

Mill Chase Academy

Mill Chase Road, Bordon, Hampshire GU35 0ER

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have established an ethos of high expectation and aspiration which is central to the life of the school. This is bringing about ongoing and rapid improvement.
- The culture of safeguarding evident throughout the school is recognised by pupils, parents and staff. Pupils are safe, happy and well looked after because of the positive relationships they have with their teachers and other adults in the school.
- Pupils make increasingly good progress across a range of subjects by the end of Year 11, from starting points which are typically low. Where underperformance existed in the past, standards are rising because of improvements to teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making more rapid progress than their peers, which is helping them to catch up.
- Effective systems put in place by leaders encourage pupils to behave well and have positive attitudes towards their learning. The atmosphere in lessons and around school is calm and purposeful.
- Teachers know their subjects well and plan lessons which build on pupils' prior learning. They are passionate about doing the best for the pupils they teach, and understand their needs.
- Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are nurtured and supported well in accessing the curriculum. They make good progress in their academic and wider development.
- Attendance has improved rapidly and pupils now attend school regularly. The small number of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing steadily.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop capacity within wider leadership so that:
 - middle leaders more sharply evaluate the impact of their work and use what they learn to direct actions that secure rapid further improvement
 - expertise and strong practice that exist within the school are shared increasingly effectively, leading to more consistently strong teaching and learning.
- Closely target the next phase of the schools' work in accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that their achievement across the wide range of subjects falls in line with that of their peers nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders are determined to secure the best for the pupils in the school and the community they serve. They remain resolute in this aim, which is shared by staff, governors and members of the trust. Their focus is leading to ongoing improvement across the school.
- Improvements to the curriculum mean that more pupils now access a broad range of subjects than was the case in the past. This supports leaders' ambitions to ensure that pupils have high aspirations for what they can achieve, both at and beyond school. As a result, pupils are achieving better across a wide number of subjects and are prepared increasingly well for the future.
- School leaders have established an ethos that promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils are highly tolerant of each other and develop the attributes that will help them to be good citizens in modern Britain. Academic mentoring supports pupils in becoming increasingly reflective and self-directed learners.
- Teachers share leaders' high expectations and are held firmly to account for the progress of the pupils in their classes. Performance management focuses individual teachers on improving their practice, which is leading to more consistently high-quality teaching across the school and improved outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are supported well in keeping safe and being successful. Those who are part of the resourced provision are nurtured and challenged, with staff knowing and meeting their needs in a way that enables them to make good progress academically and holistically. A small number of pupils benefit from alternative provision, where they attend regularly and make good progress.
- Leaders work closely with support from the trust to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Links to the trust provide useful ways to share good practice and learn from expertise from beyond the school. A range of opportunities allow teachers to share their skills in school, although this could be refined to have a more rapid impact where it is most needed.
- Leaders use additional funding well to help disadvantaged pupils and those in Year 7 who need to catch up in English and mathematics. Their focus is on providing quality first teaching in the classroom, supported by extra help that is reviewed and developed in response to pupil need. This work is helping these pupils to make rapid progress and begin to catch up with their peers in school and nationally. A sharper focus on the difference that this work is making would enable rates of progress to become even more rapid.

Governance of the school

- Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They can describe priorities for improvement, and have confidence that the school's leaders can bring about the ongoing development that has been needed in the recent past. Governors understand the significance of the school in contributing effectively to the local community, and are determined to support this.

- Governors have a suitably diverse set of skills and take part in appropriate training. This allows them to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in relation to safer recruiting and managing the performance of staff.
- Recent strengthening of the governing body, supported by the trust, has improved its effectiveness. Governors now ask more challenging questions to satisfy their understanding about what is being reported to them. This is enabling them to hold leaders increasingly to account about the performance of the school. Governors do not always scrutinise the evidence that they are given sharply enough to determine in detail the relative impact of leaders' actions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils' welfare is at the heart of the work of all those involved in the school community.
- School leaders manage well the challenges of keeping the site secure. Pupils and staff are equally vigilant about challenging visitors moving across the site.
- Leaders and governors take appropriate action when recruiting staff. Key personnel are trained in safer recruitment and involved in interviews. The school's records of recruitment and employment checks are suitably rigorous and carefully maintained.
- Staff receive appropriate training and understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. Clear systems are in place and are followed well to ensure that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are looked after, using support from beyond the school where appropriate.
- Staff respond quickly to manage concerns about pupils at risk of radicalisation. Pupils are highly tolerant of each other's beliefs and values, but would benefit from being taught more specifically about the dangers of radicalisation in a wider context.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know their pupils well and create a safe environment where pupils are confident about being challenged to think. Teachers' expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour are high. Most pupils work well in lessons and are keen to make progress.
- Teachers know their subjects well and use their specialist knowledge to plan lessons which build on learning. Pupils ask thoughtful questions to check their own understanding of their learning as well as the task in hand.
- Pupils read and write with fluency that enables them to access their learning. Where pupils arrive at the school with skills that are weak, they receive appropriate support within and beyond lessons to help them catch up. Improving pupils' literacy and encouraging a love of reading is a focus for school leaders, who use a range of strategies that are making a measurable difference.
- Teaching in the resource base effectively meets the needs of the pupils who work there. Staff work closely with subject teachers to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in a way that complements work in mainstream lessons. This means that these pupils make good progress in developing their wider skills and across an appropriately broad range of subjects.

- Pupils receive homework that supports their learning. They appreciate the help available at after-school homework clubs and extra study sessions that enables them to keep up and achieve well. A range of other clubs, including sports, arts and science, provide additional opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in these areas.
- Pupils receive regular feedback from teachers about their work, in line with the school's policy. This is being used increasingly well by pupils to improve their understanding and make more rapid progress.
- Teachers assess pupils' work consistently accurately, using support from the trust to check their judgements. Leaders use this assessment information to identify further help for pupils who are not making good progress and to stretch the most able. When future work in lessons planned by teachers does not match closely the prior learning of individual pupils, progress is not as rapid as it could be, especially for those who are ready to move on.
- Where teaching is most effective, questioning is used well to probe and deepen pupils' understanding. This is not done consistently well across the curriculum, meaning that opportunities to extend pupils' thinking more rapidly are sometimes missed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders have established an ethos where all pupils are well cared for and encouraged towards high achievement and aspiration.
- Pupils report that they feel very safe moving around the school, supported by their good relationships with their peers. Staff provide a visible presence around the school, and pupils feel confident about going to them with any concerns that they may have.
- An effective transition process from primary school ensures that Year 7 pupils settle quickly and feel confident. Older pupils help younger pupils with their learning, as well as making them feel welcome and safe.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils in the resource base is good. Staff understand the unique needs of these pupils well and work sensitively to meet them. Pupils integrate well into the life of the main school, developing skills and confidence that equip them for life after Year 11.
- Pupils receive helpful careers information and guidance to help them prepare for life beyond school. This raises pupils' aspirations and encourages them to focus on making the most of the opportunity to learn in lessons. Increasing numbers of pupils move successfully on to further education, employment and training as a result.
- Assemblies and experience days support pupils' learning in their different subjects about how to be a good citizen in Britain today. Pupils know how to stay safe, including online.
- The lack of derogatory language in school shows how well the high moral code has been established. No incidents were reported in the past year, and pupils talk respectfully to each other and their teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and their teachers as they move around the school. They manage themselves well during social time and enjoy effective relationships across the age range of pupils at the school. Staff, including senior leaders, are accessible and visible, and this provides reassurance where needed.
- Pupils have consistently positive attitudes towards their learning. Classrooms are orderly and purposeful, which helps pupils to focus on their work.
- Parents, pupils and staff recognise good behaviour as a strength of the school. Effective systems are in place for pupils who find it challenging to meet the high expectations for their behaviour. School leaders make good use of their pastoral centre to help pupils to reflect on their behaviour while being supported to make academic progress. This prevents learning in lessons from being disrupted, and helps individual pupils to improve and manage their behaviour when they return to class.
- The school's behaviour records show low and decreasing numbers of pupils whose behaviour is deemed to be unacceptable. The number of pupils that it is necessary to exclude from school is well below the national average, because of the alternative strategies that staff use effectively to address low-level concerns when they arise.
- Incidents of racism and bullying are rare, and pupils describe how these are dealt with quickly when they arise. Parents have confidence that leaders will address any instances of bullying promptly.
- School leaders monitor carefully the attendance of pupils at alternative provision. These pupils attend regularly and behave well.
- Pupils attend school regularly, with attendance rates which have improved and are now consistently above the national average. Leaders work closely with the small number of pupils who continue to be persistently absent from school, and this is making a sustained and steady difference. Leaders recognise that this continues to be an area of focus, and emphasise the link between good attendance and good progress in their work with pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils arrive at the school with below-average starting points and with literacy skills which are typically lower than would be expected for their age. As a result of improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching, pupils now make increasingly good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics, consistently achieving results at the end of Year 11 which are in line with the national average. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make particularly strong progress in mathematics, reflecting consistently high-quality teaching.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve good GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics is increasing and is now close to the national average.
- Pupils in key stage 3 make stronger progress than has been seen historically, as a result of better teaching. An increasingly large proportion of pupils make good or better

progress across a wider range of subjects.

- Pupils currently in Year 11 are making better progress than their predecessors, and are set to achieve stronger outcomes across the broad curriculum by the time they leave the school. Disadvantaged pupils are making more rapid progress than their peers in school, which is diminishing the differences between their outcomes and those of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils are prepared well for the future. The proportion moving on to further education, employment or training is typically above the national average. In 2015, every pupil who left the school at the end of Year 11 went on to further education, employment or training.
- The most able pupils typically make better progress than their peers, although this was not the case for pupils who left the school in 2016 when the least able pupils made better progress by the end of Year 11. The most able pupils currently in the school are challenged well to achieve their potential, and make strong progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who are part of the resource base, are well supported by a curriculum that meets their individual wider needs. This enables them to access an increasingly broad range of qualifications than has been the case in the past, and make progress which is similar to that of their peers in school and improving towards that of all pupils nationally.
- Pupils who left the school in 2016 had not made as much progress across a broad curriculum as would be expected. Progress in mathematics and modern foreign languages was above the national average but it was much weaker in English, science and humanities. This reflects the legacy of a narrow curriculum and inconsistent teaching in the past. Leaders have addressed both of these issues, and the progress of pupils lower down the school across a wide range of subjects is much improved as a result.
- Outcomes in English have historically been weaker but show signs of significant improvement. Staff recruitment challenges have meant that addressing this issue has taken longer than it should have, but teaching is now much more consistent and current progress is better than it was in the past.

School details

Unique reference number	140182
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10019848

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Grant
Principal	Paul Hemmings
Telephone number	01420 472 132
Website	http://www.millchase.hants.sch.uk/
Email address	c.tutton@millchase.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Mill Chase is a small mixed secondary school. It became an academy in November 2013 and is sponsored by the University of Chichester Academy Trust.
- The school has a lower than average proportion of boys, and a higher than average proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.
- There is a lower percentage of pupils from multi-ethnic groups than the national average, and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is less than half the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, but there is a higher than average percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school has a resource base for pupils with moderate learning difficulties which has places for nine pupils. There are currently five pupils being supported by this provision.

- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision, either through the Linden Centre pupil referral unit or at Brighton and Hove Albion football club.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the government floor standards for what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 31 lessons to observe learning, talk to pupils and look at their work across the broad range of subjects. Some of these visits were carried out with school leaders. Inspectors also visited four tutor sessions and an assembly, the Bridge pastoral centre and the resource base for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders and a range of other staff. They also spoke to groups of pupils from Year 7, Year 9 and Year 10. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and the academy trust. An inspector spoke to a representative of the Linden centre alternative provision.
- The inspection team worked alongside the assistant principal to look at a sample of Year 8 and Year 10 pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered 41 responses to the online Parent View survey, including 35 free text comments. They took 26 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 51 responses to the staff questionnaire into account.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of other documents, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plan, the school's website and policies, the school's central record of recruitment checks, child protection records and case studies, curriculum plans, governor minutes and pupil attendance, behaviour and performance information.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Foster	Ofsted Inspector
Harry Kutty	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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