

Icknield Community College

Love Lane, Watlington, Oxfordshire, OX49 5RF

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school because

- Leaders have ensured that students make consistent and strong progress over time as a result of effective teaching.
- The school is improving rapidly because of the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher. He is supported well by other key senior and subject leaders.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the school. They take an active part in ensuring it continues to improve at a rapid pace.
- The curriculum is strengthened by clear social, moral, cultural and spiritual guidance. Students demonstrate a good understanding of British values and what is right and wrong.
- The very positive ethos in the school leads to good behaviour by students around the building and site.
- This ethos permeates the school and contributes to students' sense of well-being.
- Students know that they are safe; they are confident about reporting incidents and know they will be dealt with swiftly.
- Teaching is good overall and there is some that is outstanding in mathematics, English, science, geography, physical education, textiles and citizenship.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly. They use highly effective questions to assess students' understanding and to encourage them to think deeply about their learning.
- Students make excellent progress in English because of good teaching and strong subject leadership.
- Students make good progress in many other subjects. Achievement in science and mathematics is improving significantly.
- Disadvantaged students have made rapid progress, especially in English and mathematics. Achievement for these students is good and has improved markedly to be almost in line with all other students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and learning in modern foreign languages and business studies are not consistently good enough. Some of the work set is not challenging, particularly for the most able. As a result, some students are not motivated by tasks and this can slow their progress.
- Literacy strategies are not consistently well-developed across all subjects to support students in all year groups.
- Students do not regularly respond to teachers' feedback and marking in order to improve their knowledge and understanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning in 35 lessons or part lessons; nine were observed together with members of the leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, five members of the governing body, other leaders and groups of staff. Inspectors had telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and partner schools, including Matthew Arnold School and Buckinghamshire Hospital School.
- Inspectors talked to students informally and met with four groups of students in different year groups.
- Inspectors took account of 134 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, three parent letters and additional comments from a small number of parents.
- There were 53 staff questionnaires returned and considered by the inspection team.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including students’ work, information on students’ attainment and progress, and records of attendance and behaviour. They also checked the governing body minutes, safeguarding logs, planning documents and classroom reviews by school leaders. They looked at the school’s current data on students’ achievement.

Inspection team

Sheila Crew, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Barnes	Additional Inspector
Harry Kutty	Additional Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2011. The deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers have been appointed in the last three years. More than half of the teaching staff have also been appointed during the same period.
- The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, for which the school receives additional funding (pupil premium), is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is slightly below average.
- The main ethnic group is White British. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic groups is significantly below the national average.
- The school has received leadership support from Matthew Arnold School.
- The school makes use of off-site provision at Oxford City School, Buckinghamshire Hospital School, Abingdon and Witney School, and Meadowbrook School for a very small number of students.
- A small number of Year 10 and 11 students also complete work experience placements at the Didcot KSES warehouse, Trax Motor Project, Lewknor Primary School and Rainbow Corner Day Nursery.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve progress and attainment for all students by:-
 - raising the quality of teaching and learning in modern foreign languages and business studies for all students, including the most able, by careful lesson planning which takes account of their needs and allows them to work to their potential
 - developing the effective literacy strategies that are used in Years 7 and 8, so that they are embedded across the curriculum in all year groups and for all groups of students
 - ensuring students respond to teachers' good marking and feedback and that teachers check to make sure that the students' work improves as a result.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, which has led to strong progress. The headteacher's focus on eliminating weaker teaching has led to a number of new teaching and subject leader appointments to replace staff who have left.
- The headteacher, leadership team and other senior leaders set very high expectations for the school. They have established an ethos that encourages and supports good behaviour, attitudes and learning. The school promotes equality of opportunity and fosters good relations well. Incidents of discrimination are extremely rare and dealt with rigorously.
- The school has an accurate view of its own performance and leaders are determined to move towards outstanding overall effectiveness. Senior leaders carry out systematic lesson observations and conduct 'learning walks' on a regular basis. These combine 'strand' observations that have a particular focus, such as 'behaviour and engagement in Years 8 and 10', with more formal lesson observations. Teachers are provided with written feedback and targets hold them to account. Records show that the proportion of good or outstanding lessons is high, with improvements across subject departments and good lesson planning. The quality of teachers' work is closely linked to pay progression and to Teachers' Standards.
- The headteacher is supported well by the leadership team. Subject leadership is strong in English, mathematics and other subjects. This has led to further improvements in students' achievement in English, mathematics and some sciences. Subject leaders set aspirational targets. They analyse their performance rigorously and actively promote a culture of sharing best practice.
- Additional funding provided by the government is managed well and the tracking of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is rigorous. Leaders use these funds to ensure students benefit from targeted interventions, which means they make very good progress, particularly in GCSE mathematics and English.
- The school receives valuable services from the local authority through regular reviews to monitor progress. A 2014 review led to additional leadership support for students with disabilities or special educational needs.
- The headteacher has received strong leadership support from the headteacher of Matthew Arnold School. Senior leaders in the two institutions work together and a seconded teacher has helped to deliver ICT in the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are very effective and meet all statutory requirements. The school works closely with the Oxfordshire Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure students are safe.
- The school provides a good range of subjects in the curriculum. There is a keen focus on academic achievement which is supported by a broad range of extra-curricular activities. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum actively promotes a very good understanding of British values and culture through the citizenship programme.
- Key Stage 3 students receive valuable careers advice through the personal, social, health, citizenship and emotional (PSHCE) curriculum. Year 11 students are individually mentored by the leadership team and tutors and are supported in writing personal statements and curriculum vitae. Students have mock interviews prior to college applications with local business representatives and are also given 'taster' session with further education providers. The percentage of these students going on to employment or education in 2014 was significantly higher than the national average.
- The school provides alternative provision for a small number of students in local schools and work experience placements help to develop their work skills, such as in land management, catering and hairdressing. Their good progress is closely monitored by the school and reports are produced on their achievements and attendance every term.
- The school is leading the way in piloting a tracking system, 'Life without Levels' in Year 7, in preparation for a whole-school approach to changing assessment criteria, since National Curriculum levels were removed.
- Leadership is not yet outstanding because modern foreign languages and business studies subject leaders do not use evidence from lesson observations to accurately predict outcomes for students, particularly for most-able students. Leaders are also aware of the need to further develop the good literacy strategies that are already effective in Years 7 and 8 and ensure they are fully embedded across the curriculum for all groups of students.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school leadership. They value highly the headteacher's weekly newsletter and results from Parent View show the vast majority would recommend the school to

other parents.

- Staff questionnaires reveal that they all believe the school to be led well, with frequent comments about the swift and dramatic improvements which have happened since the headteacher was appointed. One teacher commented: 'I have never worked with such a brilliant headteacher and I have worked with a few in all my teaching years.'

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. The governing body has been instrumental in making the key staff appointments that have led to the rapid improvements in the school.
- The governing body is led well and provides good support and challenge to school leaders, particularly in working with the headteacher on his many plans for the further rapid improvement of the school.
- The governing body is fully involved in self-evaluation and improvement planning. Governors take a full part in monitoring, supporting, planning and providing challenge when necessary.
- Governors regularly check on the effectiveness of the school so that they have a view of what is working well. They understand the use of data and know how it compares with similar schools. They check leadership's monitoring of the quality of teaching and look carefully at how well students are doing. They also closely monitor students' attendance and behaviour.
- Individual governors take responsibility for specific aspects of the school, such as the quality of the provision for students with special educational needs, disadvantaged students or links to subject departments. They take these responsibilities seriously and the detailed feedback they provide ensures that the governing body is well informed.
- Good management of finances means that the additional government funding is used very well to improve the learning of disadvantaged students.
- Governors rigorously ensure that the best teachers and staff are rewarded and they understand the process of setting targets for teachers well.
- Governors ensure that all statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.

The behaviour and safety of students

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They respond very well to the positive ethos in the school. This ethos permeates the school and contributes to students' sense of well-being.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very positive. They have particularly warm relationships with teachers that help them make good progress in lessons.
- Students respect each other and their teachers, and take great pride in their school community. Students are taught to be 'responsible learners', which results in good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Students move between lessons with a sense of purpose, and there is a calmness and good sense of order in the school. They are punctual to, and prepared well for, their lessons. Students in friendship groups are polite and considerate. They are happy, well mannered and courteous.
- Form tutors play an important role in the pastoral system. Disabled students and those with special educational needs comment on the support they receive from their tutors to help them integrate and to develop confidence in relating to one another.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because attendance for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those who need extra help is lower than for other students and exclusions are proportionately higher. Governors have approved the use of additional funding for extra staff to improve the behaviour and attendance of these students. School records this year show evidence of rapid improvement.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The school takes its responsibilities for safeguarding very seriously and all statutory requirements are met. There is regular and effective training for all staff; they have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the school's thorough procedures.
- Students feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe in the school.
- A very small number of parents express concerns about bullying. Inspectors discussed these concerns with students in groups and individually, and they unanimously said that bullying is very rare and any aggressive behaviour during the school day is dealt with immediately and effectively. Some mentioned minor incidents

outside school, such as on buses, saying they know exactly who to contact in the event of any incidents.

- Leaders have very good community links which means that incidents occurring outside school are followed up rapidly.
- Students have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. Assemblies cover topics such as extremism and racist behaviour and the very good PSHCE programme enables them to explore these issues further.
- Students also understand how to stay safe online and they have a clear awareness of exploitation risks. PSHCE programmes such as 'Chelsea's Choice' enable students to think carefully about aspects of sexual grooming and the dangers of online exploitation.
- The school makes referrals to external agencies when necessary. The school works closely with these agencies to support families and students who are vulnerable. The case studies looked at during the inspection show that the outcomes for these students are very positive.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall and there is some that is outstanding including in mathematics, English, science, geography, physical education, textiles and citizenship.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons which motivate students to learn. In the best examples, teaching is matched closely to a precise understanding of each student's current progress. This good practice is apparent in most lessons ensuring that all students, including the most able, make as much progress as they can.
- The teaching of classes that contain large numbers of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good and focuses well on the individual support they need to ensure that they make at least good progress. Teaching assistants are used well in these lessons.
- The large majority of teachers set and maintain high expectations for students' progress and behaviour. They establish an excellent climate for learning and students mostly respond with enthusiasm.
- Most-able students are particularly challenged well in mathematics. Teachers ensure that Year 11 students apply their mathematical knowledge fluently and accurately.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly using the school's clear marking policy. They use highly effective questions to assess students' understanding and to encourage them to think deeply about their learning. Feedback to students is good and they are often set targets for further improvement. In English, students are beginning to respond to teachers' high quality marking to correct their mistakes. However, teachers of some other subjects do not always check to make sure that the students review their work in order to improve their knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because the support provided for developing students' literacy skills across the curriculum is variable. All teachers check students' spelling, punctuation and grammar whenever they mark students' work. However, not all plan carefully how to develop students' reading, writing and speaking skills through their subject teaching. There is some very good practice in English and in the literacy initiatives used to improve reading in Years 7 and 8, which are having a significant impact on improving disadvantaged students' reading skills.
- Some weaknesses in teaching in modern foreign languages and business studies are being addressed, but the impact of the support being provided is not yet fully evident. Some of the work set is not challenging, particularly for the most-able students. As a result, some students are not motivated by tasks and this can slow their progress.

The achievement of students

is good

- Students join the school with prior attainment levels which are in line with national averages.
- Students' achievement in English is excellent as a result of consistently good teaching and strong subject leadership. In 2014, all students made very good progress in English, including disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Over time, students' achievement in mathematics has been strong, although there was a dip in GCSE results last year. Since September 2014, school leaders have taken swift action to eradicate underachievement by disabled students, those with special educational needs and lower-ability students, with precisely targeted support and more rigorous checking of individual students' progress. These pupils are now making stronger progress in line with their peers and with students nationally.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students were almost in line with other students in the school in GCSE English and

mathematics. This represents excellent progress as these students have consistently moved closer to be almost in line with students nationally. The gap between them in achieving five A* to C grades including English and mathematics has closed significantly and rapidly.

- The most-able students make very good progress over time in the majority of subjects. Students learn well in lessons and are supported by good teaching strategies that accelerate achievement. Most-able students' achievement in English is significantly better than this group nationally.
- Scrutiny of work in lessons indicates that progress is good in all year groups. The depth and quality of work in books and folders is good, with regular teacher assessment recognising and supporting this progress.
- Predicted attainment for the current Year 11 is very good, with 72% of students expected to achieve five GCSE A*-C grades, including English and mathematics. The school has, over time, become better at predicting the outcomes for Year 11 students. In 2014, the predicted and actual outcomes were precisely matched and accurate. The moderation of predictions is also rigorous, with regular checks on teachers' assessments.
- The small number of students who attend alternative courses are making strong progress in Level 2 qualifications.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because, although most students achieve expected progress for their age at GCSE across many subjects, there has been some variability in progress. Some students have underachieved, particularly in modern foreign languages, business studies and single sciences. Science achievement is now improving significantly and students are making good progress. A legacy of underachievement in the school is being eradicated and this is having a positive impact on achievement.
- The school does not use early entry for GCSE examinations.

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	123244
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	453846

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	603
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Cockrem
Headteacher	Mat Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2013
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