

Cressex Community School

Holmers Lane, High Wycombe, HP12 4QA

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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's leaders have established a strong climate for learning, which has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and examination results for students.
- Students develop good knowledge, skills and understanding in most subjects and particularly in mathematics. Students make good progress overall from low starting points.
- The improvement in students' achievement is a direct result of the school's drive to improve learning and teaching. Teaching is good and improving. Teachers have high expectations and are ambitious for students' achievement.
- Students enjoy a rich range of learning experiences to match their abilities and interests.
- Students work hard and behave well. The school is a harmonious community where students get on well and are respectful of each other and of adults.
- Relationships between staff and students are a strength of the school and have a positive impact on students' learning and behaviour.
- The sixth-form course run for a small group of students is outstanding. Students make excellent progress from their starting points because they follow a well-planned curriculum that offers them an appropriate qualification.
- Governors understand the school well. They give good support to leaders and ask them searching questions about the school's performance to make sure it continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Students do not get enough feedback, either through marking or in discussion on how they could improve their work.
- Some subject leaders are still developing their skills. Their actions do not have sufficient impact on improving their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 part-lessons taught by 29 teachers. Eight of these observations were conducted jointly with four senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders and two members of the governing body, and held a telephone conversation with the local authority.
- Inspectors had conversations with four groups of students in meetings, as well as at other times, informally in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors took account of 10 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and to the school's own analysis of parents' views, and reviewed 41 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team evaluated other information, including: the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses; the improvement plan; attendance and behaviour records; information about students' achievement and progress; and external reports and documents relating to the management and development of teachers' performance.

Inspection team

Chris King, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Mark Warren	Additional inspector
Justine Hocking	Additional inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It has a non-selective admissions policy but is in a selective authority, where more-able pupils can choose to go to a grammar school if they pass the 11-plus examination
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs supported through school action or school action plus or who have statements of special education need is above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked-after children.
- The proportion of students with English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The majority of students are of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- An above-average number of children are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected level in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- There is a very small sixth form that offers one course for a group of students wishing to study Children's Care, Learning and Development.
- While the school is now full in the lower years, the upper school has had a significant number of spare places. As result, many students join the school after the usual starting point. Some of these students, having recently arrived in the country, start with weak communication skills, while others arrive having had an unsuccessful previous school experience.
- No students attend any form of alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school is in a trust called the Cressex Cooperative Learning Partnership, which consists of the following partners: Wycombe Abbey School, The Cooperative College, Buckinghamshire County Council and Buckinghamshire New University.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding in order to accelerate students' progress and raise attainment by:
 - providing students with more feedback about their work, either through written comments or through discussions in lessons, so that students understand how to improve their work and by making sure they act upon the guidance given
 - making better use of students' achievement data when planning lessons to ensure that all groups are fully catered for and appropriately challenged.
- Strengthen the quality of subject leadership and management so that it is consistently of a high standard by ensuring that leaders' checks on learning are accurate and that actions taken subsequently lead to measurable improvements in students' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good. Students start the school with attainment that is well below average, and the majority have English as an additional language. Results of the 2013 GCSE examinations show that students made good progress from these starting points.
- In 2013, the percentage of students that gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, increased significantly to 46%. Information provided by the school indicates that this is set to increase further in 2014. The proportion of students gaining at least five A* to G grades was above the national average.
- Students' numeracy skills are extremely well developed and they are able to use and apply these skills in a range of situations and subjects. Students try hard when they encounter mathematical problems and can use a range of strategies and approaches to solve these problems. Students' attainment in mathematics was above average in 2013.
- In 2013, students' progress in English was similar to that in other schools in England, but improvements in teaching since September 2013 mean that standards are higher this year. Evidence from the work in students' book shows students' writing skills develop well, especially in the way they use subject-specific or technical vocabulary and terminology. School leaders have invested in support for literacy and for students with English as an additional language. This has led to significant improvements in students' reading and comprehension ability. Information provided by the school shows that these interventions are highly effective in improving students' literacy and communication skills.
- Students make impressive progress in vocational courses such as health and social care and also in sport. Students make good progress in GCSE courses such as mathematics, citizenship and religious studies. Students make less progress in history and business studies. The school is aware of this and is supporting these subjects so that better progress is expected in 2014.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well by making sure that all students have a chance to succeed.
- In the sixth form, a small group of students follow a course on childcare, learning and development. Evidence, including information on progress, work scrutiny and observations of learning, shows that the achievement of these students is outstanding.
- The careers advice and guidance students receive is well coordinated and valuable. A good range of activities, including work experience, is arranged to help students plan for the future.
- Students who have physical disabilities and other special educational needs make good progress because of the very strong individual support they are given. Teaching assistants and other adults plan work carefully that is suitable for each student.
- The school has a large group of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and uses funding well to support them. In the 2013 GCSE examinations, they were on average two thirds of a grade behind their classmates in English and one third of a grade behind in mathematics. This gap is considerably smaller than it was in 2012. The school's internal tracking shows this gap is set to close even further in 2014.
- The Year 7 students supported by the catch-up funding do well in English and mathematics so that they develop the skills necessary to help them to succeed.
- A small number of students were entered early for GCSE mathematics in Year 11, but there is no indication that this has a negative impact on their overall results.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Good teaching leads to students' good progress and improving attainment in most subjects, including mathematics and English. Relationships between staff and students are a strength of the school and have an increasingly positive impact on students' learning, achievement and behaviour.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very strong and they use a range of strategies and interesting resources to motivate students well and keep them focused on learning.
- The promotion of literacy is planned for well in all subjects and students are given good opportunities to expand and develop skills through a variety of activities and tasks.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, which encourages students to stretch and challenge themselves. As a result, students make rapid progress.
- Students who met with inspectors spoke positively about the quality of teaching and the support they received.
- Where teaching is most effective, the quality of planning is good and students' progress is monitored closely. Students receive regular feedback on the quality of their work and what they need to do to get better. Teachers also make good use of information about students' prior learning and performance in planning appropriate activities for all students.
- Although helpful marking is evident in most subject areas, good practice is not consistently followed in all subjects. In some cases, students do not get enough feedback to help them understand how to improve their work. In other cases, students do not respond to improvements called for by teachers. Where this happens, students are sometimes less engaged with their own learning and are not seen to make as much progress in their books.
- The learning needs of students supported by additional funding (in the form of the pupil premium), of disabled students and of those who have special educational needs are met well.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning. They are trained well to ensure that those students who require additional support receive this in a timely and effective way. They maintain a good balance between providing support and helping students to work things out for themselves and develop their skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**is good**

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are proud of their school, with many older ones commenting how behaviour has improved significantly. They are friendly and well mannered and are respectful of students' social, religious and cultural diversity. Students make their way to lessons promptly after break and lunchtime and come well prepared for lessons.
- School records show that any incidents of poor behaviour are managed well by teachers, support staff and the inclusion team. The number of fixed-term exclusions is reducing because leaders take preventive action to support those students who are at risk.
- Effective systems have been developed to ensure that both students' behaviour and achievement are tracked closely together. The work of the intervention manager and inclusion team is having a clear impact on raising standards for those not on track to achieve as well as they should.
- Students are attentive and keen to learn in lessons. They respond positively to teachers' questioning, even when they are not absolutely sure about their answers or points of view. They are respectful to each other and work well on their own or in groups.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Care is taken to ensure that the school is safe and that safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are rigorous.
- Students say that they feel safe in school. Students who spoke to inspectors reported that incidents of bullying are rare and that when reported, students are confident that issues will be dealt with quickly and effectively. The school's records of incidents support this view. The school's own recent survey of parents, with a large sample, shows a very positive response to

questions about students' safety and behaviour. Parents spoken to at a parents' evening and those who contacted inspectors supported this view.

- Students say that they know how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet or social media. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying and the negative effects of name-calling, particularly those based on race, sexuality or disability.
- Attendance is continually improving because the school is working hard to involve parents. It has received effective support in this area from the local authority, including the use of a texting system, which has had a significant impact. The overall rate is slightly above the national average. It is not higher because a small proportion of students do not attend regularly enough.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and senior leaders have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning and have made very good progress in the areas identified for improvement. A successful focus on tackling weaker aspects of achievement, in particular in English, has contributed to the good progress made by all students. Students' high performance in mathematics has continued. The school has the capacity to improve further.
- Subject leaders share in this drive for improvement and the majority contribute effectively to making improvements in their areas of responsibility. However, not all subject leadership is as effective in improving teaching and students' progress. Where this is the case, appropriate support is given by senior leaders.
- Teachers are well supported by senior leaders to help them develop and deliver their skills. Inspectors confirmed the accuracy of the school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching.
- Both the staff survey and parental views showed strong support for the school's actions and improvements over time.
- The school has good understanding of its overall performance and the achievement of students. However, it does not make the best use of students' performance data to help with planning units of work and lessons so that they build well on what students already know and can do.
- A carefully planned 'personal improvement plan' for teachers keeps a clear focus on improving learning for all students and sharing teaching approaches that help students to learn better. More structured plans are in place to improve the small minority of teaching that isn't yet at least consistently good. This training and development approach contributes well to the good progress made by students.
- Teachers are set appropriate performance targets and are supported to achieve them through training and sharing best practice with each other. The link between the achievement of students and teachers' pay rises and promotion is clear. Staff morale is high overall and this contributes to the school's increasingly successful development.
- The curriculum is increasingly academic but guides students effectively towards GCSE or equivalent courses. The courses students follow are well matched to their needs and, as a result, they make good progress. The curriculum is enriched by an extensive programme of activities, visits and opportunities for students to take responsibility during and beyond the school day. As a result, students' skills and knowledge are developed further and their progress in related subjects is supported well.
- The development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' learning is effective. Students explore a range of related issues through cultural visits, such as trips abroad or to the opera, and through visual displays around the school. In a number of subjects, but especially in citizenship, students are encouraged to reflect and to develop personal responses to a range of cultural, social and political issues. The school's emphasis on this reinforces the harmonious atmosphere within the school community. The school has well-developed links with the local community.
- The local authority provides the school with good support and has been engaged, for example, in

helping the school improve attendance, and supporting leaders in their evaluations of teaching and achievement across the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The school's governing body consists of effective professionals with a wide range of skills that they use in a balanced way to support and challenge leaders. Governors are rightly ambitious for the school to improve and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Performance management of all staff, including the headteacher, is rigorous. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching across the school and make sure that performance is linked to pay progression. They have supported the headteacher in taking action when performance has not met expectations. Governors understand how the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up premium are spent and the impact this is having on students' achievement. Governors ensure financial stability and that safeguarding procedures comply with current legislation.

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	110500
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	442443

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	591
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katy Simmons
Headteacher	David Hood
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 October 2012
Telephone number	01494 437729
Fax number	01494 561402
Email address	office@cressex.bucks.sch.uk

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