

# The Wey Valley School

Dorchester Road, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 5AN

## Inspection dates

27–28 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement at GCSE has been too low over time.
- Pupils do not make good enough progress in mathematics.
- Teachers do not consistently plan lessons that challenge pupils appropriately, particularly the most able.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is too variable in quality. School leaders are not ensuring that all teachers follow the school's assessment policy.
- Some pupils do not behave well enough in lessons, disrupting the learning of others.
- The attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils have begun to improve but are still too low.
- Middle leaders do not ensure that good behaviour and high-quality teaching are routinely expected across all subject areas.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff understand how to deliver high-quality teaching and assessment. Improvement planning is not sharply focused enough on the key areas of weakness.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new principal has halted the decline in the quality of education provided by the school.
- The principal's leadership is greatly valued by teachers, pupils and parents.
- Increasingly, teachers plan and teach effectively, and this good practice is now being shared more widely across the school.
- Positive relationships and effective pastoral care underpin the recent improvement in behaviour around the school. Pupils state that they feel safe at school.
- The governing body is now well placed to support and challenge senior leaders. It has actively developed the knowledge and skills necessary to make the best decisions for the future of the school.

## Full report

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

- Urgently improve the progress made by all pupils, especially in mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that learning is planned to take full account of pupils' existing knowledge and skills, as well as reflecting high expectations for their next steps in learning
  - ensuring that all pupils, including the most able, are challenged by the work covered
  - improving the consistency of mathematics teaching across the department by supporting all teachers to develop securely good practice.
- Develop a common understanding of what high-quality learning and progress look like, and expect nothing less at Wey Valley, by:
  - ensuring that all staff know how to transfer good practice in teaching and assessment to their own classroom
  - enabling and expecting all senior and middle leaders to monitor and rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas
  - sharpening the focus of all improvement planning on the key areas of weakness, and on pupils and subjects most at risk of underachieving.
- Continue the current trend of improvement for attendance and behaviour around the school. In particular, improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Further raise expectations of behaviour in lessons, particularly in the lower years of the school, so that disruption does not feature in any lesson and learning is not interrupted.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

- Over time, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that pupils learn and progress well. There has been no organised approach to developing a common understanding of good teaching and learning, nor of tackling and eradicating weak teaching. Staff, governors and pupils are aware of a change in culture in the school, led by the new principal, and this is greatly valued.
- The senior team can accurately describe the significant change that has occurred in the school, as well as planned actions to build on existing strengths and address current weaknesses. Its evaluation of the school's current position lacks sharpness, however, and does not provide a sufficiently precise description of the next steps needed to improve the school.
- Despite recent improvements, learning is not yet securely good across subjects and for all groups of pupils. Leaders do not make sure that teachers apply school policy on assessment consistently, so pupils do not always receive feedback on their work to help them take the next steps in their learning. Where the policy is followed, the quality of feedback is still variable and therefore of limited use in some cases.
- The principal actively seeks further development opportunities for herself and her senior team, with well-judged training and coaching opportunities now in place for them. Good use has been made of external support available from other schools. The assistance of experienced mathematics teachers from another school is helping to tackle weaknesses in mathematics provision at Wey Valley.
- Leaders have now put in place an appropriate performance management system across the school, and set suitably challenging targets for staff. In addition, leaders are developing individual training plans for staff, describing the next steps they need to take to develop their teaching and outlining the support they will need to do this. However, this has not yet resulted in securely good teaching across all areas of the curriculum.
- Middle leaders greatly value the changes that have occurred in the school. They are now able to discuss and share their most effective teaching strategies and learn from each other, as opportunities to do this have now been formalised by the senior team.
- Middle leaders are clearly ambitious for their subjects and for the school as a whole. Nonetheless, subject leaders have not been equally successful in establishing consistently high standards of teaching, assessment and behaviour in lessons across all subjects.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, overwhelmingly support the changes that have been made in the school since the new principal has been in post. Parents repeatedly commented on how much they value the significant improvements made by the new principal, and also indicated that communication with the school is much improved. Before the inspection, a group of parents had written to the chair of the governing body at the school to express how pleased they are with the new leadership of the school and the impact it is having on the education of their children.

- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Pupils receive comprehensive advice and guidance, including access to an external careers service, to help them make decisions about their education after Year 11. Staff from local sixth-form colleges and schools provide additional useful information to Year 11 pupils, and helpful advice about apprenticeship opportunities.
- Pupils greatly value the range of enrichment activities offered by the school. Teachers run an extensive range of clubs as well as additional sessions to support progress in subjects. Trips take place locally, nationally and internationally, and other initiatives such as an artist in residence and collaboration with a local special school all add to the richness and diversity of pupils' experiences.
- The school provides spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in tutor time and assemblies. Assemblies for year groups are used well to promote British values such as the importance of individual liberty and the rule of law, linking these from their wider national meaning to their application in the school community. The planned programme of assemblies considers current issues such as preventing radicalisation.
- Pupil premium funding is appropriately targeted towards support for disadvantaged pupils, and the impact of spending is carefully evaluated and monitored. However, this has not ensured that the achievement and attendance of this group of pupils match national averages for other pupils. Following a review of the school's use of pupil premium funding, there is a tighter focus and better evaluation of the impact it has. This is also the case for the Year 7 catch-up funding the school receives.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors have actively developed their role since the last inspection.
- Governors are now able to hold the school to account more effectively than in the past. They are confident in interpreting the information they receive about performance, and understand the need to scrutinise the performance of groups of pupils, such as the most able and those who are disadvantaged.
- Governors are aware of the rapid progress the school has made in the time since the new principal has been in post. In addition, they are fully aware of the current strengths and weaknesses of the school, and understand that further work is needed to improve the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and the attainment of all pupils in mathematics.
- Effective performance management arrangements for the principal are in place.
- Governors are suitably skilled and appropriately informed to make the right decisions for the future improvement of the school.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Overall, pupils feel safe in their school. A large majority of pupils know how to report any concerns they have and are confident that the school will deal with these issues appropriately.

- All staff are trained appropriately and regularly updated so that safeguarding practice is consistent and recognised as an important responsibility for all. Records indicate that all staff have read, and are able to implement, the most recent guidance documents. Staff and governors are all aware of how to deal with any safeguarding issues that arise. Pupils indicate that they are aware of whom they can report concerns to in the school.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- Teachers do not always plan appropriately challenging and engaging activities for pupils. When this is the case, some pupils, particularly the most able, are not fully stretched to achieve their best. The quality of learning varies too much between subjects and also between teachers in the same subject and year group.
- Teachers do not insist on equally high standards of learning and attention in class. In some lessons, pupils drift off-task or interrupt the learning of others. Where teaching is well pitched and structured, pupils work keenly and are interested in their learning. All pupils are effectively supported to make progress.
- School leaders are supporting each member of the teaching staff with a plan that helps them develop their practice. Although the full impact of these plans is yet to be seen, leaders are beginning to capitalise on the most confident and positive teaching, where pupils learn well because of well-judged, engaging activities and effective feedback.
- Teachers now more frequently collaborate to share and develop their practice, learning from each other. However, there is significant further work to do to ensure that all teaching is as good as the best in the school.
- The school's work to promote the development of reading is starting to have an impact in all year groups. Reading levels are carefully monitored, and pupils who need to catch up are given appropriate support.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

#### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The school works hard to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, and appropriate strategies have now been put in place. For example, two daily minibuses routes have been established so that pupils can get to school more easily. The school monitors the attendance of each individual in this group, supporting and intervening if necessary. The school actively works with the local authority's attendance officer and social services as appropriate. However, despite all the work done, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains stubbornly low.

- The school's pastoral support panel meets regularly to review the behaviour, attendance and well-being of individual pupils, and puts plans in place to help them improve their behaviour. Older pupils have experienced marked improvements as a result, but the youngest are still putting up with disruption to their learning. Some new Year 7 pupils wrongly believe this is something they have to put up with in senior school.
- Pupils value the improvements to date, and the renewed sense of community in the school. The majority report that they feel safe at the school most or all of the time. More than four out of five pupils who completed Ofsted's pupil survey indicated that there is an adult in the school they can talk to if something is worrying them.
- Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain through the work they do in their tutor groups and in the topics covered in assemblies. The school has recently set up a school council, so recent developments such as the school charter have benefited from structured input from pupils. In addition, pupils are encouraged to participate in the local area youth council.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by the school, with suitably frequent individual review meetings, to consider the needs of each child, taking place to good effect.
- The welfare and progress of pupils who are educated off-site are monitored carefully, with scheduled meetings ensuring that regular reviews are carried out. The progress data for these pupils is included in the school's data system so that they also are subject to the same scrutiny as their peers in school.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The school has improved standards of behaviour around the site. In corridors between lessons, and in communal areas at break and lunchtime, there is a generally calm and ordered atmosphere, with staff actively on duty around the site intervening quickly if any issues arise. Older pupils view this as significant improvement and they feel safe at school.
- Teachers are confident that new systems are now starting to promote consistently good behaviour across the school, and that they are supported in their use of the school's behaviour policy by the senior leaders. However, this is an over-optimistic view given the experience of the youngest pupils.
- Year 7 pupils reported that their learning in lessons is too often disrupted by the behaviour of others, with 'calling out' and 'pupils talking when the teacher is talking' identified as significant issues. Of all the pupils who completed the pupil survey, half indicated that their lessons are disrupted at least some of the time.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Requires improvement**

- The 2016 GCSE results were significantly better than those achieved in 2015. The percentages of pupils who made expected progress in mathematics and English were higher, and the progress made by disadvantaged pupils was closer to the progress made by pupils nationally. Despite these improvements, the 2016 GCSE results are still too low, particularly in mathematics, and the school recognises this.

- In mathematics, assessment information for the current year 11 indicates that their attainment is higher than the year group that preceded them, showing evidence for rising standards in the subject. However, there is still considerable variation in pupils' progress in mathematics because teaching is not consistently good.
- Over time, pupils' achievement has not been good enough. In 2015, the school's GCSE results were low and did not meet the national floor standards. Across all their subjects, the progress made by all pupils was significantly below the national average.
- In the 2015 GCSE exams, the most able pupils in English did not make the progress expected of them, with their outcomes below the national average for that group. In mathematics, all pupils made significantly lower than national average progress, and this was also true for the most able. Disadvantaged pupils did not make the progress expected of them.
- The school has now started on a trend of improvement, and the achievement of pupils currently in school confirms this. Leaders regularly discuss individual pupils and their progress in order to provide intervention as required. This now takes place in current year groups, so that pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning catch up.
- There is more to be done to ensure that progress is securely good across subjects, year groups and pupil groups. When teachers plan effectively and challenge pupils with the tasks set, pupils engage very effectively and gain knowledge and skills at an impressive rate.
- Nonetheless, there are still too many instances of pupils not completing all the work set for them to the best of their ability, and not acting on the feedback provided for them. As a consequence, they achieve less than they are capable of. Until recently, there was no reliable system to capture and reverse this underachievement.
- In key stage 3, the school has had very little information to measure the progress of younger year groups with any reliability. This is changing. New data systems have been started this year and are beginning to provide a more reliable picture of rates of progress across all year groups.
- There are more reliable and accurate evaluations of progress in place for the current Year 11 group. This assessment shows that they have made more progress to this point than did the year group above them.

## School details

Unique reference number	138616
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10019967

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	781
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Day
Principal	Sara Adams
Telephone number	01305 817 000
Website	<a href="http://www.veyvalley.dorset.sch.uk">www.veyvalley.dorset.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:adamss@veyvalley.dorset.sch.uk">adamss@veyvalley.dorset.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	20–21 November 2014

## Information about this school

- Wey Valley School is a smaller than average secondary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small number speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is just above the national average.
- The proportion of pupil who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average overall, although higher than average in the lower years of the school.
- The school did not meet the current government floor standards in 2015.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Eighteen pupils are educated off-site at the Dorchester Learning Centre and the Compass Centre.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspector visited 30 lessons, most of which were visited jointly with a senior leader. In addition, shorter visits were made to lessons across a year group in mathematics.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and groups of pupils from both the upper and lower school.
- Further meetings were held with members of the governing body including the chair. The lead inspector met with the school's improvement partner and a headteacher from another secondary school which has been supporting Wey Valley.
- Inspectors reviewed 81 responses from Parent View, as well as responses to pupil and staff questionnaires. Inspectors saw a letter written to the chair of the governing body by a number of parents, and received an email directly from one other parent during the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, documents concerning safeguarding, monitoring records and minutes of governors' meetings.
- A work scrutiny was carried out to evaluate the quality of work in pupils' books.

## Inspection team

Jerry Giles, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Butler	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Nicholson	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Grant	Ofsted Inspector

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