

Oathall Community College

Appledore Gardens, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 2HQ

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and this increases as they mature through the school. As a result, achievement is good.
- Teaching in the majority of lessons is at least good and improving.
- Students behave well around the school. Their conduct, manners and punctuality are good. They are courteous to adults, welcoming to visitors and respectful of one another.
- Students say they feel safe at school and have a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- The headteacher, the senior leadership team and the governing body have a clear vision for the direction of the school. Their actions have brought about improvements to standards of teaching and students' achievement and they have the ambition to take them to the very highest levels.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not all well planned and teachers do not consistently provide written feedback to students about the next steps in their learning.
- Some students, including the more vulnerable and those with special educational needs, do not always attend school regularly.
- Some subject leaders do not always specify weaknesses in marking and assessment when checking other teachers' work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 52 lessons or part lessons, involving more than half of the teachers. A small number were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, staff, including senior and other managers, members of the governing body, including the Chair, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, including the provision it makes for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- They looked at a number of documents, including information about safeguarding, the school's own data on students' current progress and parents' and carers' views, its view of itself and records of monitoring in relation to teaching, students' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors observed students' workbooks in lessons as well as an appropriate selection made at random in order to help evaluate the progress made by students over time. A substantial number of exercise books from a range of teaching sets were tracked against students' individual progress data.
- Inspectors took account of the 96 responses to the online Parent View survey and considered the 46 responses made by staff in the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Haydn Evans, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Jones	Additional Inspector
Angela Pollard	Additional Inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional Inspector
David Smith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a secondary school of marginally below-average size.
- A very small proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups represented are of Asian heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked-after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families) is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the Year 7 'catch-up premium' is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school uses alternative provision at the West Sussex Alternative Provision College for students at risk of exclusion, as well as Central Sussex College and Chichester College for work-related courses.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and the quality of teaching by making sure that:
 - all teaching is well planned so that all students' learning needs are met
 - teachers agree how they give written feedback to students so that all students are clear about what they should do to improve their work
 - the school works closely with students, parents, carers and external partners to ensure that all students, including those who have special educational needs, attend school regularly
 - subject leaders specify weaknesses in marking and assessment precisely when they are checking the effectiveness of the work of the teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students is good

- Students join the school with significantly above-average attainment. They make better-than-expected progress so that by the end of Year 11, attainment is further improved. Students are not generally entered early for GCSE examinations. However, a very small number of entries were made this year.
- Students' achievement is not outstanding as not all students are making equally rapid and sustained progress. This is partly because a number of students are unclear about how to improve their learning. Teachers do not always give sufficient guidance to students in their exercise books about how to improve their work.
- All students are encouraged to read as often as possible; for example, reading during tutor time has become common practice.
- Those in Year 7 eligible for the catch-up premium receive targeted literacy support from mentors and tutors which enables them to keep up with their peers.
- The school's examination results have improved substantially. This is because of the raised expectations that senior leaders have of teaching and achievement. The school's more robust tracking of students' progress also picks up on underachievement more rapidly.
- Achievement in mathematics is good. The proportion of students making better-than-expected progress in the subject is improving rapidly.
- Students are generally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment and the proportion of Year 11 who remain in education, training or work on leaving the school is significantly above average.
- The rapid rates of progress in Years 10 and 11 are expected to continue. These expectations are based upon the tracking information on students' progress. The school's own data and written work confirm that students make good progress over time.
- The very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those of Asian heritage, have not achieved well. However, the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing. This is because the monitoring of students' progress is more rigorous and intervention more effective.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is in line with that of other students in the school.
- Students who make use of the off-site provision achieve well because of the specialist support they receive.
- A small group of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium have not achieved well in the past. In 2012 they achieved three quarters of a grade lower than the average for students nationally. However, by means of more targeted support the school is successfully narrowing the gap between the achievement of these students and that of others.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving. It is characterised by good questioning, supported by the good subject knowledge of teachers and their positive relationships with the students.
- Teachers make effective use of new data systems for students' progress, especially throughout Key Stage 4. This helps to accelerate the pace of learning. However, they do not consistently provide written feedback to students about the next steps in their learning.
- Technology is used well to enrich teachers' explanations and to support students' learning. For example, in science it helps to engage students and sustain their interest throughout the lesson by animating teachers' explanations and providing illustration for a variety of topics. In one lesson a DVD on indigestion tablets was used to demonstrate the removal of excess acid in the stomach.
- In the best lessons, teachers skilfully question and challenge students at a brisk pace in order to

elicit explanations that improve their learning and understanding. Students are encouraged to be active and develop their understanding by collaborating with each other, as well as working independently of the teacher.

- For example, in a Year 8 German lesson students were required to study the alphabet. They were encouraged to pronounce letters correctly by the teacher's highly effective use of a guitar. As a result students worked actively and collaboratively on this. The teacher skilfully drew together responses from the students. Consequently, they were quickly able to develop correct pronunciation, to some extent independently of the teacher.
- Students are encouraged to find things out for themselves and to collaborate, for example in assessing the quality of their own and one another's work.
- Some teaching is not well planned because not all students' learning needs are accounted for.
- Teachers' expectations about students' progress are generally high, as illustrated by classroom discussions. Students are confident in holding a dialogue with their teachers. The effect is that in the majority of lessons observed, including key subjects like English, modern languages and science, the discussion enabled students to learn independently.
- The teaching of students who use the off-site provision is good. This is because it is directed at their specific learning needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students typically have good and, in some cases, exemplary attitudes to learning, as when they are working independently of their teachers. These attitudes make a significant contribution to their improving achievement.
- Students' behaviour in a range of teaching groups and settings is mostly good and often excellent. Their behaviour around the school is good. They are polite to adults, helpful to visitors and generally respectful of one another. There is a positive ethos in the school. Corridors and recreational areas are orderly, respectful and free from overt supervision by senior leaders.
- The majority of parents, carers, staff and students comment very positively about both the behaviour and safety at the school.
- The enrichment programme, together with students' personal education, helps to promote equal opportunities and develop a cohesive community with tolerance toward others. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The community farm, tutor time and assemblies and the many artefacts around the school environment are good examples of this.
- Students have a good understanding of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Students say that any bullying or harassment is dealt with discreetly and effectively. There are very few incidents but the school is pro-active in this respect.
- Students say they feel safe in school and have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. This is demonstrated by their very high standards of behaviour around the site and in lessons. However, there are occasions when students can become distracted from their learning. This tends to arise when teaching is not well planned and students' learning needs are not properly met.
- Students are punctual to school and to their lessons. The rate of attendance is about average but the proportion of students persistently absent is above average. The attendance of groups of students considered vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and disabilities is below average. However, this has improved over the last academic year with more focused support. The school continues to prioritise attendance in the current academic year.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school and a sense of urgency in implementing it. In this respect he is well supported by his colleagues. This is demonstrated by the recent review of the middle leadership structure and also in the way the school manages the performance of teachers, based upon accountability and relevant training, which has improved the performance of individual staff.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team have high expectations of staff. Their approach to improving the achievement and personal development of all groups of students is determined. This is illustrated by the school's success in substantially improving students' progress in English and mathematics over the past year.
- Some subject leaders do not identify deficiencies in marking and assessment frequently enough when they check teachers' work. The changes made to the school's middle leadership structure and therefore its monitoring and evaluation policy are helping to improve the situation.
- Senior leaders have been successful in raising standards of teaching by the systematic incorporation of performance management into the system for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
- The school's curriculum is effective and regularly reviewed to meet the needs of all groups of students.
- The school's prioritising of equality of opportunity is seen in the increasing progress made by all groups of students and the narrowing of the attainment gap between those eligible for pupil premium funding, those who have special educational needs and the rest of the students.
- The school works well with parents and carers, as indicated by the highly positive response from Parent View, showing that, in a significant sample, almost all of the parents and carers would recommend the school to others.

■ The governance of the school is effective:

- Governors have a clear vision for their strategic role in improving the school. They make effective use of progress data to check the impact of teaching on raising students' attainment and are able to hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account. They have received the relevant training to enable them to fulfil their statutory duties effectively, including those relating to safeguarding. They make sure that financial resources are managed properly. Governors have a good understanding of how teachers' performance is managed and make sure that pay progression takes account of teachers' individual achievements in relation to their targets. They know the strengths and areas of weakness in teaching, partly through their conversations with the headteacher but also through their close links with the work of the school. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. They are strongly supportive of the school's strategy for narrowing the attainment gap between different groups of students. Governors are aware of how the school uses the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding to improve eligible students' progress. They are able to challenge senior leaders through the committee meetings that take place each month and also the regular visits of link governors to the school. This is having a positive effect on the performance of the school.

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 pupils' 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

Unique reference number	126085
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	426690

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

Type of school	Non-selective
School category	Maintained
Age range of students	11–16
Gender of students	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	946
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rowena Chalk
Headteacher	Edward Rodriguez
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 October 2010
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