

Churchmead CofE (VA) School

Priory Way, Datchet, Slough, SL3 9JQ

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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

- Students' progress in science has been much slower than in other subjects.
- The most able make less progress than other students.
- Too few students read widely enough to support their learning, or for pleasure.
- Too little of the teaching is outstanding.
- Sometimes, students' learning lacks direction because teachers are not clear what they want students to achieve in a lesson.
- Not all teachers find out enough about what students currently know and understand about a topic, or their misconceptions. Learning is not checked rigorously enough in some lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is providing strong and effective leadership. He and his senior team are driving rapid and secure improvements in the school.
- Achievement is improving because teaching is getting better. Students' progress in English and mathematics is secure and standards are rising.
- Students' literacy skills are improving and this is supporting better learning.
- Inadequate teaching has been virtually eradicated and staffing is now more stable.
- Some lessons are enjoyable and stimulating and challenge students well.
- Students behave well around the school and in the vast majority of lessons. They demonstrate a new-found sense of pride in their school, and in their achievements.
- The interim executive board exercises good governance.

Information about this inspection

- The school was placed in special measures at its previous inspection in November 2012. This was because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school were not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- This inspection began as the third monitoring visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. It was changed to become an inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 at the end of the first day. Evidence from the first two visits was used to support the judgements in this inspection.
- Inspectors observed 18 lessons and made shorter visits to five other lessons. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with senior staff.
- Inspectors met with senior staff, representatives of the interim executive board including a representative of the diocese, teaching staff and students.
- The school's development planning and self-evaluation documents, policies and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online Parent View to be able to use these to gauge parents' opinions of the work of the school. The school's own surveys of parents' views were used.

Inspection team

Alan Taylor-Bennett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Karen Roche

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is slightly higher than the national average. The proportion supported at school action is near the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is above the national average. Some students are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- A larger than average proportion of students joins the school at times other than the beginning of Year 7. Many of these students speak English as an additional language.
- The school is designated as being able to enrol students from 11 to 18, but recruitment to the sixth form has been suspended and there are currently no students in Year 12 or above.
- A small number of students are educated elsewhere for at least part of the week. This includes work experience placements, and three students who are educated elsewhere on a full-time basis. These other providers include East Berkshire College, Haybrook College and Academy 21.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in the school so that it is at least consistently good, and there is a far higher proportion that is outstanding, by:
 - making sure that the desired learning in every lesson is expressed clearly in planning, and is shared with students in useful ways
 - making sure teachers check the quality of students' learning over the course of a lesson by a wide variety of means, including frequent and probing questioning, and continually adapt teaching in response
 - maintaining high levels of pace, involvement, and stimulation, to make learning more involving and enjoyable.
- Raise achievement, specifically:
 - in science, through ensuring consistently good teaching in the department
 - of the most able, by offering them high levels of challenge and support, and a wide range of stimuli
 - by improving levels of literacy in the school, strongly promoting reading for pleasure and emphasising the importance of consistently high standards of written expression.
- Raise the quality of leadership and management at all levels to become at least good, by ensuring that:
 - all middle leaders hold teachers to account for outcomes, while providing good levels of support and communication
 - high quality leadership training is undertaken, where relevant involving national bodies.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students are now making better progress across a wide range of subjects. Examination outcomes in 2013 showed that, in English, a higher proportion of students in the school made the progress expected of them than is the case nationally. The proportion doing so in mathematics was only slightly below the national average.
- This better progress is causing an upward trend in the number of students obtaining five GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, over the last three years. Average grades in English and mathematics, and a number of other subjects including history and media, are improving.
- Students' literacy skills are becoming more secure. This is reflected in the better quality written work in books, and also in the greater pride being taken in its presentation. This is because of a good whole-school strategy and a continual focus on written communication in lessons. The good use of the Year 7 catch-up premium is accelerating younger students' progress in reading and writing, through one-to-one extra support and smaller class sizes in some subjects.
- Progress in science has been inadequate over recent years, but there are clear signs that better teaching and leadership in this area are beginning to improve students' progress. There is a legacy of underachievement in Key Stage 4 to address, and the department and senior staff are well aware of the need to make special provision to address this.
- Students' speaking skills are improving. Because of the school's emphasis on this, students' verbal contributions to lessons are beginning to be formulated with more care and precision in many classrooms. Too few students read for pleasure, however, and too few lessons involve students being guided to read around topics.
- The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs has been variable over recent years. The underlying trend is positive because there is a strong culture in the school of promoting equality of opportunity and teachers are getting better at setting work that matches individuals' particular learning needs.
- Students entering the school with low Key Stage 2 results make very good progress. The progress made by more-able students requires improvement. A raft of initiatives this term, to provide stimulus and challenge for students with specific talents and interests, has helped to address this, and teachers are beginning to organise resources and classroom activities to enable very high levels of attainment by those with such potential.
- A higher proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals make greater than expected progress in English and mathematics than others. This is causing the existing gaps in attainment to close: the difference in the average grade in English in 2013 was negligible, and the difference in mathematics was half a grade and is narrowing. This is due to good use being made of this additional funding, including provision for literacy and numeracy coaching, employing more teaching assistants to support individuals in lessons, and supporting eligible students to take part in enrichment and extension activities.
- Only a few Year 11 students will take examinations for the GCSE in English early, and this is done very carefully so as to not limit anyone's potential to achieve better grades in the summer. No early entries are planned in mathematics.
- The progress of students who join the school during or after Year 7, many of whom speak English as an additional language, is better than those who spend the full five years here. This is a tribute to the work of the recently reorganised Compass Suite which aims to integrate new students into the school as well as possible, and with good language and social skills. It is also because many of these students have a strong work ethic, and a determination to do well.
- The progress of students educated elsewhere is monitored closely to ensure that they benefit from this alternative provision and obtain appropriate qualifications, including in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving throughout the school, especially in English and mathematics. Most is good, virtually none is inadequate, but very little is outstanding. Students and their parents are appreciative of the better teaching, and of the more stable staffing in the school now.
- When teaching is good, students' learning is rapid and secure. For example, in a physical education lesson observed, students were associating changes in heart rate and blood flow with different forms of activity and were able to grasp complex ideas, such as blood shunting, quickly and combine them successfully with other learning.
- Good teaching in the school uses questioning skilfully to continually probe and extend understanding. In an art lesson seen, the teacher moved a discussion on pointillism and other techniques forward quickly, while continually checking for understanding by directing the right kinds of questions to particular students.
- Where teaching requires improvement, there is sometimes a lack of clarity about the real point of the lesson, which means that learning is not directed strongly and purposefully. In such situations many students still show willing and there are gains in learning, but progress is compromised and some misconceptions remain unaddressed.
- The school is aware of the need to address the needs of the most able better and there has been a range of lunchtime sessions run covering interesting topics. Too few lessons currently build in very high expectations of the most able students, and offer them different work and stimulating challenges.
- Students appreciate the different work set to meet different abilities in mathematics, English and science, but say that this does not happen enough in some other subjects.
- All teachers prioritise the development of literacy in lessons and this is leading to better written work. Opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage greater clarity of verbal expression in the way that answers are articulated and ideas expressed. Few teachers require or encourage students to read around topics often enough.
- The quality of marking has benefited from a clear policy implemented throughout the school. Books are usually marked with appropriate frequency and there is almost always useful feedback offered to students; sometimes, however, this is simply of a general nature about presentation or effort. The best marking involves subject-specific commentary and requires specific responses from students, and thus supports very secure progress.
- The teaching supports students' cultural development well. There are art trips to galleries in London and locally, to London theatres that involve workshops with professional actors and then an opportunity to see the play performed, and visits to a local French restaurant to give students the chance to use their language skills over a meal. Assemblies, religious education lessons and a range of carefully planned provision in other subjects offer a wide range of opportunities for students' spiritual development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Students move around the school calmly and happily. They are welcoming and friendly. Students from different backgrounds get along very well.
- Many students wanted inspectors to understand how much better behaviour is this year, and how much they appreciate the steps taken by senior staff to bring this about. The number of exclusions for serious disciplinary offences has decreased markedly.
- Students are punctual to lessons and punctuality to school has improved because of recent responses, including 'late at the gate' and the use of sanctions. Lessons start on time and learning begins promptly.
- The new rewards system is regarded very positively. It is felt to operate fairly and to promote good behaviour. Students have a good moral compass and a well-developed sense of what may constitute a risk to their well-being or to their community, such as extremist views, homophobia

or racism. This is due to the good values that the school continually reinforces through assemblies, personal, social and health education and other lessons, and in tutor time.

- In lessons, students are very willing to take part, and listen well to explanations and instructions. Opportunities to work in groups in lessons are usually very successful because students are keen to work together. They do not, however, test their own understanding, and that of their friends, rigorously and often enough; there are missed opportunities to air misconceptions and consider different ways of approaching problems.
- Students work hard in most lessons and value making good progress and obtaining qualifications. There is time wasted in some lessons, when teaching does not offer sufficient challenge and activities go on too long, but rarely disruption.
- Bullying is rare and students value the support of the 'blue guardian angels', selected and trained older students who can offer immediate and effective advice and help. They regard staff as kind and helpful, and many students feel that they can share any problems with their teachers.
- Attendance in 2012/13 was below the national average. Although the contribution of persistent absence to the overall absence rate is diminishing, there are no strong signs of improvement currently.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher commands the respect of parents, staff, students, the interim executive board (IEB) and the local authority. He has a very clear vision for the school and exercises authority calmly and very effectively. He has already built rapidly and securely on the strengths that developed when the deputy headteacher led the school last year.
- The senior team is now working in a coherent, focused and effective manner. The members' individual strengths have come to the fore and their joint leadership is assured and confident.
- Development planning is thorough and addresses the issues that will move the school forward most quickly. Monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the work of the school are undertaken frequently and thoroughly. Students' achievements are monitored and analysed meticulously and the messages detected in patterns of achievement are used to drive appropriate responses. The headteacher and his senior staff know and understand the school's development needs very well and demonstrate the capacity to address them successfully. Achievement, the quality of teaching and the behaviour of students are all improving as a result.
- The headteacher and the IEB are formulating a vision for the longer term development of the school, which involves it meeting the needs of the local community in imaginative and exciting ways. There are well thought through plans for changes to the curriculum for next year, all of which have the capacity to support better teaching and learning.
- Improving the quality of teaching is given an appropriately very high priority. This is done through a wide range of ways, including grouping staff who are seeking to improve similar aspects of their practice and supporting them to work together effectively; personalised programmes for individual staff; good quality training; good links with a local outstanding teaching school; and frequent observations of classroom practice and high quality feedback. Leaders and managers usually judge the quality of teaching accurately.
- This good quality support for staff training is underpinned by a newly reorganised and thorough performance management process. There are now clear links between how teachers are bringing about improvements in students' progress, and pay increases. All teachers have targets that are rooted in the school's overall development planning.
- Middle leaders understand their role clearly and are relishing the higher levels of accountability of them to drive up achievement. They exercise their responsibilities diligently and are beginning to hold teachers to account for the quality of learning. None is currently involved in high-level leadership training to develop good and outstanding practice, such as a nationally recognised programme, to improve their skills.
- There are now regular parent newsletters and a parent forum has been formed. School leaders

have a keen understanding of the needs of the local community. Ways of keeping parents informed about how some lessons are delivered, for example in information technology and literacy development, have been trialled, but there are relatively few ways established yet of involving parents closely and strategically in the life of the school.

- Safeguarding is given high priority. The vetting of applications from adults to work in the school, and of current staff, is thorough, and safeguarding training is regular and of good quality.
- The local authority has provided a great deal of very useful support for the school over the last year. Advisers have been closely involved in addressing weaker teaching and supporting the development of good teaching, the school's leadership has been given high quality support, and monitoring visits have served to reinforce emerging strengths and focus attention on important areas of weakness. The diocese is highly supportive of the school's work and a representative chairs the IEB. The school continues to benefit from appropriate support, but senior leaders have now taken the reins and are successfully directing improvement strategies themselves.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The IEB has exercised strong governance of the school. It maintains a clear distinction between its role and that of the headteacher and senior staff, and maintains robust and resolute strategic oversight of the key priorities. Members of the IEB have a very good knowledge of the school's work and specifically of the quality of teaching. This is obtained through a close scrutiny of performance data which enables members to understand specific strengths and weaknesses against national expectations, regular visits to the school, and by holding specific middle leaders to account through invitations to board meetings. They oversee the operation of the performance management system closely and ensure that only good teaching is rewarded by pay rises. They show a very good understanding of the need to closely monitor the performance of students eligible for the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up premium, and follow an established set of procedures to do this, using students' achievement data well in the process. Members of the IEB have maintained their own skills and professional knowledge through training. The school's finances are monitored scrupulously. There are plans to reconstitute a governing body at an appropriate point, with measures in place to ensure a smooth and effective transition.

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	133580
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	424272

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	464
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Eddie Carmichael
Headteacher	Chris Tomes
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 November 2012
Telephone number	08444 722446
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