

# Melksham Oak Community School

Bowerhill, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 6QZ

**Inspection dates** 18–19 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	<b>3</b>
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school's vision 'to be a great school' is highly evident. Staff at all levels are strongly committed to the success of individual learners.
- The leadership and management, including governors, are successful in constantly driving improvement. Since the last inspection, a range of well-targeted initiatives has dramatically accelerated students' achievement, which is now good.
- Teaching is good and has resulted in students' progress improving rapidly, especially in Year 11.
- Relationships between staff, teachers and students are a key strength and result in strong partnerships and a positive climate for learning.
- Students develop the skills and knowledge to be safe and behave well to aid their learning. They are courteous and friendly.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form is good, and while the number of students is small, they generally achieve well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching across the school is outstanding. As a result, students make good rather than outstanding progress.
- Some variations in students' achievement exist between girls and boys, and between subjects across all key stages.
- Students are sometimes not given sufficient opportunities to develop their independence skills and, as a result, their behaviour is good rather than outstanding.
- The initiatives and actions of a few of the strategies designed to raise achievement have yet to be fully embedded.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 44 lessons, observing 44 teachers. Fourteen lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. The team also conducted a series of brief observations of learning in classrooms and around the school.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's analysis of its own questionnaire.
- They observed the school's work, and looked at improvement plans, records and analyses of students' behaviour, the tracking of students' progress and examples of students' work. They looked at the school's attendance figures and monitoring information.

## Inspection team

Raymond Lau, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Elizabeth Cooper	Additional inspector
Patricia MacLachlan	Additional inspector
Robert Smith	Additional inspector
Svetlana Raymond	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school. Almost all students are from a White British background and speak English as their first language. The proportion of girls in the school is below the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The proportion of students supported by school action and school action plus is above average, with some experiencing moderate learning and/or behaviour difficulties. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is similar to schools nationally.
- The school specialises in technology.
- It meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- At the time of the inspection, half of the Year 7 students were on a residential trip.

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

- Accelerate students' achievement, so that it is outstanding, by:
  - ensuring that all staff have sufficiently high expectations of students, resulting in a greater proportion making rapid and sustained progress
  - decreasing the variations in students' attainment and progress between subjects and between girls and boys.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is outstanding, by:
  - consistently implementing learning activities that constantly challenge all learners to make more progress
  - ensuring that teachers' assessment of students' work is more effective in providing students with guidance on the next steps to develop their learning
  - increasing opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning, and the learning of others.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Many students join the school with knowledge and skills that are below national expectations. In Key Stage 3, students develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to assist them in achieving well. There are, however, some variations in students' achievement between English, mathematics and science. Students' attainment in reading is improving due to well-targeted intervention and strategies. Girls' achievement is generally better than that of the boys.
- In Key Stage 4, achievement has accelerated rapidly since the previous inspection. Attainment in English and mathematics has improved and is now broadly average. Whilst the performance in subjects has sharply improved in 2012, achievement in physical education, food technology and business studies was not as high as in other subjects.
- During the inspection, the majority of students made good progress in lessons across a wide range of subjects. For example, students confidently rehearsed a scene portraying racism in a Year 11 drama lesson. The proportion of students making typically expected progress from their starting points compares favourably with national expectations. This picture has significantly improved in 2012 as all students made at least the progress expected in both English and mathematics. The proportion of students exceeding expected progress has improved.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of the very well targeted intervention support and strategies. Those students who are supported by the pupil premium make good progress, as do those of minority ethnic heritage.
- While the sixth form numbers are relatively small, the achievement of students is improving. Students' attainment is broadly average, although the proportion of students gaining the highest grades is below that found nationally. There are some variations in performance, with girls performing better than some boys. The retention of students throughout the courses has improved significantly.
- Achievement is not outstanding because the proportion of students making outstanding progress over time is not high enough in both English and mathematics. The school is addressing the differences in the performance of subjects with clear actions, and closing the gap between girls and boys.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- A sizeable majority of the teaching is typically good. The school has worked hard to ensure that there is no inadequate teaching. However, a small minority of teaching is still judged to require improvement. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use a common language that is shared with the learners.
- The key characteristics of lessons that feature good and outstanding teaching include:
  - implementing learning activities that enable learners to make good progress
  - strong relationships between teachers and students, which promote a supportive climate for learning
  - teachers' effective use of questioning, particularly in re-shaping students' misconceptions
  - good quality resources that are prepared and utilised well
  - activities implemented at a brisk pace.
- The school has actively promoted the development of reading, writing and mathematics through a range of initiatives, such as 'POW Man' (Punctuation Organisation and Words) and 'Number Ninja'. These strategies are having a positive effect on students' interests and contributing to their achievement.
- Where teaching is outstanding, students, particularly in the sixth form, are given opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. However, this very good practice is not sufficiently

widespread for teaching to be judged outstanding overall.

- Lesson observations and other evidence show that teaching requires improvement in a small minority of lessons where:
  - learning is limited because teachers' explanations were too long
  - work given is not always well pitched to sufficiently challenge specific groups of students
  - teachers' expectations of what students could achieve were not high enough.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs learn well across the school because the deployment of support staff is successful and they show effective use of questioning to stimulate students' thinking. As a result, students are focused, persevere and achieve well from the focused intervention work.
- The assessment of students' work is sometimes inconsistent in terms of providing students with guidance on the next steps towards improvement. While verbal feedback to students is a key strength of the school, and pockets of good practice exist, the marking of work is variable across the school.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The school has positively created a strong climate of inclusion, trust and support. This has subsequently led to the students' successful achievement, noticeably at Key Stage 4. A range of rewards is in place to motivate students to achieve. Some aspects of the school's work are at a relatively early stage and have yet to be fully embedded; hence, it is too early to measure the effectiveness of these systems.
- Students are positive, friendly and polite. The overwhelming majority of them demonstrate good manners and effective communication skills. Their behaviour is typically good, as is their attitude to learning. They participate in lessons effectively and generally contribute to their learning. However, in a small minority of lessons a few individuals very occasionally disrupt the learning of others. This is usually linked to the quality of teaching.
- Students' attendance is broadly average. The number of those deemed to be persistently absent is decreasing because of the intervention work and strengthening of working relationships with parents and carers. Students are punctual in arriving at school and to lessons.
- Students feel safe in the school. A few incidents of bullying do occur, but the students reported that these are dealt with swiftly by teachers. Students had good knowledge of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobia. Their good level of awareness of what constitutes safe and unsafe practices is clear. Students are knowledgeable about internet safety, protecting themselves sensibly when using social media network sites.
- Although attitudes to learning are good, students do not have enough opportunities to develop skills of leadership, independent learning and collaborative work.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, ably assisted by the senior team, provides strong and decisive leadership. A very supportive climate of trust, support and accountability of all staff is established. There are opportunities for middle leaders to be co-opted as part of the enhanced senior leadership team. The middle leaders are united, effective and very supportive of the school's journey, while their monitoring is robust and rigorous. Nevertheless, they are aware that there are still some variations in performance across some subjects.
- Since the last inspection, the leadership has driven improvements in rapidly raising achievement at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and strengthened attendance and behaviour. Target setting is robust and is carefully monitored by the leadership team.
- The school development plan focuses on the key priorities and self-evaluation is robust. As a

result, the school has good capacity to improve. The local authority has provided good support in monitoring the school and has assisted in accelerating students' achievement.

- The management of teaching is effective. The school places students' learning at the heart of its operations and has ensured the development of consistent approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers' and leaders' expertise is used well in delivering specific workshops and sessions to other members of staff.
- Coaching further personalises individual teachers' development, and this approach has had considerable impact on improving the performance of staff. The new Teachers' Standards are being used as part of the school's systems for managing staff performance.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced with a clear focus on reading, writing and literacy. The new Year 7 curriculum is innovative, but it is too early to judge its impact. The Key Stage 4 pathways offer a wide range of courses, allowing personalisation of the curriculum. The sixth form curriculum is adapted well to the needs of the students.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - is visible, holding the school to account for the students' monitoring effectively
  - is proactive in subject areas, conducting visits and monitoring learning
  - has ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fully met.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils' are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupil's needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	126448
<b>Local authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	406367

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1175
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	121
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ruth Gillings
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Clark
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23-24 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01225 792700
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