

The Vyne Community School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116440
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	385406
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	590
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Newlands
Headteacher	Mrs K Dawkins
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2010
School address	Vyne Road Basingstoke RG21 5PB
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Introduction

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hugh Betterson

Additional inspector

Heidi Boreham

Additional inspector

This inspection took place without notice. Inspectors carried out 25 formal lesson observations involving 24 teachers. These were supplemented by tours of the school and short visits to a further range of lessons. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, a representative from the local authority, middle leaders and classroom teachers. Individual meetings were held with some senior leaders. Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at local authority reviews and headteacher reports to governors.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average-sized comprehensive school. The proportion of students with English as an additional language or from a minority ethnic background is below average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is a little above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below average. The school has specialist status for performing arts.

At the previous inspection in September 2010, the school was placed in special measures because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education. Inspectors subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and re-inspected the school in March 2012. Between these two inspections, there have been changes in senior leadership, including two changes of interim headteacher and major reductions in staffing. Some staff have resigned in order to take up other jobs and have not been replaced. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- This is a satisfactory school. The school is rapidly improving and students' achievement is now satisfactory. In around two thirds of lessons, students make good progress from their starting points. The school is not yet good because students' progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 is still below average, leading to below-average attainment, and there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are characterised by very positive relationships between teachers and students. While marking is regular, it sometimes lacks precise details about next steps for improvement. The majority of teachers make good use of learning time, responding well in planning their lessons to keep students engaged through a range of activities. Inspectors observed around a third of lessons that were satisfactory, and this reflects the view of school leaders and the local authority.
- Behaviour over time is good. Inspectors found the school to be calm and well ordered. The vast majority of lessons were well focused and students were engaged in their work. Arrangements to ensure students' safeguarding are very thorough and secure. Behaviour has been transformed over the last 18 months thanks to clear boundaries concerning students' behaviour and effective strategies to manage behaviour.
- The leadership and management of teaching have brought about some important improvements and staff training over the last 18 months has had a highly positive impact. Leaders have been successful in raising achievement, raising the quality of teaching, improving the curriculum, improving attendance and punctuality and transforming behaviour. Despite these improvements, the impact of the monitoring of teaching is still not consistent throughout the school.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and the quality of learning, further closing the gap between student attainment and that found nationally, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use well-focused questioning to check all students' understanding and to extend and deepen their thinking
 - as a result of assessing students, teachers re-shape tasks in lessons rather than sticking to lesson plans
 - teachers consistently challenge students of all abilities, including the most able, to increase the proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE, and that the needs of less able students are better met
 - the content of what is taught is always appropriate for students who find learning harder.

- Further improve the impact of the monitoring of teaching to reduce the variation in performance between different subjects and teachers.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students made above-average progress during the large majority of lessons observed by inspectors. This concurs with records of observations by the school and the local authority. As a result, students' improved achievement is starting to close the gap between their below-average attainment and that of students nationally. The gap has narrowed more quickly in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4 because Key Stage 4 students have experienced a greater proportion of their secondary education while the school was underperforming.

In the large majority of lessons, students were very keen to learn and engaged enthusiastically with a range of activities. There were good resources to support a variety of learning activities. Lessons were usually conducted at a brisk but appropriate pace. There was good promotion of literacy development both through marking and through teaching in the lessons. There was regular reference to the examination mark scheme and examination skills, especially in Year 11. Good support for students from teaching assistants was observed. Following recent improvements, disabled students and those who have special educational needs are now making at least satisfactory progress.

The school's monitoring data has become robust and, supported by their GCSE results from early entries, indicates that currently Year 11 students are on track to make a substantial rise in the proportions of students making expected progress. Accelerated learning has been brought about through:

- an increase in and diversification of curriculum opportunities
- an increase in staff accountability through performance management
- intensive intervention for identified students and groups of students
- increased reporting to parents and carers
- improved teaching.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is rising because a programme of mandatory professional development has been embraced by staff. A good deal of consistency in teaching approaches was observed by inspectors. For example, learning objectives were invariably shared with students so that they understood what they were supposed to be learning. During the inspection, all teachers demonstrated a thirst for feedback and a desire to improve, which is highly encouraging. Students report that while lessons still vary in quality, overall teaching has improved so that now, as one student put it, they 'never experience a bad one'. Inspectors observed teaching ranging from outstanding to satisfactory, and none that was inadequate.

Teachers' planning has greatly improved and consistently includes opportunities across the curriculum to develop students' literacy and numeracy. Assessment has improved so that students know how they are doing, and they usually know what they need to do to gain higher grades. Marking is now routine, but some of it is less successful in telling students exactly what they need to do to improve.

In the large majority of lessons observed, teaching was enthusiastic and sometimes inspirational, resulting in a high level of interest and commitment from students. The best teaching tends to be found more often, though not exclusively, in higher-ability groups. Sometimes teaching for lower-ability groups is insufficiently adapted to meet the needs of these students. Even at the top end of the ability range, there is sometimes insufficient challenge for the most able to reach the highest grades. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted by teachers, for example through giving the opportunity to reflect and to discuss their work where appropriate.

Most students now get good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching most of the time. However, around 30% of teaching is less successful and only satisfactory. Sometimes inspectors observed tasks not being fully matched to students' ability levels and lessons being too dominated by teacher input, with too few opportunities for students to learn actively. There was sometimes confusion between challenge and going over the heads of low-ability students. In these weaker lessons the usual positive focus on literacy development was sometimes missing.

In lessons most teachers now regularly and systematically use various opportunities to check that students are acquiring knowledge. There are some excellent examples of using well-focused questioning to check that all students understand or to extend and deepen their thinking, but this is not so strong in less successful lessons. Similarly, having checked students' learning, teachers do not always have the confidence to make use of the information to change the lesson. Reflecting the school's specialism, the performing arts continue to be beacons of excellent provision.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Over the last 18 months there have been very significant improvements in behaviour and attendance. Visitors, including inspectors, find the school to be a calm, well-

ordered and very friendly working environment. Behaviour in lessons now makes a positive contribution to students' learning. Behaviour around the school is characterised by politeness and courtesy. Like their teachers, students clearly enjoy coming to the school and say that behaviour has greatly improved. This can be seen by their engagement in lessons and their now above-average attendance. A related significant improvement has been in punctuality. The overwhelming majority of students arrive before the start of the school day and the strong emphasis on punctuality to lessons results in brisk starts and maximises learning time. Tighter procedures in school such as the introduction of an additional registration time with form tutors, as well as improved partnership work with parents and carers, have had a very positive impact. Incidents of disruptive behaviour are now rare and where they do occur they are well handled.

There are now consistent approaches to behaviour management and, unlike 18 months ago, all teachers see the management of behaviour around the school as their personal responsibility. The number of exclusions has fallen significantly and is now low. Students feel safe and say any rare instances of bullying or harassment of any type are dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. The school is secure and students have a good understanding of potential risks and dangers. Positive changes to the curriculum, including the use of programmes such as Skill Force and the vocational opportunities offered by Basingstoke College of Technology, have increased the engagement of students in learning.

Leadership and management

'The headteacher is amazing' is the general view of students regarding the current interim headteacher. The arrival of a new interim headteacher last March was a catalyst for a significant move forward in the school's improvement. She effectively communicated to staff, parents and students a clear vision for improvement and instilled a sense of pride in belonging to the school. Importantly, she empowered senior leaders to fulfil their roles and streamlined accountability and decision making. She took robust action to tackle inadequate teaching and rapidly and successfully established a positive culture regarding behaviour and attendance. Following her departure the current interim headteacher has been in post since January. The handover between the two appointments was well managed so that the school's improvement continues to be rapid and uninterrupted. One reason for this is that the team of senior leaders has become very effective. They have a relentless focus on improving achievement for all students as part of a commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

Monitoring and accountability have improved dramatically. The use of student progress data has developed well over the last 18 months so that it is used by teachers to modify work and by leaders to monitor and challenge student progress. There remain a small number of areas where comprehensiveness and robustness of middle management arrangements have gaps while new appointments are made, for example in humanities. Generally, both academic and pastoral middle leadership is now very effective.

The school has diversified its curriculum at Key Stage 4 to better meet the needs of the full range of students. It now provides a mix of GCSE and more vocational BTEC

subjects. The school also has used its close links with the local post-16 colleges and other local schools to offer students courses including motor vehicle maintenance, hair and beauty studies and catering and hospitality. Constraints in timetabling result in students sometimes having an over narrow diet of subjects on particular days. The range and quality of after-school and out-of-lesson activities is a real strength, having a positive impact on learning and behaviour.

Governance has improved since the last inspection. The governing body has been strengthened through additional local authority appointments and has worked hard to ensure that parents are fully informed of the school's progress and potential structural changes. Governors take very seriously their safeguarding responsibilities. The school has benefitted from the support of the local authority and neighbouring schools. This support has gradually been withdrawn in response to the school's increasing internal capacity. For example, the school has effectively used some of its strongest teachers to support colleagues through an 'Advocate' programme which has paired staff up to observe each other and work on areas of improvement. The school now successfully promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with particular strengths in moral and social awareness.

Meetings with senior staff and the governing body show they know the school's strengths and areas for further development extremely well. This and the record of substantial recovery over the last 18 months provide strong evidence that the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



15 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Vyne Community School, Basingstoke RG21 5PB

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. We believe your school is a satisfactory and rapidly improving one. It has good features. Most importantly, you have told us on each of our visits over the last 18 months how much the school has improved. You were really passionate about your school, your teachers and especially your headteacher. As a result of the improvements you told us about and the way we could see that your behaviour and attitudes have been transformed, we have decided that your school no longer needs special measures and we would like to give our reasons.

Standards are rising and you are now making at least satisfactory progress. Teaching has greatly improved and the majority of your lessons are good. You have a very clear idea of what makes good teaching and you are helping your teachers to make teaching even better. The school has developed good systems for keeping track of how well you are doing. You know your levels and teachers help you understand how to improve. The school's leaders and managers have worked very hard to improve the school. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is transformed and we judge your behaviour to be good. There are still some occasions when teaching is disturbed and you can all do your bit to ensure that other students' learning is not interrupted, just as we have asked teachers to make sure that the lessons are always suitable and interesting. Your attendance and punctuality have improved greatly. There are still a few whose rate of absence and time keeping brings down the overall average and so those students can help make this even better.

To make an even better school we have asked the leaders to help you by ensuring that even more of your lessons are good and by so doing raising your examination results overall to at least meet the national average.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

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