

Frome Community College

Bath Road, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2HQ

Inspection dates 29 – 30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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.

- The school has made rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement because of the good leadership provided by the school's senior leaders. The Principal provides outstanding leadership.
- Governors are well informed and support and challenge senior leaders well.
- Most students make at least good progress from starting points that are often low. An increasing number are making outstanding progress.
- The achievement of students in Years 9 to 11 has improved significantly and gaps between the achievement of different groups of students have closed, or are closing rapidly.
- Improvements in students' achievement are due to improvements in the quality of teaching and more rigorous tracking of their progress. Much teaching is good and some, in a range of subjects, is outstanding.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a very strong feature that permeates much of the school.
- Almost all teaching in the sixth form is now at least good and much is outstanding. However, the achievement of some students is not good enough and the sixth form overall requires improvement. Achievement is rising rapidly because of the significant improvements in the quality of teaching..
- The school has responded very well to the requirements of the 16 to 19 Study Programme introduced in September 2013. The sixth form curriculum meets the needs of all students particularly well.
- This is a vibrant school where students play a full part in the many and varied opportunities open to them. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is at least good and they feel safe. They have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. They are very appreciative of the improvements that the school has made.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The achievement of some students in the sixth form requires improvement. There has not been enough time for improvements to teaching to result in good achievement for all.
- A small amount of teaching requires improvement to raise students' achievements further so that all make the progress they are capable of.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 47 lessons, 22 jointly with the Principal, another senior leader or a subject leader. Inspectors also conducted a number of student pursuits, following individuals and small groups of students over a sequence of lessons. In lessons, inspectors checked the data on the progress being made by students in that class, looked at the work of students and discussed their progress with them.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with two groups of students from Years 9 to 11 and several meetings with small groups of students in the sixth form. They also used lunchtime and break times to hold informal discussions with other students around the school to gather their views, particularly about how much the school has improved.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, the Chair and other members of the governing body.
- The meetings included discussions about school policies and procedures, the analysis of data and documented information, and records provided by the school, including those related to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and tracking of students' progress. The lead inspector worked with the Principal and other senior leaders to analyse the school's data on the progress being made by students in each year group, including boys and girls and those in different groups, such as those supported through the pupil premium and disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Meetings with senior leaders and with the governing body included discussion of the school's self-evaluation of the impact of the large number of developments in the school, and improvement planning.
- Inspectors took account of the 56 responses to the online Parent View survey and 62 responses to the staff survey as well as the school's own surveys of the views of teachers, parents and students.

Inspection team

James Sage, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Bullen

Additional Inspector

Duncan Millard

Additional Inspector

Helen Neal

Additional Inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector

Full report

When Frome Community College was inspected in October 2012, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Subsequently, the school was inspected on three occasions. At the last monitoring inspection the school was judged to be making reasonable progress.

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Frome Community College is a larger-than-average-sized 13 to 19 secondary school with a large sixth form. It works closely with partner middle and first schools through the Frome Partnership of Schools.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is just below the national average.
- The overall proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for children looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces) is just below the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students whose first language is not English is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the amount of good and outstanding teaching even further, including in the sixth form, by:
 - making sure that all teachers have high expectations of all of their students and challenge them to do as well as they can
 - making clear links between well-planned steps in learning, sharply defining learning objectives, how students' achievement of these will be monitored during the lesson and the success criteria the school uses to judge what learning has been achieved
 - making sure that teachers use data on their students' progress to plan activities that result in students learning as much as they can during lessons.
- Raise students' achievement in the sixth form further by:
 - improving teaching further, as described above
 - ensuring that students make better use of study time to prepare for lessons and to complete all of the work they have been set
 - tracking students' progress carefully to identify any at risk of falling behind so that swift and effective action can be taken
 - improving students' attendance
 - extending the good-quality 'wrap-around care' for students in Years 9 to 11 to those in the sixth form
 - enhancing the status of the leaders of the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students in Years 9 to 11 make at least good progress from starting points that are often very low, particularly for boys. The achievement of students has improved significantly since the school's last inspection; overall attainment has risen significantly year on year and is well set to improve further. Students' achievement is not outstanding overall because some students, including some of the most able, do not yet make all of the progress they are capable of.
- Students' achievement in English is good. The proportions of students making the expected levels of progress are in line with national figures and the achievement of boys has improved to be closer to that of girls. The achievement of the most able students has improved to be in line with national figures, although boys lag behind girls. Students' achievement in mathematics is good, continues to improve and is in line with national expectations. The achievement of boys in mathematics is now close to that of girls.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make as much progress as these students nationally, but do not do as well as other students in the school. While the difference in attainment for these students compared to others in the school in English and mathematics was up to one GCSE grade in 2013, this gap is narrowing rapidly as their progress improves. The additional funding is being used well to raise the achievement of these students.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported extremely well and make at least good, and improving, progress. They are catered for well in lessons and receive high-quality individual support when they need it.
- Students' achievement is at least good across a wide range of subjects. Achievement in science has improved significantly as teaching improves and is now at least good. Students now make consistently good progress in almost all subjects.
- Many students enter the school at the start of Year 9 with low levels of written and oral communication, reading and mathematical skills. A huge amount of work has been undertaken, particularly in literacy, and this is evident in many lessons in a wide range of subjects. The use of a programme to promote reading for all students in Year 9 has already had significant impact on improving students' reading levels and the librarian reports that many more boys are taking more books out of the library. Students' oral communication skills have improved through teachers, in mathematics and science for example, making them explain their reasoning in class discussions. Widespread use of short, focused discussions in pairs or small groups has also helped improve students' skills, as well as increasing the pace of learning in these lessons.
- Support for individuals and groups of students is directed well at their particular needs. The frequent and robust tracking of students' progress enables this support to be identified swiftly. Any students in the main school who are at risk of falling behind are supported well, helping them to quickly get back on track.
- In the sixth form, while overall achievement is now improving rapidly, it requires improvement because too much variation across years and subjects remains. Students' achievement in vocational subjects is at least good. It is also strong in some subject areas, such as art and design, English literature, drama and law, and is improving in mathematics and the science subjects. However, there is too much inconsistency in achievement across a range of subjects. The number of students who stay on after Year 12 is too low in some subjects, with low achievement at the end of Year 12 in some being part of the cause.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is achieved very well through a range of activities and through the good attention given to this in many lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- Through the period of monitoring the school's progress since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved significantly in all subjects at each visit. Much teaching, including in

English and mathematics, is now at least good. Some teaching in a wide range of subjects is outstanding. In the sixth form, almost all teaching is now at least good and a significant amount is outstanding, although this has not yet had time to result in all students making good progress across the sixth form. The teaching of re-take English and mathematics for those students in the sixth form without at least a GCSE grade C is sometimes not good enough.

- Senior leaders and leaders in charge of subjects make accurate judgements of the quality of teaching based on evaluations of students' progress over time, from scrutiny of their work and from observations of teaching. This enables support for those teachers that need it to be accurately identified and put in place swiftly.
- The characteristics of the very best teaching were clear, for example, in two outstanding mathematics lessons and one outstanding science lesson. In all of these, the teacher was relentless in questioning students to probe and develop their understanding, making them explain their reasoning and asking other students to comment or develop the answers further. The lessons had excellent pace and students worked with enthusiasm, enjoyment and a desire to make rapid progress. Similar high-quality teaching was seen in a number of sixth form lessons, for example in applied business, drama, religion and philosophy, geography, mathematics and politics.
- The teaching in most lessons is at least good, and some is outstanding, but at times students, including the most able, are not challenged and stimulated enough. Teachers do not always make good use of the data that they have on students' achievement to plan activities that result in students making rapid progress or to identify those that need extra support or challenge.
- One significant improvement the school has made is ensuring that all lessons have clear learning objectives and 'success criteria' to check that these have been achieved. In some lessons, including the small proportion that require improvement, these objectives are not sharp enough and not enough thought had been given to how students' progress will be checked in the lesson. Despite the use by the school of 'non-negotiables' (key features of all lessons) some teachers, whose lessons are not yet good, find it difficult to distil from the large number of developments the school has put in place what can be best achieved in the lesson and other aspects that become forced. For example, while many lessons develop students' skills in reading, writing or discussion naturally as part of the subject teaching, others try to force these into the lessons inappropriately.
- Students, including those in the sixth form, receive regular feedback on their work, are given clear guidance about what to do to improve it and most teachers check that this has been done. This is much improved since the last inspection. Students are clear about their target grades and most know what they need to do to achieve them. They are also clear about the 'high challenge' grades they are set and most aspire to achieve this higher grade.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- The students interviewed were very positive about improvements in behaviour and about how safe they feel in the school. While a small minority of parents disagree about behaviour being good, this seems to be a view more of how the school was in the past rather than what it is like now.
- In lessons, most students display good attitudes, are attentive and take a full part in the activities. They respond really well when the teaching is stimulating.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because in a few lessons teaching is not 'grabbing students' interest'. Despite the size of the school campus, students move to lessons promptly and generally arrive ready to learn. The way that students in physical education lessons take on specific roles (such as leading the warm-up or short skills development sessions) and show great respect for others, despite wide variations in skills levels, is impressive. Other subjects also allocate roles in this way and students rise well to these responsibilities.

- Around the school site, students behave safely and sensibly. The site is clean and tidy and students show good respect for the school environment. The school is planning how to make even better use of the site and students are looking forward to this. Students have a well-developed sense of how to keep themselves safe and of all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Bullying is extremely rare and when it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Racist, religious, homophobic and other prejudice-based bullying seem to be almost non-existent. Older students, without being specifically selected to do so, take a responsible role and attitude in ensuring that younger students are safe.
- The on-site behaviour unit, the Phoenix Centre, is used very well to improve the attitudes and behaviour of the small group of students who spend some of their time there. All of these students successfully move on to employment or further education when they leave the school.
- Year 9 students wear the new school uniform with pride.
- The school provides students with an extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs: artistic, musical, theatrical, sporting, social, cultural, science and technology activities and careers fairs, for example, make highly effective use of the theatre and other facilities on the school site, as well as in the community. All activities are very well attended and highly valued by students. Many of these also show the very strong relationships the school has with many businesses and organisations within Frome – it is very much at the heart of the community.
- Overall attendance is below average. However, it is more in line with that for other 13 to 19 schools. The number of students who are persistently absent from school is too high. The school is fully aware of this, and of the need to know where these students are and ensure their safety, and is taking appropriate actions. It is hampered by financial constraints in not being able to devote more resources to this.
- In the sixth form, attendance is not high enough and some students do not make best use of study time to complete set tasks and to prepare themselves for their next lessons. The school is fully aware, particularly as it offers more provision for students at Levels 1 and 2, that there is scope to continue the very good 'wrap-around care' it provides for students in Years 9 to 11 to those in the sixth form. Again, in this it is working within tight financial constraints.

The leadership and management are good

- Overall leadership and management of the school are good and the leadership provided by the Principal is outstanding. Significant changes in subject leadership have taken place, but the school is well on the way to building a very strong team of subject leaders. This is why the school has made such good progress in improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of students.
- The Principal and other senior leaders, supported well by governors, have created a school where students want to participate and learn, where working hard is seen to be the acceptable norm, where behaviour and attitudes to learning are good, and where teachers strive to be as good as they can be. It now feels like a vibrant and lively school where students and teachers are proud to work.
- Leadership of teaching by senior leaders and, increasingly, by most subject leaders, is a strong feature of the school. The quality of teaching and the performance of individual teachers are checked frequently and rigorously, with strong links to the impact of teaching on students' progress and achievement. Swift actions are taken to support those teachers that need it, as well as challenging all to get better. Frequent and good quality professional development is provided for all teachers to help them improve and to ensure that whole-school developments are applied consistently. When teachers show that they do not have either the will or ability to improve, the school takes appropriate, but sensitive, action and there have been a large number of staff changes in the last 12 to 15 months.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good and, since the start of this school year, has accurately identified what needs to get better and is driving significant improvement. A vice principal has

primary responsibility for the sixth form, recognising its importance to the school, and is supported well by the sixth form director of learning. The plans to extend and enhance the leadership of the sixth form even further needs to be implemented as quickly as possible to drive through the improvements required.

- The school has responded to the requirements of the 16 to 19 Study Programme, introduced in September 2012 for all 16 to 19 learners, extremely thoroughly and creatively. It is building a curriculum suitable for post-16 learners at all levels, with a very good balance and breadth of academic and vocational programmes, including apprenticeships and, in the future, possibly traineeships. It has entered into a wide range of productive partnerships, with employers, training organisations and further education colleges, to offer this breadth of provision. Careful attention is being given to building good progression from the Key Stage 4 curriculum, which already meets students' needs and aspirations well. The school ensures that those students who enter the sixth form without a GCSE grade C or better in English and/or mathematics have full-year programmes in these subjects. However, these students' attendance and the quality of teaching are not yet good enough.
- The school is an active and leading partner in the Frome Partnership of Schools that includes both partner middle and all first schools. There is now a better flow of information and much clearer accountability for students' achievement. It has also enabled key initiatives, such as developing students' literacy skills in a coordinated and supportive way, to be increasingly effective.
- Since the last inspection, the school has been through a period of uncertainty regarding its future, particularly in relation to the possibility of it becoming a sponsored academy. However, the Principal's single-mindedness and tight focus on school improvement, supported by the governing body, has enabled the school to come through this period to become a good school. This has been achieved largely without practical or financial support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the school is good. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and of the school's analysis of students' progress. This enables them to hold senior leaders to account by asking challenging questions. Governors are fully aware of how the performance of teachers is managed, including the use of the Teachers' Standards, and support the Principal well in dealing with teachers that are not good enough. The governing body ensures the efficient management of financial and other resources, and supports the Principal well in determining priorities within financial constraints. They check carefully the use of pupil premium funding and monitor the impact on these students' achievement. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory requirements, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection.

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	123862
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	426704

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1271
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Lock
Principal	Gavin Ball
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 October 2012
Telephone number	01373 465353
Fax number	01373 469078
Email address	gball@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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