

Southfield School

Gipsy Lane, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2HR

Inspection dates 2–3 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 students

This is a good school.

- Students make good or better progress from their starting points on entry into the school. The students are prepared well for transition into life after school.
- Leadership is good. The new Principal is supporting improvements already underway and creating an even greater level of ambition, leading to increased benefits for the students.
- The Principal is very well supported by senior staff and the governing body in tackling the areas for improvement suggested at the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. This contributes to the students' good progress and helps the students to make big strides in their literacy and mathematical skills.
- Support staff are effective in helping to manage students' behaviour.
- The students feel safe, secure and valued and enjoy their learning. This leads to behaviour that is usually good or better around the school and there has been a significant reduction in exclusions and incidents of poor behaviour.
- Attendance has improved significantly because students enjoy their work and appreciate the individual care and attention provided by the school.
- There is a range of interesting subjects and activities on offer and this encourages students to work well. The school provides outstanding opportunities for students to follow vocational programmes.
- The governing body has been very involved in the school's improvement since the last inspection. Governors offer a high degree of challenge, as well as good support, and are focused on long-term developments.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A higher proportion of outstanding teaching is required to make sure that all students make rapid progress. There are not always enough opportunities for students to write in lessons.
- Marking is not consistent and does not always help students to know how to improve their work.
- Support staff are not always used effectively in extending learning.
- In some lessons students are not given enough opportunities to assess their own and others' work or discuss what they have learnt.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons and various other learning activities, including opportunities for students to read.
- Meetings were held with students and staff. Telephone conversations were held with a member of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- A visit took place to Berkshire College of Agriculture to gain evidence on vocational placements.
- There were too few submissions to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for data to appear, but the inspector took account of the school's own surveys of parents, carers and students.
- Returns from 25 questionnaires completed by staff were also considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised examples of students' past and present work and looked at various documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, documents related to the performance management of staff, documents on the use of pupil premium, school policies, information on students' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Graham Pirt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mary Geddes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). About half of the students have additional learning difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is designated as co-educational but there are currently no girls on roll, a situation which has existed for some years.
- There are weekly boarding places (Monday to Friday) for 16 students and this provision was subject to a social care inspection in October 2012.
- The students come from a number of local authorities.
- Almost all of the students are from a White British background.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by their local authority or who have a parent in the armed services) is well above the national average.
- The school uses a number of external organisations including Berkshire College of Agriculture, Reading and Newbury Colleges to provide learning for students in Years 10 and 11.
- The Principal took up post in January 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - giving students more opportunities to check their own and each other's work
 - improving marking so that it always informs students about what they need to do to improve
 - increasing the role of support staff in extending students' learning as well as managing behavior.
- Improve achievement by providing more opportunities across the curriculum for students to develop their writing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Almost every student who joins the school has had their education disrupted and, in addition, a number has additional special educational needs; so, on entry, their learning is well below the standard expected for their age. Although the levels they reach remain below average by the time they leave at the end of Year 11, all groups, irrespective of their particular special needs, make good progress and a minority makes outstanding progress.
- All students undertake work experience and achieve accredited vocational qualifications. Students are being well prepared for the next stages in their lives, particularly through the vocational courses provided in Years 10 and 11. Skills in reading, communication and mathematics are improving well. However, students are not always given enough opportunities to develop their writing skills across all subjects. Students who were heard reading did so with confidence, embracing the challenge.
- Since the previous inspection, the deputy principal has developed and introduced the school's own system of 'Get On And Learn' (GOAL), which has had a significant impact on increasing the rate of students' progress by reducing low level disruption to learning.
- There is now an effective system of recording and checking how every student is improving. Since the previous inspection the school has introduced a commercial assessment system to help check the students' levels of work on entry and this now shows the good and better progress that they are making. Staff now set individual targets for every student, and then check progress against targets accurately within the GOAL system.
- There are very good procedures in place for checking how students who study off site are doing. Records show that they also make good or better progress. Many make great strides in their attitudes to learning, their academic work and in their personal and social development.
- The school's tracking systems indicate that learning for students eligible for the pupil premium is improving and the gap with the school average is closing so that some pupils are approaching levels expected for their age. Those students who are looked after by the local authority also make good rates of progress.
- The school works well in partnership with many other professionals and organisations, especially with the speech and language, art and anger management therapists that they employ. Well-planned partnership work ensures every student is supported, helping them to achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students achieve well because lessons are taught consistently well and there is some outstanding teaching.
- Good progress is made in lessons because the students are expected to learn and the work interests them. They often have the opportunity to work independently and at their own pace. This successfully helps their concentration and, in most cases, students apply themselves well to the planned activities.
- Staff work hard to establish positive relationships with the students. The quality of these relationships is key in raising confidence and how students feel about themselves. Classrooms are calm, with the students accepting that school is a place to learn. This is reinforced by the impact of the GOAL system, which is understood and valued by students.
- Although learning in lessons, and over time, has improved since the previous inspection, opportunities to develop learning further are sometimes missed. Although most staff offer feedback to students on their work, both verbally and through formal marking, the quality of this is inconsistent, particularly about what students need to do to improve and how this is followed up. There are too few examples of teachers asking students to assess their own or each other's work.

- Examples of outstanding teaching were seen in English and food technology. The work engaged and enthused the students. Aspirations were high and the teachers' very careful planning meant that each student could work at their own level. However, in many lessons, there are too few opportunities for students to develop their writing skills.
- Good learning is further promoted through the work undertaken by additional adults. Support staff are particularly effective in helping to manage students' behaviour successfully. Their work is less effective in relation to helping to develop and extend students' learning and assisting in assessment.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The attitudes of most students improve well during their time in the school. Most students now attend regularly. In the student questionnaire a large majority states that they enjoy school. Although a small minority still does not attend regularly, the improvement in attendance and the reduction in persistent absence since the last inspection have been outstanding. Many now attend at levels close to, or even in excess of, the national average figure for secondary schools.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school site is usually good because the well-planned lessons are interesting to the students. On the rare occasions when the behaviour of some individuals was not to the standard expected, staff dealt with it consistently and the students involved then returned to their task.
- There is a safe and calm working environment, both on the main site and in the alternative provision. The use of GOAL is an outstanding addition to this process, leading to a very large decrease in the number of incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions in the school since the previous inspection.
- Students are continually encouraged to lead safe and healthy lifestyles and there is a good focus on being healthy and eating healthily. This is reinforced by the very successful food technology and physical education curriculum. Considerable work is undertaken on personal safety, avoiding the dangerous effects of drug, alcohol and substance abuse and adopting safe and sensible attitudes socially. Students feel that bullying is not an issue in the school, but believe that it is dealt with if it occurs. Examples of anti-social behaviour based on racism, homophobic behaviour and the use of other insulting terms are rare, but are all treated very seriously. Students are fully aware of the dangers of cyber bullying.
- Students expressed considerable confidence in the staff. They know that if they are troubled or worried, staff will always be on hand to offer help, advice and guidance. Students reported that they are safe in school and valued by staff.
- The school is in the process of dealing with the difficulty of transport entering the premises by providing a turning circle for vehicles. This should be completed without delay to consolidate the safety of students.

The leadership and management are good

- All aspects of the school's work are well managed, with members of the management team supporting the Principal well and fulfilling their own roles effectively. This is an improvement from the previous inspection.
- Responses to the staff inspection questionnaire indicate high morale. Staff believe recent changes have resulted in a clearer vision for the school's future and improving standards. One member of staff commented, 'We are clearly heading in a very positive direction. School is safe and a very progressive place to work in.'
- The curriculum is varied and engages pupils. There is very good provision for all students, including those who have additional needs.
- Partners spoken to during the inspection commented very positively about the school's work.

They identified key strengths as helping students to change their lives, having high aspirations and supporting students in successfully re-engaging with education.

- The work with partners in alternative and vocational provision is very well managed. The school's students at Berkshire College of Agriculture make consistently rapid progress in their learning.
 - Achievement of students and the quality of teaching are improving at a very good pace because of improved checking of the quality of teaching, the tracking of students' progress and setting targets. This is supported by the emphasis placed on the training of staff, encouraging and supporting staff to gain qualifications in teaching and other awards.
 - Secure procedures for managing teachers' performance are in place. Only staff meeting the required national standards will be able to progress through the salary range.
 - Senior staff and governors have a strong vision for the school and are currently planning, with the local authority, how the present site could be better used to offer more choices, including a broadening of age groups in the school.
 - Systems for checking the quality of the school's work are helping to identify and implement improvements. The school has been strongly supported by the local authority, as a high priority school, during a difficult phase, contributing to the good improvements made. Since the appointment of the new Principal this has reduced to a light touch involvement.
 - Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and meet statutory requirements. Risk assessments, including those for off-site work, are detailed and fit for purpose.
 - There is a strong commitment to equality to ensure that all students make good progress. Work on different religions, cultures, outdoor activities and visits promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Relationships across the school are good, with no evidence of discrimination.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body supports and challenges the school well. Governors have helped to manage the school through a period of difficulty in the past and now provide good governance. Governors are maintaining their role in checking the quality of the school's work well, including taking a keen interest in the quality of teaching and the progress that all students make. They are very knowledgeable about the outcomes for students, including examination and test results. The governing body is fully involved in ensuring that there is a close link between salary progression and the effectiveness of classroom teaching. Governors monitor expenditure well, including the way extra funding through the pupil premium is spent, ensuring it is effective. They correctly believe that the recent improvements mean that the school's overall effectiveness is good. They also know where further developments are needed.
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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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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

Unique reference number	110191
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	405272

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of students	11–16
Gender of students	Boys
Number of students on the school roll	50
Number of boarders on roll	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Marengo
Principal	Dominic Geraghty
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 July 2011
Telephone number	01189771293
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