

# The Wey Valley School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113879
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	357445
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Karl Sampson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	957
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Diane Day
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Philip Thomas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7–8 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Dorchester Road Weymouth Dorset DT3 5AN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01305 817000
<b>Fax number</b>	01305 815851
<b>Email address</b>	office@weyvalley.dorset.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	22–23 June 2011
<b>Inspection number</b>	357445

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011



## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors carried out observations of a full lesson, and 38 part lessons taught by 42 teachers. A third of the lessons were jointly observed by a member of the school's leadership team. One inspector undertook a learning walk which comprised of a number of short visits to lessons to look at provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, three members of the governing body and different groups of students. Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and pupils' work. They observed the school's work, and looked at 262 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, questionnaires completed by a sample of pupils from each year group and 53 completed by staff.

## Information about the school

The Wey Valley School is slightly smaller than most secondary schools. The school has very strong partnerships with providers across the Weymouth and Portland area through the Chesil Education Partnership. Most students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is much lower than that found nationally. The school has held sports specialist status since 2003 and is in receipt of the Healthy School award. The school was previously part of the National Challenge scheme and has met the government's floor targets for Key Stage 4 over the past three years.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety</b>	<b>2</b>
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

## Key findings

- The Wey Valley School provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school is a welcoming and positive community, where students behave well, feel extremely safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The school uses its sports specialism well and effectively promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students have good opportunities to develop their leadership qualities, sense of identity and self-worth. They demonstrate high levels of respect and consideration for each other and adults and make a strong contribution to the wider community.
- Student achievement is satisfactory overall. While there is an increasing amount of good, and some outstanding, teaching, the quality is not yet consistent in all subjects. Too many lessons remain satisfactory because they are not sufficiently well matched to students' individual needs and abilities.
- The use of assessment to support students' progress is variable across the school. It is at its best when teachers use probing questioning to involve students fully, deepen thinking and offer clear subject-specific steps for improvement.
- Middle leadership has been strengthened through new appointments in English and mathematics and these changes are having a clear impact in raising achievement. 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 and their attainment is now average.
- The effectiveness of leadership across the school is uneven and school leaders recognise that more work needs to be done to ensure that all leaders rigorously evaluate the impact of the actions they are taking to improve students' achievement and raise standards.
- External support is being utilised effectively to complement, challenge and

**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

refine the work of senior and middle leaders.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, and where leadership and management is no better than 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?**

- Accelerate students' progress and increase the proportion of good lessons to 85% by September 2013, as well as increasing the proportion that are outstanding by:
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information consistently well when planning lessons so that work is more closely aligned to students' individual needs and academic targets
  - extending the use of dialogue and probing questions in lessons to give students more opportunities to actively participate, develop their ideas fully, deepen their thinking and drive learning forward
  - enabling students to understand precisely what the subject-specific actions for improvement are, and how to achieve them, so that all students are supported to take greater responsibility for managing and developing their own learning.
  
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising achievement by the end of Key Stage 4, by:
  - ensuring all departments develop and implement strategies to share and the best practice already evident within the school
  - increasing the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems to drive improvements more evenly and consistently across the curriculum
  - sharpening the way in which leaders at all levels track and measure students' progress and evaluate rigorously the impact of the actions that they are taking to improve students' outcomes.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement**

When teaching is good, students achieve well. In a few lessons, students were seen to make outstanding progress, for example in mathematics and art. In these and other good lessons, learning was purposeful, well paced and enhanced by a good range of challenging learning activities. Crucially, teachers used their acute knowledge of students' individual strengths and weaknesses to deftly target provision to meet individual needs and maximise progress. However, this good teaching is not yet sufficiently, or consistently, present across the curriculum to allow the school to close the gap quickly enough with the national average for some foundation subjects. Whilst over half of lessons are well taught and secure good progress, too many lessons secure only satisfactory progress. School leaders know that sometimes

**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

activities are not sufficiently fine tuned in lessons to ensure that progress is consistently good or better for all groups of students.

The additional support that was provided through the National Challenge initiative has strengthened achievement in English and mathematics, and its positive impact is now beginning to be seen in improvements in science. However, leaders and managers recognise that, historically, the achievement in other subjects has not been consistently strong enough. Analysis of the current Key Stage 4 assessment information, supported by the broadly average levels of attainment seen in lessons and books, shows that all groups of students are now making at least satisfactory, and in some cases better, progress and that the gaps in attainment between different groups are narrowing. Girls' achievement has continued to improve securely since the last inspection, particularly in English, and boys' achievement has improved after a dip in 2010. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers, particularly because of the good specialist support they receive in improving basic literacy and numeracy skills. The school's latest data suggest that the current Year 11 cohort is on track to achieve their challenging targets by the end of this academic year. However, there is still some unevenness in the performance of all students across the curriculum, which is closely aligned with the quality of teaching.

**Behaviour and safety**

Students' attitudes to learning and conduct in lessons and around the school are good. Students relate to each other well, are considerate of the needs of others and contribute to a safe and well-ordered environment. Students report that incidents of bullying are infrequent, but when bullying does occur then it is dealt with speedily and effectively by staff. Students report that they feel extremely safe and most parents and carers agree. Inspectors found that students show respect for their teachers in lessons even when teaching is less secure. Where students' behaviour was less than good in lessons, it was clearly linked to learning activities that failed to sufficiently challenge learners and hold their interest. The large majority of parents, carers and students agree that standards of behaviour are good and most believe that teaching is good. A minority of parents and carers who completed questionnaires, and some students, were concerned that lessons are sometimes disrupted, but this was not reflected in the good behaviour observed in lessons by inspectors and around the school. Most students reported there is good behaviour over time and that teachers are usually effective in dealing with such issues.

Students' attendance and punctuality have improved considerably as a result of the school's systematic approach to identifying and resolving any issues. The school's support mechanisms, coordinated by the work of the student achievement group, have proved to be extremely effective, particularly in reducing the number of students who are persistently absent. Effective partnerships with a range of outside agencies ensure that strategies to support vulnerable students, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are a strong aspect of the school's work. Students who exhibit more challenging behaviour respond well to actions to improve

**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

their behaviour through individualised learning programmes and the number of exclusions continues to fall year on year. The school is effective in building self-esteem and successfully supporting reintegration into lessons for students who may otherwise be at risk of exclusion.

## Teaching

Overall teaching is satisfactory and students make satisfactory progress in their learning. There is some extremely effective teaching, particularly when it is informed by acute understanding of students' individual needs. For example, in one outstanding mathematics lesson, Year 10 students made excellent progress because activities were engaging, relevant, fun and purposeful, and planning ensured highly-personalised challenge and support for all. The teacher used high-quality dialogue and probing questions to encourage students to participate and drive learning forward. In this and other lessons which were good or better, students meet and exceed their teachers' high expectations with regard to learning and behaviour. Such lessons are underpinned by positive relationships which establish a great platform for learning. There are also some examples of effective marking, notably in English, mathematics and art, so students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. Students told inspectors that when they receive feedback of this quality they feel well supported and make good use of subject-specific comments to refine their learning. However, this practice is not consistent across subjects. In too many cases, guidance is of limited value, providing general comments that do not enable the student to respond to and/or reshape their learning.

Teachers generally possess strong subject knowledge, but this is not always used to best effect to enthuse or challenge pupils to make good or better progress. There are too few opportunities for teachers to listen to students, observe or question them during lessons in order to reshape tasks and develop their thinking. Consequently, activities are not always adapted enough to challenge students of all abilities, and over-long teacher explanations sometimes inhibit opportunities for students to think for themselves and to develop and explain their ideas. In the lessons observed where students did not make expected progress, learning activities lacked sufficient challenge and failed to motivate students because they were not specifically tailored to meet their individual learning needs. Consequently, students become distracted more easily and are soon off task, resulting in learning that is too slow paced.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher and his senior leadership team have been successful in creating a caring ethos in the school in which all students are valued and respected. School leaders, including governors, are determined to accelerate students' achievement and the overall effectiveness of the school. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is demonstrated by the improvements it has brought to attainment and achievement overall. The National Challenge programme has been used to galvanise the efforts of the school to seek further improvement. School leaders have secured

**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

important improvements to attendance and have increased the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Consequently, the gap with the national average has been closing quickly and underachievement, as shown by cohorts in the past, is being eradicated.

The school is now developing its monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that the best practice found in these subjects is consistently applied across the entire curriculum. However, they are still at a relatively early stage for some subjects and here the effectiveness of leadership is uneven. Actions taken by middle leaders sometimes lack clarity and precision with regard to evaluating the impact they have had on students' outcomes. The school is currently developing its analysis of the performance of different groups of students to help all leaders identify where to provide additional support and where new teaching strategies need to be developed. School leaders recognise the need to refine the development of teaching and learning at whole-school level so that the very best practice is shared more widely. The school therefore has a satisfactory capacity to secure further improvements.

The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provides good support. The governors have a clear strategic understanding of the needs of the local community and are developing strong partnerships with a wide range of local education providers. Governors' confidence and expertise in evaluating the performance of groups and subjects in relation to national expectations, and in holding it to account, are growing. Effective procedures are in place to ensure students' safety; all current safeguarding requirements are met.

The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has been enhanced by the school's sports specialism and a wide range of opportunities within the wider community. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the ways in which they are able to take responsibility for their own and others' welfare, as student leaders, members of the school council, peer mentors and Olympic ambassadors. Students articulate clearly how much they learn themselves by taking account of the needs of others, and speak proudly of the work that they do with pupils from the neighbouring primary and special schools. The multiculturalism event, which coincided with the inspection, is an excellent example of this work and clearly highlights the depth of students' responsibility, engagement with others and contribution to the local learning community of schools. Pupils were particularly positive about the quality of support for transition both into and beyond school, as well as the range of artistic and sporting opportunities that are available.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Wey Valley 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 262 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 957 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	102	39	138	53	18	7	3	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	98	37	142	54	18	7	4	2
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	76	29	146	56	25	10	6	2
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	79	30	148	56	22	8	5	2
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	89	34	147	56	15	6	5	2
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	64	24	163	62	16	6	9	3
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	25	10	157	60	50	19	15	6
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	18	7	108	41	95	36	20	8
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	61	23	126	48	32	12	17	6
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	54	21	151	58	41	16	6	2
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	71	27	119	45	43	16	12	5
Q12 The school is well led and managed	77	29	145	55	17	6	6	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 achievement of all pupils.</li> <li>■ Behaviour and safety.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of leadership and management.</li> </ul> <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</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.**

24 June 2011



Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Wey Valley School, Weymouth, DT3 5AN**

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

- Your school provides a satisfactory standard of education.
- Behaviour is good because of the respect and consideration you show each other.
- You feel extremely safe and your teachers ensure that you are well cared for.
- You make a strong contribution to your school and wider community through the school's sports specialism, taking on positions of responsibility and through your dedication to supporting more vulnerable members of society.
- Your progress in achieving five or more good GCSEs including in English and mathematics is accelerating.
- School leaders, teachers and governors are all determined that you should have the opportunity to succeed.

In order to improve the school further, we have asked Mr Thomas and his team to concentrate on two things in particular.

- Improve teaching so that more of it is consistently good or better and accelerates your progress by:
  - enabling teachers to share their best ideas across all subjects and learn from each other
  - ensuring all teachers provide you with challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learning and better meet your individual learning needs
  - using dialogue and questions to check and deepen your understanding and allowing you enough time to develop and explain your ideas
  - ensuring that teachers consistently give you better feedback on your work so that you always know how to improve in each subject.
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising achievement by ensuring that all leaders consistently monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions so that they know how well they are working.

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

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson  
Her Majesty's Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**