

Avon Valley College

Recreation Road, Durrington, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 8HH

Inspection dates

4 to 5 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good, because teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work are too low.
- Subject leadership is not consistently effective. This leads to variations in the quality of teaching and in outcomes for students within and across subjects.
- Pupils with lower starting points do not make enough progress. Teachers do not spend enough time developing the reading, writing and numeracy skills pupils require.
- Disadvantaged pupils have made poor progress in the past. However, leaders have made significant improvements in the school's work in this area.
- The post-16 provision requires improvement because the sixth form does not cater adequately for the needs of its students.
- Changes to staffing have generated a secure capacity for improvement, but they have not yet had time to have an impact on the lack of progress made by pupils in the past.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal is resolute and determined to provide the highest quality of education for pupils at the school. He has the strong support of governors, staff and pupils.
- The leadership team has put in place a comprehensive plan to bring about improvements.
- Pupils are safe, well looked after and cared for. They enjoy coming to school and attend regularly.
- The progress of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving because of strong leadership.
- The governors, principal and staff show great commitment to ensuring that the school serves its community well.
- Senior leaders have taken decisive action to improve behaviour around the school. As a result, the school is calm and orderly.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They are tolerant and respectful of each other and they are keen to play a part in the life of the school through participation in sporting and community events.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in all subject areas in order to raise pupils' achievement, including that of disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - consistently providing work that challenges and interests all pupils in all lessons
 - making sure that teachers have the same high expectations of all pupils no matter which subject or class they are taught in
 - checking pupils' understanding in lessons more effectively in order to correct misconceptions and deepen learning
 - identifying the needs of different groups of pupils and ensuring that they receive effective support.
- Improve the quality of leadership by ensuring that:
 - leaders check rigorously that intended measures to improve the quality of teaching happen in practice and have demonstrable impact
 - literacy and numeracy are given high priority across all subjects to enable all pupils to access the curriculum and make good progress from their starting points.
- Improve the quality of leadership of the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that students are advised and guided to take courses which are appropriate for their needs and aspirations
 - broadening the post-16 curriculum to include more opportunities for personal development
 - improving the monitoring of students' progress and providing support to help them catch up.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the arrival of the new principal in September 2017, the school has been improving rapidly. However, the impact of the many positive changes he and his team have put in place is yet to be reflected in positive outcomes. Consequently, leadership and management require improvement.
- In 2016, governors recognised the need to halt the decline in the standards of teaching, pupils' outcomes and behaviour. Leadership has been strengthened and new appointments have been made. New systems and routines are now in place to enable pupils to learn more effectively. There are clear procedures governing behaviour and pupils understand what is expected of them. Teachers use the procedures consistently and there has been a marked improvement in behaviour in classrooms and around the school.
- Leaders and governors' views of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school are too generous. Leaders recognise that outcomes for pupils in the school need to improve, but they still judge the quality of teaching to be good. Evaluation of the quality of the teaching does not pay sufficient attention to the impact that teaching has on improving pupils' progress and future prospects.
- Leaders use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, is not having enough impact on the progress made by those pupils who need to catch up after primary school. There is not enough emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills so that they can make good progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders have begun to set high expectations for pupils in the school but, until recently, expectations were low, particularly for middle and high attainers.
- The leadership of English and mathematics has not been strong enough over time to secure sustained good progress for all pupils. New staffing structures are now in place and expectations of what can be achieved are rising rapidly.
- Middle leaders are receiving training for their roles and speak positively about the support they have been given. They are becoming more secure in assessing pupils' progress as a result and they are gaining confidence in monitoring the work of their teams. The impact of this is yet to be measured.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Leaders have made well-considered adjustments to the curriculum and others are planned to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leadership of the sixth form has not ensured that students choose courses which best suit their needs. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form lacks rigour and some aspects of the 11 to 19 programmes of study are weak. For example, some students do not have access to aspects of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) tutor programme.
- The principal and senior leaders are ambitious for their pupils and keen that they are equipped to make a positive contribution to society. They have ensured that pupils'

spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well planned and effective.

- The school has a positive and motivated teaching staff. Responses to the online survey of staff opinion indicate that morale is high. There is strong support for the principal and his leadership team.
- The school has drawn appropriately on external support for its improvement work, including a wide range of support provided by the local teaching school. As a result, appropriate staffing and systems are now in place to quicken the pace of improvement still further.

Governance of the school

- Governors have reacted to the poor examination results over the past three years, and they have supported the principal and senior leaders in bringing about significant changes to staffing and to the way the school operates. However, they have an over-optimistic view of the impact of these changes, many of which are yet to be reflected in more positive outcomes for pupils and students.
- Governors hold leaders to account, and they are actively involved in monitoring the school's work. They have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and regularly challenge decisions made by the leadership team.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's context and the community in which it is located. They are committed to the school's ethos and values, and they are justly proud of its improving reputation in the area.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Appropriate checks are made on all staff to make sure they are suitable to work with children. Senior leaders make safeguarding a priority. They fully meet their statutory responsibilities. They keep detailed records of any concerns that are raised by staff and any subsequent action that is taken.
- Staff receive training about the 'Prevent' duty, which is designed to protect pupils who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Adults are also trained to keep pupils safe from abuse and sexual exploitation.
- Governors oversee safeguarding effectively. They work with school staff to make sure that safeguarding arrangements are in place and up to date. They undertake regular reviews of the school's records and procedures to ensure that there are no weaknesses in the system.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is not securing consistently good outcomes across the school.
- Historically, pupils have made poor progress in the core subjects due to poor teaching. Leaders have addressed this in most areas but there are still pockets of weaker

practice. In English and mathematics, the legacy of poor teaching in previous years is still evident in pupils' achievement.

- Too often, the tasks set by teachers are not adapted to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Sometimes, pupils are set work that is too easy for them. Because of this, pupils are not challenged and do not achieve as well as they might. In other instances, tasks do not address gaps in pupils' understanding and skills, and misconceptions are not corrected. When this occurs, and pupils find that they cannot understand what is required of them, they often give up too easily.
- Some teachers' expectations are too low. Teaching does not provide the level of challenge that will help pupils make rapid progress whatever their starting points. Work is often not based on a clear understanding of what pupils already know, understand and can do.
- Although the leadership team has been effective in establishing new standards of behaviour in the classroom and new routines, teachers' expectations of the way pupils present and set out their work are far too variable. The ability to set out work clearly is an important aid to understanding and progress. In many of the books seen, handwriting was poor and the presentation untidy and disorganised.
- The school has not yet properly addressed literacy across the curriculum, though plans are in place to do so. Consequently, pupils' spelling and punctuation are often weak, and this limits their ability to make good progress. An online literacy program has recently been introduced to enable pupils who had fallen behind in their primary schools to catch up. A new 'book in the bag' policy has also been put in place to encourage pupils to read more often in order to develop greater fluency and understanding.
- Assessment practice varies across the school. A new system is in place which most teachers follow, but it needs refining to ensure that it accurately reflects pupils' progress and helps pupils to improve their learning. Teachers give feedback in line with the school's assessment policy, but pupils' use of this feedback varies. In some lessons, they use it well so that they know what they need to do to improve; in others, they make little use of it and this limits their learning.
- Since September 2017, improvements to teaching have started to become more evident. Leaders are aware that more work is required to ensure that teaching exerts maximum influence on pupils' progress over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know pupils well, respond in a timely manner to any concerns and maintain contact with parents as much as possible.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. During arrivals at school, departures at the end of the day, travelling around school and during breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils behave very safely.
- The pastoral support provided by the school is a clear strength. Leaders have created

an inclusive school where every pupil is valued and cared for. Pupils and staff are unanimous in their praise for the help, support and guidance they receive when they need it. Parents agree that the school is a safe place for their children.

- Discussions with pupils and responses from parents identify that bullying is rare, and that staff deal with it effectively. Inspectors' checks of bullying records showed that incidents of bullying are followed up and resolved effectively. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from the risks of exploitation, including when using social media.
- Leaders regularly seek pupils' views about school life. This information is then used to develop further what the school does to support its pupils. As a result, pupils say that they feel listened to and that their points of view matter.
- Careers education forms an integral part of pupils' learning from Year 7 through to Year 13. Pupils are offered an increasing range of opportunities to find out more about their own strengths and skills, and how to present these, by writing curriculum vitae and in mock interviews. These skills are helping pupils to become more successful learners.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. The school tracks their attendance and progress regularly, working with these providers to ensure that the personalised programmes support the pupils effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and the atmosphere is calm and orderly. They are polite and welcoming towards visitors. Around the school, pupils hold doors open for each other and greet staff with a smile.
- Pupils say behaviour has 'improved massively' since the principal was appointed. They enjoy the new sense of calm and order around the school, and they appreciate the high levels of staff supervision at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Pupils line up before every lesson so that teachers can check that they are properly equipped. This has led to much calmer starts to lessons because pupils enter the classroom ready to learn.
- Attendance is improving and is higher than at the same point last year, reflecting pupils' more positive attitudes to school.
- The improved behaviour of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils, has led to rates of exclusion falling.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because pupils currently in the school are not making consistently strong progress, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' outcomes for at least the last three years have been much lower than they should have been compared with similar pupils nationally. This is because pupils have not been taught consistently well. Many pupils have underachieved, especially boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils.
- Teaching is now improving rapidly as a result of the support from leaders and the many opportunities teachers now have to improve their practice. Despite these improvements in teaching, progress is not consistently good in some subjects and year groups.
- As a result of the underachievement that has taken place for the past three years, pupils are not prepared well for their next steps in education.
- Pupils' work indicates that many have gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills that have persisted through their time at the school. This means that many do not have secure foundations on which to build their knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils with SEND are supported well across the curriculum. Some pupils with SEND have significant gaps in their learning when they arrive in the school. Pupils make better progress as they move through the school because the coordinator for SEND assesses pupils accurately to identify their needs and makes sure teachers know how to help pupils to overcome their barriers to learning. Pupils are fully included in all aspects of life at the school.
- The principal is acutely aware that pupils should be making better progress overall. Building on improvements made last year, such as higher rates of attendance and much better behaviour, he is taking decisive action to raise standards. Although it is too soon to see any real impact on pupils' outcomes, inspectors could see positive signs of improvement.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching is variable in the sixth form. The same inconsistencies exist in the sixth form as are seen in the main school. Leaders of the sixth form do not use assessment information to raise standards effectively and some students fall behind as a result.
- Students' progress in both academic and vocational courses is in line with national averages. Students retaking level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics do less well. Leaders are aware of this and are devoting more time to ensuring that students are better prepared in the future.
- Students are offered a wide range of courses when they apply for places in the sixth form in Year 11, and every effort is then made to cater for their needs. However, in practice, many of the courses on offer do not run. This means that students make last-minute decisions about staying in the school sixth form or choosing different subjects.

- In recent years, staying on rates in the sixth form have varied significantly. Between 2017 and 2018, six of the 11 students who started courses in the sixth form left before completing them. The current Year 12 is much more stable.
- Students receive careers guidance from their tutor and an independent careers officer. The small size of the sixth form means that the sixth-form leader knows the students well and understands their interests.
- Students speak highly of the help they receive from their teachers, and they particularly value the small class sizes which make personalised support possible. They recognise, however, that small class sizes limit the stimulating interactions provided by discussions in larger groups.
- There is a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme, but leaders do not ensure that all students have access to it. Students who do not have lessons at the start of the day do not have to attend school until their first lesson begins. This means that these students can easily miss key aspects of the PSHE programme.
- All students have access to work experience, and they talk positively about the opportunities offered by the school to develop their leadership skills by working with pupils in lower years. A comprehensive programme of university visits is available, and students are encouraged to start thinking about their next steps as soon as they enter the sixth form.
- Leaders are committed to the sixth form and they have ambitious plans for its expansion.

School details

Unique reference number	143005
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10088361

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	411
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	23
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Carl Orme
Principal	Sam Johnston
Telephone number	01980 652 467
Website	www.avonvalley.wilts.sch.uk
Email address	office@avonvalleycollege.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- 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 is smaller than the average-sized 11 to 18 secondary school. It is part of the Salisbury Plain Academies Trust.
- The school makes use of one alternative provider. Currently, a few pupils, who are dual registered, spend time at the WASP Centre.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above national averages.
- A very small proportion of pupils are from other than White British backgrounds.
- The school has received support from The Excalibur Teaching School Alliance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons. The majority of these observations were conducted jointly with the principal and other senior leaders.
- Meetings were held between inspectors and senior and middle leaders, teachers, groups of students, the chief executive of the trust and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence, including the school's improvement plan, checks on how well it is doing, information relating to safeguarding and child protection, records of the quality of teaching, performance management information and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's records of students' progress and attainment and also work in students' books across a range of subjects.
- The views of parents were considered through 27 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire; 35 members of staff responded to the inspection questionnaire and 61 pupils gave their views through the online pupils' questionnaire. Inspectors also took into account the opinions expressed in a small number of written communications which were received from parents.

Inspection team

Richard Steward, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David New	Ofsted Inspector
Jerry Giles	Ofsted Inspector

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