

Wye School

Kempe Centre, Olantigh Road, Wye, TN25 5EJ

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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.

- Lessons are consistently well structured and engaging for students. Consequently, students from all groups make good progress.
- Provision for disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and disabilities is managed very effectively. These students achieve well.
- Students are polite and they behave well. They enjoy being at school, are safe and generally work hard.
- Students enjoy a broad curriculum which includes a wide range of interesting activities, including enrichment sessions and visits out of school. The school promotes fundamental British values well.
- The principal leads very well. She has a clear and aspirational vision, shared with governors, and is creating a happy and hardworking staff team.
- Teachers are beginning to develop their roles as leaders, with enthusiasm and success.
- The school is growing and improving through a well managed and creative process, which looks to the future and inspires those involved.
- Governors are supportive of, and much involved in, the school. They have very effectively ensured its successful beginning.
- Staff and governors fully promote the school's goal to serve the local community well. Parents are very positive about the school. They feel welcomed and involved.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons and activities, not enough is expected of all students. Occasionally, the work set is too easy or too hard for some.
- Students' presentation of work is too often untidy. This does not reflect the quality of their learning.
- The school's self-evaluation, whilst honest and useful, is over generous, in a few respects. Some improvements needed, although identified, are not sharply and immediately enough addressed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons across the school, some jointly with senior leaders. They observed the school at work, including at break times and by visiting several curriculum enrichment periods.
- They held discussions with the principal, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other members, a representative of United Learning and students. They heard some Year 7 students read.
- Inspectors scrutinised students’ work in books, folders and on display.
- They evaluated and discussed important documents, including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plan, data about students’ progress, information about how staff performance is managed and minutes of meetings.
- They took account of the opinions of parents by checking the 80 responses to Parent View on the Ofsted website, as well as looking at the results of the school’s own parents’ survey. They held meetings with groups of, and individual, parents. They also considered the 22 responses to Ofsted’s confidential staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Robin Hammerton, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Nigel Sheppard

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a free school, founded by members of the local community. It opened in September 2013 and is located in a rural area. It takes students of different abilities within the local selective system of education. It is attached to United Learning, which is a group of academies, independent schools and free schools.
- Wye is oversubscribed, but is small for a secondary school; there are 90 students in each of Years 7 and 8 only. There are, therefore, no examination results yet. It is envisaged that, over forthcoming years, the school will move to a roll of about 600, including sixth form provision.
- There is no alternative provision, which would take place away from the school, for any students.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, entitled to the support of pupil premium funding, is below the national average.
- About an average proportion of students are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Most students are White British.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure learning tasks are pitched at the right level for the students' differing needs.
- Improve further the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning by:
 - sharpening the wording of targets in the improvement plan, so that what needs to be achieved is crystal clear
 - ensure that the timescales for all aspects of school improvement are suitably rapid
 - evaluating the work of the school, and the achievement of improvement targets, in a completely objective and accurate way.
- Improve the students' presentation of their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The principal, working closely with the assistant principal, provides very vibrant and strong leadership. She shows a high level of ambition for the students and the school. She is clear in her vision about its inclusive role in the community and how to achieve this.
- Members of staff understand and support this vision very well. Staff comment on their joy at working in a place that feels like a 'family'. One spoke for many by mentioning the 'exciting, challenging and rewarding journey' of the school and its 'passion for students'. Another said, simply, 'This is the best school I have ever worked in.'
- Parents appreciate the clear communications, including regular newsletters. They note their children's confidence and enjoyment of school life. They highlight the school's openness and 'refreshing' lack of defensiveness, saying that staff resolve any problems promptly.
- As the school grows and develops, it is constantly improving. It has a strong culture, supported by effective management systems, in which good teaching and student behaviour are built up and sustained. Staff consult with students, giving them opportunities to make decisions about their learning.
- Staff monitor students' progress, attendance and behaviour assiduously. The school has imaginative and effective systems to promote good behaviour and attendance. It fully meets requirements for safeguarding students; the arrangements for this are very effective.
- The school's improvement plan and self-evaluation documents are thorough, honest and useful in promoting improvement. They rightly focus on improving outcomes for students. However, some of the targets, analyses and actions lack precision. This means that some current shortcomings, such as the quality of presentation of students' work, have not been dealt with quickly enough.
- Senior leaders manage the performance of staff well and this improves teaching. Teachers and other staff benefit from a good range of training and development opportunities relevant to their individual needs.
- The assistant principal and inclusion leader manage provision for students with special educational needs or disabilities and any students who may be vulnerable very carefully and meticulously. The students concerned achieve well.
- Teachers are implementing successfully their plans for the curriculum and teaching in each subject. Senior staff and governors are well aware, however, that the leadership of subjects requires further development. They are developing proposals for this.
- The school offers a well-balanced, broad and varied curriculum. Students enjoy many interesting and worthwhile experiences, including the daily enrichment sessions, the widespread and inclusive sporting and artistic events, and visits out. The curriculum enables them to understand the diversity of life in modern Britain, issues such as voting and democracy, and effectively provides for their good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- The school promotes equality and good relations well, tackling any discrimination effectively. In some of the enrichment activities, students have made stereotypical choices by gender. For example, no girls chose the Bear Grylls adventure activity. The school understands the need to explore any barriers to students making different choices.
- The school offers helpful careers information and students learn about a range of ambitious options.
- The school spends pupil premium funding effectively and carefully. The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers is small, and reducing. There are no fully reliable comparative national data as the school does not have public examination results.
- United Learning monitors the school regularly and supports its development. The school has built valuable links with other schools and effectively shares ideas. It has a constructive relationship with the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Many members of the governing body, including its highly committed Chair, were actively involved in seeing the need for, and setting up, the school. They rightly, therefore, feel a particularly strong and passionate sense of ownership and care for it. Their rigorous and clear strategic direction has borne much fruit and the school has had a very successful start. Governors are active, often visiting and volunteering in the school. Consequently, they see for themselves how teaching is being developed, for example. They have an effective working partnership with the principal and staff and provide wise counsel as ideas and issues are considered. They also understand that they need to evaluate the school, and any areas of relative underperformance, more dispassionately to help promote faster improvement towards their aim of being outstanding. Minutes of their meetings show that governors are asking increasingly challenging questions of the school's leaders. They ensure that the performance

management of staff, pay progression and rewarding good teaching, are correctly managed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Students' attitudes to learning are positive. Students are often very enthusiastic and resilient in lessons, sustaining their concentration and enthusiasm for extended periods and working well individually or together.
- Teachers manage students' behaviour well. One student aptly described the staff as 'strict but not scary'. The school has developed an imaginative and positive behaviour policy, which is well understood by all and is becoming effectively embedded. It is intended to avoid poor behaviour, as well as supporting students who do transgress. The school's growing inclusion team does useful work to support students improve their behaviour or resolve any problems, with the helpful involvement of parents when needed.
- Some students, all boys, have received fixed term exclusions this year. The school has evidence that excluded students have been successfully re-integrated into school life.
- In some lessons, there is minor misbehaviour. This tends to occur when the teaching is not sufficiently engaging. In these cases, students lose interest and may start to doodle or talk to each other about things other than the lesson content.
- Bullying is rare. Students agree that this is the case and that, if it occurs, it is dealt with quickly. The school keeps careful records of any bullying and serious misbehaviour, identifying trends and ensuring problems are properly addressed. Students are aware of the different types of bullying, including that which can happen online.
- Students socialise and play together at break times happily and kindly. They are polite and respectful. They take care of the school site, which they keep tidy. Occasionally, some forget rules like not running inside the building.
- The rates of attendance across all groups of students are good. Students are generally punctual to lessons and ready to learn. Inspectors noted a small number of occasions when they did not have their equipment ready quickly enough.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Students feel very safe, happy and secure in the school. They are well supervised by staff, whilst being given freedom and appropriate responsibility. Their tutor groups help them to feel a sense of belonging.
- All systems for safeguarding the students are meticulously organised and well publicised. Staff and students know what to do, and what to report, if necessary.
- The school has very strong systems making proper checks when appointing new members of staff. All involved are well trained.
- The policy for using the internet safely is very clear and well known to students. The school makes parents aware of it through its newsletters and meetings.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers typically structure lessons, and series of lessons, purposefully. They offer helpful explanations and give clear and encouraging instructions. As one student said, 'The staff make you feel you can do it.' Consequently, students engage well in their learning.
- In a Year 8 geography lesson, students researched diligently lifestyles from different parts of Africa. This effectively avoided stereotyping and the task was varied to meet the students' differing needs, so all were well challenged. Students were encouraged by the teacher to present what they had found to the class, using computers, and they did so with confidence.
- The good teaching in the school helps students to achieve well in literacy, reading and mathematics. They often use their skills in these areas helpfully in other subjects.
- Teachers often question students well to deepen their thinking. For example, in a Year 8 art lesson, in which students completed some striking paintings based on the work of the artist Roy Lichtenstein, the teacher asked the students questions about each other's work, such as how investigative detail had been added. This helped students to analyse at a high level what they had achieved.
- Not all of the teaching is as effective. Occasionally teachers use strategies introduced in the school

ineffectively. For example, students had to spend too long writing evaluations of what they had done, which left too little time to actually learn, work on and develop their new skills.

- Occasionally, the set tasks are too easy, too hard, or not well enough suited to the different needs of the students in the class. For example, the very tight way that some worksheets and workbooks are structured too often restricts the opportunities for students to take their learning as far as they might.
- The school offers a wide and popular range of enrichment activities, chosen by students, in the last session of each day. These involve sport, the arts and mathematical challenges amongst many other options. Some activities are not very challenging for all students; but, even in these cases, the experiences themselves are exciting and valuable, helping them to develop social skills.
- Teachers mark students work well, in line with the school's new policy. Students really appreciate this and can explain how it helps them to learn and improve their work. However, the policy is not followed consistently across the school. In some cases, poor presentation is not challenged.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The school's well organised data indicate that students from all groups make good progress and achieve well in English and mathematics, along with the other subjects. Girls fare slightly better than boys in Year 8, with the reverse being true in Year 7.
- Inspection evidence supports this view. Inspectors noted many examples of students making good progress in their work over time and in particular lessons. However, there is some inconsistency in students' progress between classes and subjects
- Students are often able, for example, to recall their strong prior learning and then organise that knowledge and thinking in a new way. In a religious education lesson, students showed good and sensitive understanding of some key features and beliefs of different religions. They were then able to use that learning to make sensible and thoughtful comments about why it is important to understand and study religion in general.
- Work in students' books and folders is too often untidy. Individual letters are frequently incorrectly formed; students' writing is hard to read because it is not neat or complete. Students' written work, therefore, does not always do justice to their good learning.
- The students who read to inspectors did so appropriately fluently and with confidence. They were able to comprehend their reading accurately by, for example, discussing the motivation of different characters in a book or explaining the story so far. They also explained the benefits to them of any additional reading support they receive from the school.
- Students who have special educational needs or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. The school effectively targets specific provision effectively for their needs. Parents comment positively on this.
- Overall, disadvantaged students attain slightly less well than their peers. However, the gap is small, a matter of just a few weeks on average. The school is well aware of the importance of not allowing the gap to grow and uses pupil premium funding sensibly in efforts to avoid this.
- More able students generally achieve well; they, like the others, enjoy the interesting work the school provides and work hard at their learning.
- Even at this early stage, students in Year 8 are thinking ahead and have a useful understanding of what they will encounter in their GCSE courses. The school is not expecting to enter students early for GCSE, except in exceptional circumstances in the students' own interest.

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	139664
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	450125

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Williams
Principal	Janet Naylor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01233 811110
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