

# Cove School

St John's Road, Cove, Farnborough GU14 9RN

<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is improving in line with teachers' raised confidence levels and belief. However, a few teachers' expectations of pupils are not yet high enough.
- Although much progress has been made in raising pupils' levels of literacy, a few teachers still accept poorly presented work.
- Disadvantaged pupils make better progress than they did in the past. However, the gap between their achievement and those of other pupils nationally in English and mathematics is still wide.
- Current achievement, including recent GCSE results, has improved. However, some disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not always fulfil their potential.
- As a result of well-targeted training and support, teachers' planning has improved considerably. Nevertheless, in some subjects, pupils' progress is unexceptional because a few teachers stick too rigidly to their plans without checking pupils' learning carefully enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher provides exceptional leadership. Her ability to get the best out of adults and young people has paid dividends. Pupils, parents and staff demonstrate unswerving support for the new vision for Cove School and its future.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective. They understand their roles and accountabilities and know where the best teaching lies within their departments.
- Parents, including those new to the school, express confidence in the school. This is demonstrated through the full intake in Year 7 and a full complement of first-choice applications for 2016.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They wear their uniform with pride and show respect for each other and towards visitors.
- Systems to support pupils who struggle to keep going or manage their behaviour are strong. This is reflected in the above-average rates of attendance.
- Governance arrangements are robust. Interim executive board members have a strong handle on how well the school is achieving and where the best and the weakest teaching resides. They have high expectations and monitor the rate of improvement closely.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement so that outcomes are good for all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Improve teaching and reduce remaining variability across subjects and year groups, by ensuring that:
  - all teachers, and not just some, recognise fully that their expectations and belief in what pupils can achieve have a direct impact on pupils' self-esteem and the rate of progress that they can achieve
  - teachers focus fully on what they want pupils to learn and move identified pupils on when this has been achieved, rather than taking all pupils through planned tasks or activities for the sake of it
  - teachers check pupils' learning carefully and often, in lessons and through marking, and identify activities that deepen pupils' learning so that they progress more rapidly and secure higher standards
  - all teachers reflect on different ways to check pupils' learning rather than purely relying on task completion as a means to gauge their progress
  - teachers across all subjects take effective action to improve the presentation of pupils' work
  - teachers continue to gain access to and learn from best practice within the school and other schools locally.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher inherited a culture of low self-esteem and low trust from all stakeholders. Despite this, within a very short period, she has built consensus and commitment, without compromising her expectation of high standards for all. Her belief in the potential of Cove pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff, and in the parent body has been key to the success of her strategy.
- Senior leaders are effective and visible. They have a clear and accurate picture of teachers' individual strengths and weaknesses. Joint observations and scrutiny of pupils' work conducted with inspectors attest to leaders' ability to identify what needs to improve in teaching and why.
- Governors and senior leaders have gained the trust and respect of subject leaders by modelling correct leadership behaviours. As a result, subject leaders feel empowered to challenge and support the work of the staff in their teams. This close line-management approach has been particularly successful in raising achievement in most subjects, particularly mathematics, where pupils' progress is rapidly improving across all year groups.
- Teachers and teaching assistants feel well supported to bring about improvements. Levels of confidence are high and personalised training approaches are valued. Many staff commented favourably on the opportunities to learn, including from each other, which did not take place in the past. In particular, strong links with local schools have enabled staff to observe best practice elsewhere and raise their expectations of what Cove pupils can achieve through high-quality teaching.
- The subjects on offer meet pupils' needs well. Senior leaders have broadened provision and no longer permit early entry to GCSE mathematics. Enrichment opportunities, such as visits, after-school clubs and study support sessions have been reviewed and extended. As a result, pupils are prepared well for the next steps in their education, employment or training.
- Leaders ensure that the Year 7 catch-up funding is used to very good effect to raise standards of literacy and numeracy for those pupils arriving at the school with lower than average attainment in English, mathematics or both subjects. This is borne out by the improved levels of attainment of pupils in Year 8, whose work has also been externally verified by the local authority.
- Leaders are making increasingly effective use of pupil premium funding. They are evaluating the impact of previous approaches and have abandoned those that failed to yield success. The 2015 unvalidated GCSE data show that the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally has reduced. Current data show an improving picture, especially in Key Stage 3.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who attend off-site provision benefit from their experiences of a curriculum tailored to their particular needs. Their progress and their welfare are overseen by a nominated member of staff who liaises frequently with an identified staff member at each of the identified providers.
- Equality of opportunity is an important principle. Tutor periods and assemblies are used well to reflect on current affairs. Pupils with whom inspectors spoke reflected the school's well-understood values of 'zero tolerance' in relation to discriminatory language or behaviour. They demonstrate a good awareness of cultural, moral, social and spiritual issues.
- The pupils' council has been strengthened over the past year and is now a vocal contributor to the school's improvement strategy. Pupils value its role and the newly defined requirements of prefects, which have enabled them to recognise the importance of taking responsibility, formulating rules and contributing to a democratic process.
- Pupils are able to access good-quality and well-organised careers advice and guidance. They feel very well informed about the range of opportunities open to them at age 16, including the variety of college courses, different institutions and the qualifications required to support their aspirations. They especially value the one-to-one externally provided careers interviews and the individual help provided by members of the senior team.
- The local authority has worked flexibly and effectively with targeted departments to provide external verification of teachers' assessments and training designed to improve pedagogy. This approach has been especially instrumental in securing the significant improvements in mathematics and other underperforming subjects, such as resistant materials.
- The executive headteacher and IEB members have worked hard to rebuild the confidence of parents in the school, and to good effect. The roll is full in the current Year 7 and for the following year. Feedback from parental surveys in relation to the leadership of the school has been very positive.

### **The governance of the school**

- Interim executive board (IEB) members' judicious approach to securing new and very effective leadership, well suited to the needs of the school, has been critical to the successful removal of special measures.
  - IEB members have a clear, shared and uncompromising vision for the future of the school. They monitor the improvement plans closely and provide a strong level of challenge to the senior leadership of the school. They have been very clear about what they expect from staff employed within the school at all levels and how, in turn, staff will be supported through high-quality training. They have listened carefully to the parent body and ensured that their voice has been heard throughout the journey to the removal of special measures.
  - The IEB is now in the process of preparing for a return to a substantive governing body. Throughout its tenure, the IEB has maintained a close and effective working relationship with the local authority. This arrangement is set to continue until such time as a new governing body is fully constituted. It is fully intended that IEB members will also serve on the newly constituted governing body to ensure continuity of leadership and success.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Training for staff is comprehensive and up to date. This has included training on radicalisation and child protection. Staff show an understanding and awareness of the policies and there is good evidence of liaison, where necessary, with external agencies, including the local authority.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- Teaching has improved from a low base and is no longer inadequate. However, there is still variability across year groups and in a few subjects including music and resistant materials.
- All teachers share a responsibility for the development of literacy and communication skills, encouraging pupils to apply them in most subject areas. Scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrates that pupils are challenged to write well across a range of subjects and the school's library is well used. However, in some subject areas more work needs to be done to improve pupils' presentation of their work.
- Teaching is inconsistent because a few teachers stick emphatically to their plans and do not check pupils' learning carefully or often enough. Equally, despite knowing their disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs, some teachers' expectations of these pupils are not always sufficiently high.
- In a few instances, teachers place too much emphasis on task completion. Where this is the case, teachers' questioning is shallow and insufficient thought has been given to finding ways to assess the depth of pupils' learning.
- Teaching in English is consistently strong because the subject leader is very clear about the approaches that are needed to ensure that pupils achieve well. Sound systems are in place to support teachers' assessment of pupils' work and appropriate help is provided for any pupils who lag behind. As a result, outcomes in English continue to improve rapidly.
- The recent GCSE results in mathematics not only improved but also aligned fully with teachers' predictions. The new subject leader has ensured that across all year groups pupils are very aware of their personal targets. Improved teaching is enabling pupils to develop their understanding and master the necessary mathematical skills across all year groups.
- Pupils have both noted and welcomed changes to the ways in which teachers now support them to achieve well. Many make mention of raised expectations of homework completion and monitoring of how well they are progressing towards subject targets. Comments such as, 'We now try harder in lessons' or 'We make sure we complete homework' were expressed to inspectors.
- Sound systems to track pupils' progress are enabling teachers to plan more effectively. Teachers now access detailed progress information about each pupil to inform their plans and teaching strategies. Where teaching is most effective, this information is being put to good effect to move pupils forward in their learning.

- Teaching in English, science and modern foreign languages is consistently strong and improving. In these subjects, teachers' planning for pupils' progression is effective because teachers' expectations are consistently high. They make good use of assessment information, check pupils' learning often, and provide valuable feedback and advice.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe, secure and well looked after in the school. Good systems are in place to offer help and support, sometimes involving external agencies when appropriate. Pupils with whom inspectors spoke commented on how changes since the last inspection have 'considerably improved' their enjoyment of school.
- Attendance is above the national averages and improving. Disadvantaged pupils, pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs have contributed disproportionately to absence levels in the past, but this is changing and currently these attendance gaps are narrowing.
- Exclusions for poor behaviour are used sparingly and as a last resort. Since the previous inspection, rates of exclusion increased in line with the change of leadership and raised expectations of pupils' behaviour. However, current rates of exclusion are reducing.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs have had higher exclusion rates than their peers. However, more effective support for these groups of pupils has resulted in marked improvements in their attitudes and behaviour. Any differences in exclusion rates are being eliminated.
- Pupils attest to frequent opportunities to learn about keeping themselves safe, in lessons and assemblies, as well as online. Learning about e-safety has a well-judged high status.
- Pupils who attend off-site provision attend regularly. Their personal development needs and welfare are well met. A link member of staff is in regular communication with each of the colleges to ensure that any concerns are quickly noted and addressed.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Cove School provides a happy, inclusive environment with a calm and business-like atmosphere. Pupils conduct themselves well around the site at all times. Pupils are polite, articulate and respectful to staff, visitors and each other. They take a pride in their uniform and their school and are eager to prove that the school's once tarnished reputation is a thing of the past.
- Punctuality is generally good and pupils come well equipped and ready to learn.
- Most lessons are characterised by positive behaviour. However, in a few lessons, where not all pupils receive the challenge they need, pupils begin to fidget or lose concentration, or their enthusiasm wanes.
- Pupils recognise that teaching has improved greatly and were keen to advise inspectors accordingly. Equally, their expectations of teachers have risen, in line with the demands made of them. They view this change very positively and now come to school expecting to be challenged and to learn.
- The behaviour of pupils who attend off-site provision is good.

## Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- GCSE results in 2015 went up and are now above the government's floor standards. The current achievement of pupils in Key Stage 4 shows an improving picture. Inspectors' scrutiny of current Year 11 progress information and pupils' work indicate improved levels of progress for all pupil groups in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. Nevertheless, there remains variation between pupils' achievements across a few other subjects.
- Leaders' action to improve the progress of pupils with special educational needs is more effective in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics. The Year 7 catch-up funding is being put to good effect, with pupils now able to benefit from phonics teaching to help them identify the sounds that letters make. This has ensured accelerated progress with reading for identified pupils on entry to Year 8.

- Most-able pupils secured improved GCSE results in 2015. There is evidence of improved rates of progress for these pupils currently at the school and across most year groups. However, some variation across subjects remains.
- In Key Stage 3, progress across all subjects is better than in the past, especially in mathematics. Across most subjects, the majority of pupils are on track to meet, or exceed, the high targets set for them. Those who are lagging behind have been identified and are receiving extra help.
- Over time disadvantaged pupils have underachieved in English, mathematics and other subjects. Current disadvantaged pupils across all year groups, especially in Years 10 and 11, now show better progress from all starting points. Nevertheless, gaps between these pupils and other pupils nationally remain wide.
- High-quality careers information and good links with local colleges are valued by pupils. These links, coupled with the support offered by senior staff, ensure that pupils are confident and well placed for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116446
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection Number</b>	10005259

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	952
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The interim executive board
<b>Chair</b>	Maureen Bax
<b>Executive headteacher</b>	Sarah Howells
<b>Telephone number</b>	01252 524397
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cove.hants.sch.uk">www.cove.hants.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@cove.hants.sch.uk">info@cove.hants.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27–28 March 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding (additional government funding) is average. Some pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is slightly below the national average.
- The school uses some additional training for a small number of pupils off-site. Pupils 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 minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 19 lessons. The lead inspector also took account of inspection evidence from the previous monitoring visits.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the chair of the IEB and three other IEB members.
- Inspectors also met with a group of subject leaders and other members of the senior team, and the lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, pupils' assessment information, the school's records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding records, performance management information and the leaders' development plans.
- Inspectors also took account of leaders' most recent survey feedback from parents and members of staff.

## Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, lead inspector

Heidi Boreham

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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