



Test Valley School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116426
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 290530
Inspection date 3 October 2006
Reporting inspector George Rayner

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Roman Road
School category	Community		Stockbridge
Age range of pupils	11–16		SO20 6HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01264810555
Number on roll (school)	770	Fax number	01264810173
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Grace Morgan
		Headteacher	Miss Wendy Morrish
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	3 October 2006	290530

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most secondary schools. It is located in a rural setting, with its pupils coming from a wide area. Standards on entry to Year 7 are broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnicity. Very few pupils are at an early stage of speaking English. The socio-economic circumstances of pupils are generally advantaged. The school has recently secured specialist status in mathematics, computing and the rural dimension.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents agree. Most think that their sons and daughters settle in well and make good progress in their learning and personal development.

The school provides good care for its pupils. It uses its small size well to encourage a strong sense of community. In this secure setting, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They confidently explain why they are happy here. They know the importance of a healthy diet and participate enthusiastically in the good range of sporting activities from which they can choose. They respond well to the many opportunities that they have to contribute to school life.

Pupils achieve well and most reach above average standards by the time they leave the school. This is because of good teaching and the pupils' good response. These are most evident in mathematics, design technology and history, in which achievement is best. Achievement is weakest in science, where it is satisfactory. In most respects, boys achieve as well as girls. The exception is that fewer boys succeed in reaching the highest levels in writing. The school is aware of this and is working with local authority advisers to develop ways to help the most able boys to become as enthusiastic and accomplished writers as the girls.

Pupils make good progress in most lessons because teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their subjects well. They understand the examination requirements and give good advice on how to succeed in these. They use assessment well to guide pupils on how to improve. Teaching in science does not always provide high enough expectation and challenge for pupils to make good progress. The school provides a good curriculum. It knows how important this is for pupils' achievement and has worked effectively to make improvements since the last inspection. It has broadened the range of choices for pupils, to make it easier for them to find courses that meet their needs.

The headteacher is dedicated to the school and has a very clear vision of the way forward. She is well supported by staff working at all levels and by governors. Good leadership and management contribute to the school's good understanding of how well it is performing and what it needs to do to become even better. The school based its application for specialist status upon a well thought out strategy for strengthening the role of the strongest departments in leading improvement. Its recent success reinforces the school's good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Find ways to encourage the most able boys to become as enthusiastic and capable writers as the girls, so that their achievement is as good.
- Ensure that teaching in science provides sufficient expectation and challenge for pupils to achieve as well as they do in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils reach above average standards and achieve well. In Years 7 to 9 they make rapid progress. This is because the teachers know their subjects well and use the setting system effectively to meet pupils' needs. This prepares pupils to successfully go forward in their Years 10 and 11 examination courses.

Each year pupils achieve very well in mathematics. Their results are consistently well above average in Year 9 and at GCSE. Teachers are able to generate enthusiasm for mathematics. This increases pupils' willingness and confidence to deal with challenging work. Most pupils also take a GCSE in statistics and reach well above average standards in this. Pupils achieve very well in history because imaginative teaching encourages them to be very involved. Teachers' expertise in all areas of design and technology ensures very good achievement in these. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in science, with average standards in Year 11. The school is working with local authority advisers to raise expectation and challenge to that of the better performing subjects. Pupils' GCSE results across all of their subjects were a little higher in 2006 than 2005.

Teachers make sure that, in almost all cases, pupils achieve as well as each other. The only exception is that the most able boys do less well than girls in writing. Their lower motivation and confidence make this so. Teaching assistants support teachers well to help pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to do well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is shown by their above average attendance and willingness to be involved. Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award has been so good that the school has become a centre for this. Most pupils behave well and work willingly.

Pupils are able to explain safety rules and understand why these are necessary. They know why healthy eating and drinking is important and can explain how they would prepare a healthy meal. Pupils willingly take up the many opportunities to contribute to school life. These include participation on the pupil council and work as prefects and mentors for younger pupils. They also take part in many activities in the wider community, including charity work and coaching primary school pupils as part of the Junior Sports Leaders scheme. The school is now working to improve pupils' personal development even further by encouraging them to play a greater role in choosing and leading activities in addition to supporting them. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education and careers. Good careers guidance, effective links with further education colleges and a Young Enterprise programme all contribute to this.

The school is aware that it is not easy to develop pupils' multicultural awareness when there is little cultural diversity. Consequently, it plans effectively to include

opportunities to learn about other cultures in a range of subjects, including religious education, English, geography and history. In a discussion, pupils showed this is effective when explaining differences between where they live and a village in India. Pupils also showed good spirituality when explaining how a visit to the Normandy landing beaches had affected them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan interesting, stimulating lessons that motivate pupils to work willingly. They know their pupils well and use assessment effectively to ensure that activities cater for all. Teachers give good advice on how to improve. Pupils say that they really appreciate this, as well as teachers' efforts to make lessons as interesting as possible. One said, 'The teachers couldn't try harder with us, even if we do not like the subject.' In some lessons, for example in English, teachers work in teams. On these occasions, and when teaching assistants are present, the quality of individual monitoring and support is very good.

In a few lessons, teachers do not make procedures clear enough to pupils, so that they are not sure when they should be listening to instructions, rather than writing. In some science lessons, challenge and expectation are not high enough to ensure good progress. This means that pupils' motivation to work hard and their achievement are not as high as in the majority of lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has improved the breadth and balance of its curriculum well since the last inspection. All pupils now take a religious education course in Years 10 and 11 that effectively meets the legal requirements. Because of significant improvements to information and communication technology (ICT) resources, which are now being further boosted by the specialist school status, pupils have good opportunities to use computers in most subjects. These still need auditing however, to ensure that all subjects are planning these well. The school is aware that pupils still need more opportunities to practise writing in different subjects and is working with local authority advisers to achieve this.

Pupils really like the good range of sporting, cultural and creative clubs. They show this by their good participation. One pupil said, 'Teachers listen to our ideas for clubs - we thought of the steel band club.' Pupils know that they are lucky that the school has its own swimming pool. They report that it is very popular in the summer and that it helps most pupils to become confident and safe in and near water.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) course contributes well to pupils' personal development. In addition, they learn about moral choices, rights and responsibilities in subjects such as English, history and religious education. An effective

careers course and well-organised advice prepare pupils to take their next steps. The school has broadened the range of choices for Year 10 and 11 pupils. For example, in collaboration with three local colleges, it provides a good range of vocational courses. The rural dimension specialism is building upon good links with local companies to prepare those pupils who aspire to a career in modern agriculture.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils and parents say that the school is a very welcoming and caring place. Those arriving in Year 7 settle in quickly. Although they come from a wide range of schools, good links ensure that pupils' preparation and welcome start early. Year 7 pupils say that they particularly like the system of having a support assistant in every lesson. This makes sure that they receive the help that they need as they find their feet in the secondary school. All procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being are diligently carried out. Staff have had training in child protection. Experienced staff have clearly defined responsibility for this and ensuring any pupils who need help receive it. Effective links with outside agencies ensure that expert advice and support are available. A well planned programme of PSHE, through taught courses and activities within a range of subjects, ensures that pupils are able to improve their understanding of health, safety and moral issues. Visitors to the school, for example police officers, give talks to provide specialist guidance.

Academic guidance and support was a weaker area at the time of the last inspection. It has been significantly improved and now has a strong impact upon pupils' achievement. The progress of all pupils is carefully tracked and reviewed regularly. Effective use is made of ICT to ensure that all staff have full access to the information. Local authority training and guidance has ensured that assessment gives pupils a realistic view of how well they are doing. The school has recently improved the role of heads of year, by giving each a clearly specified area in which they lead. This demonstrates the thoughtful and well focused approach to improving the quality and impact of support systems. However, because it is a very recent improvement, it has not yet had full impact.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's very clear vision is shared by all involved in leadership and management. Members of the senior team have clear areas of responsibility and work together effectively as a coherent unit. The school understands the key role of middle managers in pupils' personal development and academic achievement. It is effectively working to improve their organisation and expertise. In areas in which improvement is needed, senior and middle managers are working together well to secure this. There is, for example, a very clear plan to improve achievement in science by redesigning the Year 7 to 9 curriculum so that it is more motivating and provides a better starting

point for the GCSE course. Governors are well organised and knowledgeable. They provide good support and challenge.

The clarity of the school's vision is demonstrated by its specialist school bid. The mathematics specialism is aimed at increasing the influence of that very successful department in supporting others that need to improve. The ICT specialism is already having an impact upon improving resources. The rural dimension is aimed at making use of the school's particular setting and character in a rural area to improve the range of opportunities for pupils who want to work in the countryside. Because specialist status was awarded only very recently however, it is too early to judge the impact.

The school takes good notice of parents' and pupils' views. It analyses its performance carefully. Links with the local authority have been very effective in ensuring good quality training and advice. These give the school a good ability to evaluate its own performance and capacity for continued improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed my visit. It was good to see that you like your school so much and all get on well together. I was able to see that yours is a good school. It has many strengths. Although there are things that could be even better, the headteacher and staff are good at working out what these are.

You do well in most of your subjects. I was impressed by how well you do in mathematics and statistics. This is because the teachers give you difficult tasks, but are good at making these interesting and giving you the confidence to be successful. You also do very well in design and technology and history. You do less well in science than in your other subjects. The teachers are working out why this is so and already have some good ideas to improve this. They know that some of the work in science is not difficult enough to challenge many of you. Boys do as well as girls in nearly every way. The only exception is that the most able boys do not learn to write as well as the most able girls. The teachers know that they need to improve this for the boys.

Teaching is good. Some of you told me that teachers work really hard to make lessons interesting. You also said that teachers give you good advice on how to improve your work.

The school keeps very good records of how well you are all doing and makes sure it uses these to help anybody who is not making as much progress as they could.

You have many good things to do outside of lessons. Some of you told me that you really like all of the different clubs and that the swimming pool is great. Pupils told me that they feel very lucky to have such an attractive school in a country setting. The staff have very good ideas about how to use this and the new mathematics, ICT and rural specialism to make the school even better. You are playing your part by being well behaved and willing to work hard and take part in things.

Well done to you all.

George Rayner

Lead inspector