

# Cove School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116446
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	357970
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Rundle

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1002
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Carol Lloyd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Megan Davies Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	St John's Road Cove Farnborough GU14 9RN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 35 teachers and 35 lessons, and saw a year assembly. Discussions were held with senior and middle managers, staff, members of the governing body and groups of students. Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and development plan, external evaluations of the school work, policy documents, tracking information on students' attainment and progress and students' work. They also scrutinised 145 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of students and from each year group.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which teaching and learning enables good progress and offers sufficient support and challenge for all groups of students, particularly boys and those identified as gifted and talented.
- Whether issues related to staffing have impacted on the rate of student progress and/or their attainment.
- How well changes made to the curriculum meet the needs of all students.
- How effectively staff and governing body are involved in setting the strategic direction of the school and driving improvements, especially in student outcomes.

## Information about the school

Cove School is an average-sized comprehensive. It has experienced relatively high levels of staff absence, in key departments, in the last couple of years, due mainly to maternity leave and long-term illness. The majority of students are of White British ethnic origin, with some from a wide range of other ethnic groups, the largest being Nepalese. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, with a higher-than-average proportion having a statement of special educational needs. The school has a Hearing Impaired resource base currently catering for six students. The school is a designated Technology College and a designated Teacher Learning Academy supporting teachers' professional development. The school holds the Enhanced Healthy School and ECO awards.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Cove School is a good school that has shown many improvements since the last inspection, most notably in students' achievement and the quality of the curriculum, which are now both good. This improvement is a result of the school's new initiatives and the rigour with which it has tackled identified areas for improvement and indicates good capacity for sustained improvement. The headteacher leads the school well and is unafraid to tackle difficult issues and, together with the support of senior and middle leaders and the governing body, has ensured that the staffing issues in recent years, related largely to absence, have not had any significant negative impact for students and their education. The vast majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school's work.

Students benefit from the outstanding care, guidance and support provided by staff. All students are known extremely well as individuals and their welfare needs are met thoroughly, including through effective links with external agencies where necessary. This is particularly true of those in the Hearing Impaired resource base, who benefit from well-targeted support, including in lessons and extra-curricular activities, to ensure they are included fully in all aspects of the school's work.

Students' achievement is good overall. They attain in line with the national average by the end of Year 11 and make good progress in their learning from their starting points. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as others in the school. The school has identified that boys attain less well than girls. Consequently, activities are planned to engage them more, which is beginning to have a positive impact on their attitudes and achievement. The overall improvement in student achievement can largely be attributed to a combination of good-quality teaching and better use of assessment and monitoring of students' learning. This increased level of assessment, monitoring and evaluation has enabled earlier identification of students who are underachieving and swifter intervention to support their learning. However, the use of assessment data to inform teaching strategies and plan activities that match the needs of students with different levels of ability is yet to be embedded consistently across the school. Verbal feedback to students in lessons is good overall and quickly helps them understand how to improve their work, although the quality of written feedback is more varied. Good practice exists in science, where marking includes comprehensive comments on strengths and indicates clearly 'next steps' on how to improve further.

The curriculum has been reviewed successfully since the last inspection and now meets the statutory requirements for religious education. Students are given good opportunities to study a broad range of subjects, both in school and through effective partnerships with local further education providers. Students identified as gifted and talented are starting to have a broader range of extension activities, although these are yet to be embedded

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across the school and to impact fully on attainment. Occasionally, lessons are dominated by teacher input and not enough opportunities are planned that enable students to lead or initiate activities. Wherever such activities are provided, students make excellent progress in understanding their work and are excited about learning. For example, in a Year 7 drama lesson, small groups of students were able to plan a news broadcast through taking a variety of roles matched to their individual strengths. Students talk enthusiastically about the extent of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities available, especially in sport, business and enterprise and the arts. The school's specialist status in technology is having a very positive impact on students' opportunities to use modern technologies in a range of subjects and in leading initiatives with partner primary school pupils.

The school has an extensive, well-developed programme of monitoring and evaluation activities that enable the senior management team, middle managers and the governing body to have an accurate view of the school's work. The role of middle managers has been extended and strengthened considerably in recent years and consequently the drive for improvement is being led by a wide range of staff. As a result, there is a positive momentum for change apparent in most areas of the school's work and a very large majority of staff are proud to work at the school.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the consistent use of assessment data to inform teaching strategies and ensure activities match the needs of students with different levels of ability.
- Ensure written feedback informs students fully of their strengths and the next steps in their learning.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Students enter the school with slightly below average attainment, especially those that join from outside the country. They make good progress overall, although the school is aware that some inconsistencies remain between subjects and has effective plans in place to improve this position. Students attain well in the school's specialist subject, gaining a higher proportion of A\* and A grades in GCSE technology than in other subjects. Students who join from Nepal make swifter progress in mathematics than English. In the majority of lessons observed, students made good progress because they were interested in their work. For example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson, students improved their skills of designing and making recycling containers, alongside good gains in understanding the importance of recycling and sustainability, and in a Year 11 religious education lesson, students were able to draw on a wide range of knowledge to present reasoned arguments about the importance of different festivals in the Jewish faith.

Students say they feel safe in school and know whom to talk to if they have a problem. They mention particularly the 'sit and chat' room as a place where they are comfortable to discuss any issues and have complete confidence that staff will help resolve them. The vast majority of students display positive attitudes to school and say they enjoy learning. This is reflected in their behaviour, which is at least good in and around the school and at times exemplary in lessons where activities challenge their thinking. Students make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and wider community, especially through the student council, student surveys, buddy system, sport and music leadership roles in primary schools and fundraising for charity. This is an area of strength which the local

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authority has used in the production of a DVD on good practice. The school is a regional centre for a 'girls active' project which has ensured high participation rates of girls in sport. This is now being replicated and piloted to increase boys' participation. The school prepares students well for the workplace, with the development of good enterprise and personal skills. As a result, the number of students who have recently left the school and who are not now in education, employment or training is well below the national average. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and has put in place a number of support mechanisms which have proved to be effective, particularly in reducing the number of students who are persistently absent.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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?**

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and most use this well to engage students in meaningful activities and learning. A good range of teaching methods is used in lessons and most teachers are skilled at using open-ended questions to extend students' initial answers and to challenge their independent thinking. Where teaching assistants are deployed, they provide good support to individuals or groups of students, particularly the hearing-impaired or those identified as exhibiting challenging behaviour. Excellent relationships between staff and students and between students are a strong feature of the school's work and reflect the good use of humour to motivate students further. In the very small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons, learning intentions are not always clear, work is

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not matched carefully enough to the needs of students and at times there is too much teacher input so students become passive recipients of learning. The use of assessment has improved considerably since the last inspection. Most students know their targets, although not all are secure in knowing precisely how to improve their work.

The curriculum meets the needs of students and has helped raise their aspirations to continue education after the age of 16. It has been strengthened for students in Key Stage 4 through opportunities for an alternative curriculum of vocational qualifications that includes courses such as child development and construction. Good provision is made for students' personal development through the citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education programme and global studies in Years 7 and 8. The broad range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities ensure good participation rates. Students mention particularly the links with local businesses. Enterprise days and competitions provide enjoyable and challenging activities to which students respond well.

Care of students is central to the school's work. Transition arrangements to join the school in Year 7 are strong and are supported extremely well through specialist status activities between secondary students and primary pupils. The buddy system provides good role models and helps new students settle into the school quickly. Students provide a warm welcome to newcomers and show good care of each other. The special educational needs coordinator has developed effective systems of support quickly, including a secure environment where students are willing to ask for help. The new mentoring procedures are proving highly effective in providing early support for students' academic progress and/or well-being. Some students were very positive about the help they had received to change their own behaviour patterns. The Hearing Impaired resource base is highly effective and ensures that students are able to make the same progress as others in the school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders, supported by middle leaders, have set a clear direction and high expectations for improvements that most staff share and have resulted in the positive changes since the last inspection. School and subject development plans focus clearly on improving achievement and the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and scope for improvement. The secure programme to monitor the school's work includes challenging target setting and holding staff more to account for the progress of students in their subject or year group. The governing body discharges its statutory duties effectively, particularly those related to the safeguarding of students and staff. The

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governing body is knowledgeable about current educational issues, resulting in it taking a full and active role both to support and challenge the school's work robustly.

Leaders and staff work hard to promote equality of opportunity, which is reflected in the outstanding support for students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and students who join the school from Nepal. For example, classes have been moved to accommodate students with a physical disability better and some students are provided with laptops to support their learning. Students say there is intolerance of bullying or discrimination of any kind and recognise that the very small number of incidents have been resolved swiftly.

The school has created good relationships with parents, carers, external partners and the local community. The school holds 'friendship days' to reflect the different cultures of students and their families and the family learning events have proved very popular especially those on robotics, as part of the school's technology status. This aspect of the school's work was also selected for inclusion in the local authority DVD.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

A lower-than-average percentage of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. The very large majority were overwhelmingly positive. A few parents and carers raised concerns about how well the school takes account of their suggestions or concerns and in how the school helps them support their children's learning. Inspectors recognise any lapses in communication are a concern, but consider that the school works hard to keep parents and carers informed and make good use of the school's website as a vehicle for this. Close to 10% of the questionnaires returned commented specifically on not being happy with the quality of teaching and the number of different teachers their children had experienced, specifically in mathematics. Inspectors found that decisive



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actions taken by the headteacher and governing body are minimising any negative impact for students and their achievement in the subject was found to be good overall. A few parents and carers expressed concerns also regarding the effectiveness with which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour to be at least good, because of the consistent use of systems and procedures that the school has in place. A very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience and enjoyment and believe that the school is led and managed very effectively.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cove 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 145 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1002 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	29	90	62	12	8	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	61	42	78	54	3	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	56	39	76	52	11	8	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	30	83	57	16	11	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	34	23	90	62	18	12	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	21	94	65	18	12	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	23	88	61	19	13	3	2
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)	35	24	91	63	8	6	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	25	87	60	15	10	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	24	85	59	18	12	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	24	84	58	15	10	6	4
The school is led and managed effectively	50	34	81	56	6	4	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	38	75	52	11	8	3	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 May 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Cove School, Cove GU14 9RN**

Thank you for your help and for talking to us during the recent inspection. We enjoyed meeting you very much and seeing your work. This letter is to tell you about our findings.

Your school provides you with a good education. It has worked hard since the last inspection to improve your achievement and to broaden your opportunities in the curriculum and enrichment programme. Your headteacher leads the school well and is supported ably by other staff and the governing body. They are all determined that you have high aspirations and have the opportunity to succeed and their work enables you to achieve good outcomes.

You enjoy coming to the school, are very well cared for and experience good teaching. You were particularly enthusiastic about the range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and wider community and in helping you to prepare successfully for life beyond the school. You told us you feel safe and we found that your behaviour in and around the school is always good and at times exemplary. You are polite, courteous and take good care of each other.

School leaders and staff are committed to continuing its improvement. We have asked the school to review the following two things:

- Increase the consistency with which assessment data is used to inform teaching strategies and activities better so that they match the needs of students with different levels of ability.
- Ensure written feedback informs students fully of their strengths and the next steps in their learning.

All of you can certainly help your teachers by responding to their comments and using the feedback that they give, to improve your learning and the quality of your work.

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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