groups of learners, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and some teaching fails to check that all groups of learners make sufficient progress. Marking is inconsistent with the result that, in some subjects, students cannot articulate what they need to do to improve their work.
- Recent improvements to the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact in raising students' achievement. However, the range of courses available in Key Stage

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4 remains too narrow and there are insufficient opportunities for less able students to study more vocational courses to better meet their needs, interests and aspirations.

- Students' attainment in science, though improving strongly, is too low.
- While behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually good, the proportion of students subject to fixed-term exclusions is too high.

Leaders and managers have a broadly accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, some key aspects of the school's self-evaluation have been too generous, in part because systems to evaluate the impact of provision on outcomes for students have not been sufficiently rigorous. Nevertheless, the provisional results for 2010, together with projections for next year, based on accurate school data, indicate that the decline in attainment and achievement overall has now been successfully addressed. The school has a range of appropriate plans in place to build on these recent improvements. Leadership in science has been strengthened and weaker areas of performance have been identified clearly with the result that students' attainment in science is now rising quickly. Crucially, staffing is now much more stable than it has been for many years, with the result that nearly all lessons are now taught by full-time, specialist teachers. Staff are working with increasingly good effect to address the legacy of underachievement caused by turbulence in staffing. These improvements provide sufficient evidence that the school now has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fully embed recent improvements to provision in science to ensure that current Year 11 students and younger students achieve and attain well by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Accelerate the pace of curriculum change to ensure that provision fully meets the needs of all learners at Key Stage 4, particularly less able students.
- Strengthen systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of all aspects of provision on outcomes for students by ensuring that actions are rigorously evaluated against sharply defined, and interim, success criteria.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning so that, by December 2011, 75% of lessons secure good or better progress, by:
 - embedding recent strategies to share the best teaching practice
 - strengthening the impact of leadership and management in ensuring that lessons are consistently planned to meet the needs of all learners, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that all students have a clear understanding of their subject-specific targets and what they need to do to meet them, by improving the consistency of marking
 - developing teachers' skills in the use of assessment so that all teachers become equally effective in checking the understanding and progress of the whole group before moving on to the next task.
- Reduce the proportion of students subject to fixed-term exclusions to be more closely aligned with that seen in other secondary schools nationally.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

When teaching is good, students achieve well. In these lessons, students behave impeccably and work productively on independent and group tasks. In a few lessons, students were seen to make outstanding progress, for example in English and in geography. In these and in other good lessons, learning was purposeful and well paced and enhanced by a good range of challenging and imaginative activities. Crucially, teachers used their acute knowledge of students' individual strengths and weaknesses to target provision at individual needs. However, this good progress is not yet consistent enough across the curriculum. In a small minority of the less effective lessons, the behaviour of some students deteriorates and has a negative impact on the progress of the whole group. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers, although the quality of their learning varies as not all teachers match activities to their specific needs.

Students' overall attainment improved in 2010 to arrest a decline in the quality and range of their qualifications overall since the last inspection. More able students have been increasingly successful in securing the highest grades in their GCSE examinations. Similarly, girls' overall attainment has risen to more closely match girl's attainment nationally. Nevertheless, students' progress overall has been inhibited by a curriculum which, while improving, has not been sufficiently well matched to their needs and while less able students now make satisfactory progress, they do not achieve as well as other groups.

The school council is led very effectively by the Head Boy and Head Girl and their deputies and has had an excellent impact on increasing the sustainability of the school. Older students are committed to supporting younger members of the school community and relationships between students of all ages are good. Students are committed to charitable work and regularly raise funds to support more vulnerable members of the local and wider national and international communities. A key strength in this area is the role that students play to help improve the quality of teaching and learning through planning lessons jointly with some of their teachers.

Many students are committed to adopting healthy lifestyles and the school's sports team have experienced considerable success in local competitions. However, not enough girls participate in extra-curricular sports, particularly in the older year groups.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

There is some extremely effective teaching, particularly when it is informed by acute understanding of students' individual needs. For example, in one outstanding English lesson, Year 8 students made excellent progress because activities were varied, fun and purposeful and planning ensured highly personalised challenge and support for all. In this and other good and outstanding lessons, students' meet and exceed their teachers' high expectations with regard to learning and behaviour. There are also some examples of outstanding marking, notably in history, so students have an excellent understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. However, such practice is not seen consistently and in some subjects, marking is of poor quality. As a result, students' understanding of their subject-specific strengths and weaknesses is not sufficiently secure in all curriculum areas. While Year 7 students report that they receive a good deal of homework, older students in Years 8, 9 and 10 reported that they often get very little homework.

The school has begun to take effective steps to ensure that the curriculum better meets the needs of all groups of learners. For example, current students in Years 10 and 11 now benefit from the opportunity to study qualifications which extend and accredit their functional and work-based skills. The most able students in Year 10 now benefit from the opportunity to study three separate sciences to GCSE and strategies are in place to secure this provision permanently for younger students. However, many of these actions have

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only recently been implemented so there remains insufficient breadth in the curriculum offer for less able Key Stage 4 students. The physical education curriculum is good and students report that they enjoy the varied range of sports on offer. However, the Key Stage 4 curriculum does not ensure that students benefit from the recommended two hours of physical education per week. While religious education provision is delivered through a range of other subjects, leaders and managers have not monitored provision rigorously enough so that they can be fully secure that the curriculum meets requirements.

Systems to provide care, guidance and support are a key strength of the school's work. The school can point to some notable examples of its work to improve outcomes for some of its most vulnerable students. Students feel extremely confident that their teachers will keep them safe and are readily available should they need additional support. The school's work to meet students' pastoral needs is complemented through its work with a wide range of external agencies. Strategies to promote students' well-being, such as through the Health Education Lifestyle Plan (HELP), are highly valued by students. Transition arrangements into the school are excellent and students report that they receive good advice as they prepare for further education or employment. As a result, the proportion of student-leavers not in education, employment or training is low. However, while school leaders have high expectations with regard to students' behaviour, strategies to reduce the proportion of students subject to fixed-term exclusions have not been sufficiently effective and there are twice as many fixed-term exclusions as seen in other schools nationally. Systems to support the small number of students who speak English as an additional language are not yet sufficiently rigorous or developed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff share the headteacher's determination to raise students' achievement. Weaker areas of provision, such as in science, have been strengthened to match more closely the strong leadership seen in English and mathematics. Leaders and managers have secured important improvements to attendance and have increased the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades including in English and mathematics. Similarly, the school is now beginning to build on more settled staffing by devising and implementing a range of strategies to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.

However, leaders and managers have not been sufficiently mindful of the need to raise the attainment of all groups of students through improved curriculum provision. While actions have been taken to increase the range of courses offered at Key Stage 4, these

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have not been timely enough and, in recent years, the achievement of some less able students has been inadequate. While achievement is now improving, the effectiveness of the school's work to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination remains satisfactory. Although governors monitor the quality of the school's pastoral work with demonstrable rigour, they have not held leaders and managers sufficiently to account with regard to attainment and achievement and have too readily accepted the school's over-generous self-evaluation. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the school governors, are extremely vigilant in ensuring that students stay safe. Staff are acutely aware of the risks associated with the open nature of the site and manage this risk very well.

The school has excellent strategies in place to promote community cohesion and its work to promote students' understanding of the wider international community is exemplary. However, not all actions are evaluated with sufficient rigour to enable the school to fully evaluate the impact of this important aspect of its work.

The school pursues a range of excellent strategies to engage with parents and carers, including those whose circumstances have made them harder to reach. Parents and carers are regularly consulted with regard to a wide range of provision and systems for communication are varied and imaginative. The school has ambitious strategies to extend the use of its virtual learning environment to further improve the quality of information available to parents and carers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received a slightly higher proportion of questionnaires from parents and carers than usually received in secondary schools. Parents and carers indicated they are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with the very large majority indicating that they

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are happy with their children's experience. A number of parents and carers made positive comments with regard to provision for care, guidance and support and, particularly, the caring approach of staff. A few expressed concerns about instability in staffing, particularly in English and in science. Inspectors also received a few negative comments about the management of students' behaviour and of communication, particularly with regard to the provision of information about their children's progress in different subjects. Inspectors looked at these aspects of the school's work and judged students' behaviour to be satisfactory and the effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers to be good. The school has worked hard to minimise the impact of turbulence in staffing with the result that the English and science departments are currently fully staffed for the first time for a number of years.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fort Hill 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 129 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 705 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	23	89	69	6	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	42	33	82	64	2	2	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	27	75	58	16	12	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	27	67	52	19	15	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	26	20	88	68	9	7	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	19	77	60	20	16	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	9	95	74	15	12	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)	22	17	89	69	6	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	18	85	66	13	10	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	22	69	53	15	12	8	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	14	82	64	21	16	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	32	25	77	60	11	9	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	27	73	57	14	11	1	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



22 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Fort Hill Community School, Basingstoke RG23 8JQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to inspectors when we recently visited your school. Here are our main inspection findings.

- Your school provides a satisfactory standard of education.
- You feel extremely safe and your teachers ensure that you are well cared for.
- You told us that you appreciate the school's small size and the fact that everybody gets on well together.
- You make an outstanding contribution to your school community and the wider community through taking on positions of responsibility and through your dedication to supporting more vulnerable members of society.
- Many of you make good progress in achieving five or more good GCSEs including in English and mathematics.

However, Mrs Lawson and her team know that there are some areas in need of improvement and we have asked that they focus particularly on:

- raising your achievement in science
- providing a wider range of courses for you to choose from in Key Stage 4
- raising the quality of teaching and learning so that more lessons are as good as the best
- reducing the proportion of students who receive fixed-term exclusions.

You and your teachers have worked hard to raise attendance and this has improved very significantly this year. You can help your school to move forward and improve your prospects of gaining good qualifications by continuing to keep this up. Well done.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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