

Cove School

St John's Road, Cove, Farnborough, GU149RN

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The achievement of students has declined since the previous inspection. The progress of students has been inadequate for the past two years and remains uneven across many subjects.
- Standards in mathematics are inadequate due to inconsistencies in the teaching and leadership of the subject in recent years. Actions taken by the school to address these weaknesses have not prevented students from underachieving.
- Extra government funding to help students at risk of not doing well is not used effectively to ensure they achieve as well as other groups of students.
- The impact of teaching is inadequate over time. Teachers do not always have high-enough expectations of what students can achieve.
- The quality of teachers' marking and the guidance given to students varies and is not good enough as it does not always help students to improve their work.
- Behaviour requires improvement as too many students do not demonstrate good attitudes to their learning.
- Leaders and governors have identified the school's weaknesses but their view of students' progress and the quality of teaching is too generous. Actions taken have not eliminated inadequate teaching or improved students' achievement quickly enough.
- The governing body does not hold leaders to account effectively for the underachievement of students. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is weak.

The school has the following strengths:

- There is some good and outstanding teaching in the school.
- Students achieve well in science and standards are improving in a range of GCSE and work-related subjects, including English and modern foreign languages.
- Students speak highly of the enrichment opportunities available to them.
- Students say they feel safe and well cared for. Bullying is dealt with quickly and firmly and most students behave well around the school site.
- Attendance is above the national average.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as reflected in their respectful behaviour towards each other.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 30 lessons, of which a third were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons, assemblies and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders and managers and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with three groups of students, representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- Additional meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and members of the governing body, and a discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- Inspectors took account of 117 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 98 responses to the staff questionnaire. Additional comments were received from parents and carers, and consideration was given to the views expressed by families in response to the school's own surveys.

Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christopher Allen

Additional Inspector

Adam Mirams

Additional Inspector

Roger Thurlbeck

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported by additional pupil premium funding is average. In this school, this additional government funding is used to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average, the largest groups being from other Asian backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also well above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below that found nationally. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below the national average.
- A significant number of students receive Year 7 catch-up funding.
- The school enters some students early for GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10.
- The school uses some additional training for a small number of students off site. Students attend courses at the Linden and APEX Centres, the Farnborough College of Technology and the Basingstoke College of Technology.
- 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 quality of teaching so that it is good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
 - raise their expectations of what students, especially those eligible for the pupil premium funding, are capable of achieving
 - use assessment information about students' prior attainment to set more demanding work for all groups of students
 - consistently check students' understanding in lessons and then adapt activities if the work is too hard or too easy
 - when marking students' work, tell students exactly how it can be improved and subsequently check that students are responding to these comments
 - always insist on high standards of presentation in students' work
 - have the highest expectations of behaviour and make sure that students demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- Raise achievement in mathematics so that students make at least the progress expected of them and do as well as in English by:
 - making rapid and sustained improvements in mathematics a priority in the school's improvement plans and include specific, measureable targets to check the impact of actions

- ensuring there are rigorous checks on teaching and learning in mathematics lessons and acting decisively when the quality is found to be less than good
 - ensuring that the subject leader for mathematics is supported and challenged to secure long-term, sustainable improvements to the quality of teaching and the achievement of students.
- Improve the impact of leadership, including governance, on students' achievement by ensuring that:
- targets for school improvement are far more challenging
 - leaders at all levels, especially governors, have a consistently good understanding of the school's performance and the skills required to drive rapid improvement
 - all improvement plans are more sharply focused on securing consistently good teaching and at least good student achievement in all areas of the school's work
 - school systems are consistently and robustly applied by all, especially subject leaders, when making judgements about teaching and students' achievement
 - inadequate teaching and leadership are dealt with more swiftly
 - leaders act more quickly to address underachievement when identified and can show impact of their work.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students' attainment is not high enough given their starting points in Year 7. Students join the school with skills in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly in line with those found nationally. The proportion of students gaining five good passes at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, has been significantly below average for the past three years.
- In Key Stage 4 standards remain below average. The progress made by students in mathematics is inadequate. Difficulties encountered in recruiting and securing good leadership and teaching in mathematics have led to a notable decline. The practice this year of entering students for mathematics examinations early is ineffective. Too many students, particularly the most able, choose not to continue with their studies with the same vigour and instead invest their energies in subjects in which they have yet to sit an examination.
- The achievement of the most-able students is not consistently good because assessment information is not always used well to set these students challenging work and to push them on quickly in their learning.
- Standards in English are improving after a period of decline. Unlike in mathematics, entering students for the examination early in English has proved beneficial. Many students are now achieving at least at the level expected of them and a significant number are making more rapid progress. Improved teaching has contributed to the improvements seen.
- Additional funding has not been used wisely to raise the achievement of eligible students. It provides additional support, learning resources and revision classes, but students known to be eligible for free school meals do not achieve as well as their peers. Their examination results last year were lower than those of their peers. In English, they attained over a grade lower at GCSE than other students and this gap was closer to one and a half full grades lower in mathematics. Staff expectations of what these students can achieve are too low. Learning is not always stimulating and does not regularly build well on students' existing knowledge and skills.
- The school has taken some action to improve students' literacy skills, especially reading. Students' speaking and listening skills are generally well developed. A new scheme has been introduced to develop reading in Year 7 and time is given to reading for all students in tutorial time. It is too early to see the long-term benefit of these schemes and weaknesses in reading and writing skills prevent too many students from achieving success in a range of subjects.
- Too many teachers are not able to speed up students' learning and progress. Students achieve well in science, religious education and information and communication technology. Results are improving in modern foreign languages and geography but not in history, music or design and technology due to less effective teaching and weak leadership.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make academic progress similar to that of others in the school, doing well in some subjects and poorly in others.
- Minority ethnic groups and those students who speak English as an additional language achieve better than their peers in school.
- Students studying vocational courses achieve well, including the very small number of students engaged in alternative arrangements and taught at a local skills centre or in specialist provision.
- The school actively promotes harmony within its learning community and does not discriminate against any students. However, the school is not promoting equality of opportunity for all as there are inconsistencies in the progress made between some groups of students resulting from variations in the quality of teaching.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate overall and has been so in recent years, having had insufficient impact on students' progress.
- The quality of teaching is too variable within and between departments. Too much requires

improvement for it to be able to quickly drive up achievement. There is some outstanding teaching, planning and marking, but not enough.

- Too much teaching does not build on students' current knowledge and skills. Assessment information is not used properly by teachers to make sure that students have the right level of support or challenge in their work.
- Teaching is weak because not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what students can do. Planning for learning identifies different groups of students, but work is rarely set to cater for their varied abilities and the pace of learning is too slow.
- Students who experience difficulties with learning and literacy receive additional support in Key Stage 3, but the teaching of literacy across subjects is not embedded and so the lessons learned in some subjects are not reinforced and developed in others. Students in Years 10 and 11 receive intensive tutoring for their examinations and appreciate the work of their teachers, although this does not address the slow progress in the younger years.
- The work in students' books varies too widely in quality. There are examples of unfinished work and presentation is not good enough overall.
- While there is some outstanding marking, and evidence that some teachers are improving their marking, too many teachers fail to mark students' work often enough or give helpful advice on how students should improve. Few check that students have understood and acted upon the guidance given. This limits the opportunities for students to improve their knowledge or skills.
- Students make most progress where teachers have high expectations for all and design activities that provide real challenge to all. In the most effective lessons, teachers' questioning deepens students' knowledge and understanding. Students learn well, for example, when adults provide clear explanations of key points and check levels of understanding through their marking. Such good practice is evident in English and science, but not elsewhere.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching and strong relationships between teachers and students. These represent a good core from which teachers can learn and share best practice across the whole school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Too many students do not display positive attitudes towards their learning and do not push themselves to do their best. This is most common when the learning is not at the right level and teaching is not sufficiently challenging. When teaching is not good enough, students become less involved and do not participate fully.
- The school's records of exclusions show that they are falling, but a small number of students continue to consistently display challenging and unacceptable behaviour.
- Students have agreed and signed up to the 'Cove Charter of Respect' and they say that their behaviour towards each other is typically good. The majority of students behave well around the school and are courteous to adults and other students.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel very safe. They understand the dangers of the internet and social media sites. They have a good understanding of the dangers of different forms of bullying and say it is rare. They are confident that if they report bullying it will be dealt with firmly and well. Students know that teachers do not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour.
- The majority of parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View survey confirm these views and feel their child is happy, safe and enjoys school.
- Attendance has improved this year and is now above the national average. This is because the school uses good, simple systems to track the attendance of its students and acts promptly to support the families of some students at risk of not doing well.

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- Leaders and governors have not maintained high expectations of students' achievement. Since the last inspection, results have declined and students achieve less well than others nationally.
- The school's view of its own performance is not sufficiently accurate. Leaders and governors have an overly positive view of the school's success and the achievement of different groups of students. This limits their capacity to speed up students' levels of achievement in several areas including mathematics, history and some technology subjects.
- Difficulties in recruiting to key posts in the past have hampered efforts to secure improvements in areas such as mathematics. Subsequent actions to raise achievement and improve teaching have lacked sufficient urgency, so the pace of improvement has been too slow. The school knows it needs to provide more support and challenge for the subject leader of mathematics.
- Leaders' expectations of what students can achieve are too low and academic targets are not sufficiently challenging. The most-able students in particular are not making fast-enough progress, and too few students make rapid progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics.
- Activities paid for with the pupil premium funding for eligible students have not narrowed the wide achievement gap for these students compared to their peers.
- Subject leadership is of variable quality, with some good and some inadequate practice. In too many instances, checks on students' progress and planning actions to secure improvements are ineffective. The good subject leaders model good teaching, have clear plans to raise attainment, effective assessment arrangements and use high quality marking to help students improve. However, these features are lacking in too many subjects.
- School leaders set clear targets for teachers that link students' achievement with increases in salary. However, the support and training for any whose work is below expectations is ineffective in ensuring that good teaching is the norm.
- Although school leaders are developing better systems for collecting and analysing information about students' academic progress, the data is not reliable. As a consequence, not all staff use the information well to plan teaching. In contrast, the pastoral and support teams use information about attendance and behaviour well so that attendance is up and exclusions down.
- Students benefit from a wide choice of subjects. Leaders effectively review the subjects on offer each year and amend Key Stage 4 programmes to best meet the needs and aspirations of students. Recent changes have rightly placed a greater emphasis on the importance of GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics and more emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, but the impact of this focus is not yet clear.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature. Students gain from a rich and diverse range of activities, including trips both at home and abroad.
- Local authority officers have increased the level of support and challenge due to concerns about students' underperformance. School leaders have also engaged support from independent consultants with good track records of helping raise levels of achievement in schools.
- The school meets all government safeguarding requirements and those for safer recruitment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors understand the challenges facing the school, but underachievement, inadequate teaching and weak leadership have not been challenged quickly enough. The governing body is supportive and committed to the school. Recent training has strengthened governors' understanding of data but they are not using this information well enough to hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance. For example, they know that achievement in mathematics is not good, but nothing has changed in two years. Governors have an accurate knowledge of the quality of teaching and of performance management for teachers. They manage the school's finances well and ensure teachers only secure better pay when their students achieve well. In contrast, while they monitor closely how additional funding is spent on students at risk of not doing well, they do not monitor properly the impact this has on students' achievement.
 - Governors meet their statutory duties and ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, including the single central record.

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	116446
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	441028

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	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	975
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Pickup
Headteacher	Megan Davies Jones
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 May 2011
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