

Avon Valley College

Recreation Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 8HH

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2014

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.

- From their low starting points students make good, and often very good, progress. The proportion of students attaining five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics increased significantly in 2013.
- Teaching is usually good in most subjects because teachers have high expectations.
- The principal's good leadership is focusing all staff on raising achievement. Consequently, teachers plan tasks that encourage all students to work hard and motivate all to want to do well.
- Senior leaders are ambitious for the school and are committed to securing the best possible outcomes for students.
- Subject leaders work well together to support students to achieve well in their GCSE examinations.
- Pastoral leadership is strong and inclusive care for all students ensures that those supported through additional government funding achieve at least as well as their peers.
- Students behave well. They are polite and courteous to staff and to each other. Their attendance has improved and they are punctual to lessons.
- Students feel safe at school and good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins good relationships between students and teachers and between students and their peers.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from a wide range of opportunities which meet their varied backgrounds and interests. The good quality of care ensures that they are well placed to take the next steps in their education, employment or training.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The level of challenge in some lessons is not always high enough to ensure that all students make the progress necessary to achieve the highest grades.
- Not all students benefit from consistently good teaching in English because of the number of lessons covered by temporary staff.
- Some teachers' marking and feedback is not always sufficiently well structured to help students to improve the quality of their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, including 10 with members of the senior leadership team. Five further part lesson observations were undertaken with the vice principal.
- Meetings were held between inspectors and senior and middle leaders, teachers, five groups of students, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence including the school’s improvement plan, checks on how well it is doing, information relating to safeguarding and child protection, records of the quality of teaching, performance management information and minutes of governors’ meetings.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school’s records of students’ progress and attainment and also work in students’ books across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors listened to students read and observed the support they receive to develop their reading.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the questionnaires completed by staff and 53 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mark Bennison	Additional Inspector
Svetlana Bajic Raymond	Additional Inspector
Richard Kearsey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Avon Valley College is a smaller than average secondary school. It has a very small sixth form which includes students with special educational needs and those who are most able.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and requiring extra support through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium who are known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Three students in Year 10 and one student in Year 11 follow alternative provision at Wiltshire College, Salisbury.
- The majority of students are entered early for GCSEs in English and in mathematics.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers fully stretch students of the highest ability and support those of lowest ability, so that work is at the right level of difficulty in order for them to achieve highly including at AS and A level
 - improving the consistency of marking so that all students have a clear understanding of how to develop their work and are able to demonstrate to their teachers that they have understood and acted on the advice given.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that monitoring and checking of lessons ensures that all students' experiences of teaching, and the progress they make as a consequence of good teaching, are more consistent in English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with attainment that is below the national average. In 2013, the proportion of students who gained five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics was above average.
- Students make good progress from their starting points in almost all subjects. In 2013 the proportions making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics were above national expectations. Information provided by the school indicates that students currently on roll are likely to make similar very good progress.
- The school recognised that results dipped in 2012. Effective action was taken to enable the subject leaders of English, mathematics and science to work together to maximise students' progress and attainment. Consequently, there was a 13% rise in the number of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2013.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because they benefit from carefully thought out interventions and support.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding make similar progress to their peers because they are well supported to develop their reading and literacy skills.
- Additional funding from the government is used effectively to provide support for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals. In 2013 the gap in attainment between these students and their peers narrowed and was approximately one third of a GCSE grade in English and two thirds of a GCSE grade in mathematics. Information provided by the school indicates a further closing of the gap for 2014.
- Students from service families benefit from specialist pastoral care. The school facilitates timely and appropriate rest and recuperation for these students. They consequently make good progress to attain GCSE grades in English and mathematics within one third of a grade of those of their peers.
- The most-able students make good progress and attain the highest grades across a number of subjects. However, this high attainment is not consistent across all subjects including in the sixth form.
- Almost all students are entered early for their GCSEs in English and mathematics. In 2013 students' attainment in English and mathematics was above national. The proportion of students, including the most able, making more than expected progress was also above national in both subjects.
- The school runs a number of holiday and after-school lessons. These are open to all students, but targeted groups are encouraged to attend. There are also sessions for parents to help them to support their children at home in the run-up to GCSE examinations. This provision is helping students to make progress and the high uptake is indicative of students' desire to achieve good outcomes.
- Outcomes for the sixth form were below the national average in 2013 because the partnership with another local sixth form was terminated at short notice by the partnership school. Consequently, students were reintegrated into the school to study subjects that had not previously been on offer. Students currently on roll in the sixth form are making better progress because they are enrolled on courses appropriate for their ability.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and this is reflected in the work produced by students in the majority of subjects and in all year groups.
- The school's new marking policy is being used to effectively help students to improve their work. Most students respond to and act on the advice provided by their teachers. However, in a

minority of subjects teachers' comments do not provide students with precise subject specific details about how to improve their work. Teachers do not always make sure that students follow up this advice by applying it and showing their teachers that they have understood.

- Lessons are well planned and teachers make good use of strong subject knowledge to interest students and plan activities to engage them.
- Learning support assistants are very effective. They understand the needs of the students they support and have a successful impact on their learning and progress.
- Teachers know their students well and relationships between teachers and students are good. Students recognise that their teachers have high expectations of them and want them to do well.
- The school has a very inclusive culture and teachers often use opportunities in lessons for students to work together and show respect for one another's viewpoints.
- In the sixth form teachers often ensure that lessons include a range of activities to interest and motivate students. However, at A and AS level work is not always sufficiently challenging to support students to achieve the highest grades.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They wear their uniform with pride and are polite and courteous to staff, visitors and to one and other. Success is celebrated and students are proud to wear their achievement badges.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Students arrive promptly to lessons well prepared to learn and with the correct equipment.
- In the majority of lessons there is a calm and purposeful learning environment. Behaviour that is less than good is limited to those lessons routinely covered by supply staff or where teaching is less strong.
- Students believe that behaviour has improved and most notably since the appointment of the new vice principal and the introduction of an increased range of opportunities for student leadership such as the Year 11 prefect system.
- Students take care of the school buildings and resources. There is little litter around the site and graffiti is seldom seen.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire believe their children to be safe and well looked after by the school.
- Students have good awareness of the different forms of bullying including homophobic and cyber bullying. Assemblies, themed weeks and tutorial sessions help students to understand the consequences of bullying. Bullying is therefore rare and when it does occur students say that it is dealt with promptly by school staff.
- Fixed-term exclusions have fallen significantly and are now below national for all groups of students. The strong pastoral team provides very good support for students, encouraging them to behave well and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Recently introduced strategies for restorative justice are helping students to understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Consequently, the very few students who have been excluded understand and accept the reasons for the sanction.
- Attendance for the very small minority of students enrolled in alternative education at Wiltshire College is low. Consequently, the achievement of these students is lower than that of their peers. It is for these reasons that the school has withdrawn this provision and, from September 2014, those students currently in Year 10 will be reintegrated into the school for their Year 11.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal's good leadership has driven the improvements in outcomes for students. The introduction of clear systems for tracking students' progress and achievement has improved

teachers' planning and helped teachers to know the needs of students in their classes well.

- Students believe that the Principal is having a significant impact on raising standards in the school. As Year 11 students commented: 'The Principal has brought the school a long way. He is constantly around. We don't know how he does it but he knows everyone's names and is quick to intervene where there are problems.'
- The school's checks on its performance are accurate and are used to promote improvement. Recent restructuring of leadership has resulted in staff being better held responsible for the progress of students in their classes.
- Standards have risen due to the actions of senior leaders to secure good teaching and behaviour. Regular training and scrutiny of lessons are making staff fully accountable for the quality of their teaching and its impact on students' achievement.
- Subject leaders work effectively to monitor and support teachers in their departments; this is helping to raise standards of achievement. However, some students do not benefit from consistently good teaching in English because lessons covered by supply staff are not always monitored carefully enough.
- Changes made to the curriculum have broadened choice and ensured that students are guided into courses that are most suitable for them. The school's plans to become a centre for vocational learning will further broaden the curriculum, including in the sixth form, from September 2014.
- Relationships with parents and carers have strengthened and are continuing to improve because of good pastoral leadership. Communication is regular and provides parents and carers with opportunities to discuss their children with somebody who knows them well.
- The proportion of students joining the school part way through the school year or at times other than at the beginning of Year 7 is high due to the large number of students from service families. Very effective pastoral leadership ensures that these students settle, make friends and are supported to make good progress.
- Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good as evidenced by the range of sporting and cultural enrichment activities available and by the opportunities for students to share and discuss their views within lessons.
- The school provides a mixed offer in the sixth form with courses ranging from foundation level to A level. The number of students with special educational needs in the sixth form is high and consequently most classes are mixed ability. The sixth form provides school places for students required to remain in education as a consequence of the increased participation age. Less than 1% of students are not in education, employment or training post 16 and post 18. This compares to a local figure of 27%.
- The local authority has supported the school effectively in its plans to raise achievement, to increase the breadth of the vocational curriculum and to plan for the anticipated influx of military personnel into the local area over the next few years. The local authority is also insistent on the need for the school to retain the sixth form.
- The school meets all statutory safeguarding requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching and of students' achievement and behaviour. They are aware of the financial impact of the small sixth form and the need to recruit greater numbers of students, especially for the more academic courses. Governors also have good understanding of the effect of military deployment on the number of students on roll and therefore on the school's finances. The current deficit budget is being well managed and has been agreed by the local authority. Governors monitor the spending of the pupil premium and of the Year 7 catch-up fund. They evaluate the impact of spending on the achievement of eligible students. Governors have undertaken a range of training to help them to hold school leaders to account and to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place for all students. Through their Human Resources Committee governors ratify decisions about pay progression and help school leaders to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve.

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	126459
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	441072

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	602
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caron Hitchen
Principal	Mark Avoth
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2011
Telephone number	01980 652467
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