

Icknield Community College

Love Lane, Watlington, Oxfordshire, OX49 5RB

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is too variable across subjects and not enough students make good progress, particularly in English.
- Although it is getting better, teaching requires improvement because it has not been consistently strong enough to ensure that all students make good progress during their time in the school.
- There is too much teaching which does not take full account of students' different needs and abilities.
- Students are not provided with enough opportunities to develop knowledge or understanding for themselves through independent learning.
- Marking does not always inform students about how well they are doing or provide them with sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- When students are not engaged by the work set, they lose concentration and their behaviour stops being good. Teachers do not always address this consistently.
- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have introduced new systems to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement. However, these are not yet fully embedded or consistently applied by all staff.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, along with a newly appointed senior leadership team, has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school. He has raised expectations and increased accountability.
- Students are very positive about the school. They say they are well cared for, feel safe and value the close community.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and numerous educational trips and visits.
- Governors are well informed and committed to improving standards in the school. Increasingly they are challenging senior leaders to do better.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, 11 of which were observed jointly with senior staff. A number of other lessons were visited briefly with senior leaders to look at students' attitudes to learning and to sample the quality of the marking of students' work.
- Inspectors examined students' books and talked to students about their work. They observed other aspects of the school day, including assemblies, mentoring sessions, students' behaviour at break and lunchtime, and students' arrival and departure from school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and other leaders, a cross-section of staff, and four groups of students. In addition, discussions took place with six representatives from the governing body, including the Chair of Governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 96 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, two letters from parents, and 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's own data on students' recent examinations and current progress, its self-evaluation and development plan, information about the work of the staff linked to training arrangements, checks on teaching, students' behaviour and attendance, the safeguarding of students, and details of governance.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Ann Behan, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Rob Isaac | Additional Inspector |
| Glen Goddard | Additional Inspector |
| Lesley Voaden | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage, few are from ethnic minority backgrounds, and the vast majority speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for students who are eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority, and those from service families is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Currently eleven students attend alternative provision to support their achievement in a range of applied and work-related courses on a part-time basis. They study at The Oxford Hospital, Trax Motor Project, The Henley College, Oxford and Cherwell College, and Meadowbrook College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set the minimum expectations for students' achievement and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement, especially in English, through teaching that is always good or better by making sure that all teachers:
 - match activities more closely to the abilities and needs of all students
 - plan lessons that are demanding and well paced so that students are able to maintain good levels of concentration and enjoyment in their learning
 - provide more opportunities for students to work in groups or independently to research and explore topics and ideas for themselves
 - mark work to a consistently high standard so that written feedback to students explains what they have achieved and done well, and gives clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Build on the improving quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the recently introduced more robust procedures for monitoring teaching and learning become well established so that improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement are accelerated and sustained
 - leaders at all levels are equally rigorous in monitoring the quality of teaching and in making sure that all staff consistently apply the school's systems and policies for improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students have not made sufficient progress in English over time, and there is too much variation in the progress of different groups of students across a number of subjects.
- In 2012, the percentage of students making or exceeding expected progress in English was below national figures. There has been some improvement in 2013 and evidence from the inspection and the school's monitoring show that better teaching in English is improving students' progress.
- Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is broadly average. The proportion of students leaving the school in Year 11 with five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has increased since the previous inspection, but is still below average.
- As a result of action taken over the last year, there are signs that achievement is starting to improve across some subjects, but this is variable. However, achievement in English, whilst getting better, is still below average and has not improved at a fast enough rate. Students' achievement in mathematics has been consistently better than in English and science.
- In 2012, students eligible for pupil premium attained approximately a grade and a half lower in English, and approximately two grades lower in mathematics when compared to other students in the school. However, when compared to similar students across the country, they were half a grade below in both subjects. Results for 2013 and for current students show that these gaps are starting to narrow.
- Those students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme receive additional support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result of this, the school's data show that the gap between them and others in their year group is being reduced, particularly in English.
- Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved overall, and information on the progress of students currently in school shows that these improvements are set to continue. However, progress in lessons still varies too much across the school. Too many lessons do not cater for different abilities and are aimed at the middle, and as a result some students still make insufficient progress.
- Students known to be eligible for pupil premium, those eligible for Year 7 catch-up, and those for whom English is an additional language benefit from additional help and support when it is needed and as a result make similar progress to other students in the school.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs have not, until recently, progressed as well as other students in the school. However, recent changes to provision and better targeted support have meant that they are catching up with other students in the school.
- The progress made by students who attend courses in local colleges is monitored by the school. Their attendance and the progress they are making are similar to those of other students.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although improving, teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to lead to good progress for all students. There is still some teaching which requires improvement or which is occasionally inadequate.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not always use assessment data to plan activities which meet the different needs and abilities of students. In these lessons, all students follow the same work regardless of their ability so there is a lack of pace and challenge to learning for some students, and others find the work too difficult and lose enthusiasm. In some lessons, students do not get enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning by working independently or in groups to research and explore new ideas and topics for

themselves.

- Marking is too variable in quality across subjects. In the best marking, teachers give good feedback on what students are doing well and explain clearly what they need to do to improve their work to the next level. However, in some cases, marking involves little more than a few ticks and some comments of praise without giving students any guidance on how to move forward.
- Where teaching is most successful, teachers plan work that is challenging and use a variety of activities to engage students' interest. This was seen in a Year 8 geography lesson where students were learning about drainage basins and their impact on water supplies. The teacher had high expectations, made good use of ICT to capture students interest, and gave them opportunities to work in groups to investigate and discuss ideas, to practise their speaking and listening skills, and to develop their analytical thinking. Students were challenged to do well and their progress was outstanding.
- The school has recently introduced a literacy programme to promote literacy skills across all subjects. In the best lessons, teachers focus on providing activities that allow students to practise their reading, speaking and listening skills, to use technical terms in their explanations, and to produce extended pieces of writing linked to the topics being studied. However, this is not consistent across all lessons.
- The deployment of teaching assistants has been revised recently. Those observed during lessons worked collaboratively with teachers and were effective in supporting students with special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' behaviour requires improvement because in some lessons where teaching is not good and students are not sufficiently challenged, they are content to sit back and let others do the work or answer questions. In some lessons where students are not engaged fully, there can be low-level disruption which detracts from the learning of others. A few students reported inconsistencies in the way staff manage unacceptable behaviour.
- Behaviour around the school is good. Students say they enjoy attending school and feel safe. They say teachers care for them and teach them well. They value the variety of activities that are provided for them.
- Students are aware of the different kinds of bullying, including racist behaviour, homophobia, and cyber bullying. They told inspectors that on the rare occasions bullying does occur, it is dealt with promptly and effectively.
- In assemblies, mentoring sessions and across subjects, students are given good advice on how to stay safe. They cover a variety of themes about family issues, the use of the internet, and the importance of healthy lifestyles and the dangers and adverse effects of drugs and substance abuse. Students told inspectors that they appreciated this support and advice.
- Attendance is rising and has improved from low in 2012 to just below the national average in 2013. Exclusions were above the national average but new systems for managing behaviour have had a positive effect and exclusions have recently dropped to be below the national average.
- Students' attendance at courses organised off-site is good. The school keeps a careful check on their attendance and liaises well with providers of these courses to ensure students enjoy and benefit from the education they receive.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View felt that students were well behaved and cared for, and that the school dealt with bullying effectively.

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- The headteacher, well supported by the governors, has shown commitment and determination in addressing underperformance in the school. Many staff changes and more rigorous checks on the quality of teaching have promoted higher expectations among staff and students, and have brought about some improvements in both teaching and students' achievement. However, teaching is not yet consistently good, and there is still too much variation between how well different groups progress, so leadership and management require improvement.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest. The development plan identifies key areas for improvement and links closely to department plans and the accountability of subject leaders. Joint observations with inspectors showed senior leaders judgements about the quality of teaching are accurate. They have a clear idea of what constitutes good and better teaching.
- Performance management procedures have been tightened recently to reflect the raised expectations on achievement and are linked to the teachers' standards and training. There is now a clear link between teacher performance and pay progression.
- Staff are provided with numerous opportunities to take part in training. There is a school focus on improving teaching, and in supporting leaders at all levels to better develop their skills through external and internal courses, and various forms of coaching.
- Though there have been recent and significant changes in staffing, including the composition of the senior leadership team, staff morale remains high. The unanimous response to the staff questionnaire was one of support, and a number of staff commented positively on the changes that have been made. One teacher wrote, 'The school is undergoing a transition period to move towards where we need to be. The staff are all working together to push forward.' A member of the support staff wrote, 'I am extremely impressed with the management team and with the way in which they are striving for excellence.'
- The curriculum has recently been revised to provide appropriate courses for students in Key Stage 4, including well-managed off-site provision. The school works well with local primary schools to aid progression from Year 6 to Year 7, has good links with local businesses and colleges to provide appropriate pathways for students in Year 11, and provides opportunities for students to gain independent help about different career choices.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a range of enrichment activities and after-school clubs, through assemblies, in lessons, and in mentoring time. Students have many opportunities to take part in educational visits, some of them overseas to France, Italy, Spain and Morocco.
- Additional funding received through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium is used wisely to make sure that students get the help that they need. For example, the school identified that some eligible students were unable to take full advantage of after-school clubs because they had limited access to public transport, so it provided the school minibus to make sure students could take part in the extra-curricular activities and reach home safely.
- The school works hard to prevent discrimination and to make sure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. In conjunction with the local authority, in 2012, it conducted a detailed review of its provision for students with special educational needs, and as a result has thoroughly revised the ways students with special needs are catered for. Early assessments show that this is having a positive effect on progress and achievement, but the school recognises there is still more to be done to assist these students.
- There is a positive working relationship between the school and the local authority. The local authority has helped the school review and improve the provision for students with special educational needs and has given good support to the headteacher and governors through the recent staffing re-structure.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and those responding to Parent View were overwhelmingly positive.
- The school meets all government requirements in relation to safeguarding of students and safer recruitment.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors provide the school with a wide range of knowledge and expertise, and ensure all statutory requirements are met. They are committed to securing improvement and they are pleased with the progress that has recently been made by the headteacher and the senior leaders in improving teaching, while acknowledging that more needs to be done. They receive regular training and have a clear understanding of the school's attainment data and what they show about how it is performing when compared to schools nationally. They have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching in the school, and make sure that there are close links between performance management of staff, effectiveness of teaching and students' achievement, and salary awards. They know what the school is doing to reward good teachers and to tackle any underperformance. They monitor expenditure closely and are keen to make sure that resources are used effectively to benefit students, including those eligible for pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 0123244 |
| Local authority | Oxfordshire |
| Inspection number | 428887 |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 607 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Robert Cockrem |
| Headteacher | Mr Mat Hunter |
| Date of previous school inspection | 29–30 June 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01491 612691 |
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