

Testbourne Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116502
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	290554
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Tom Winskill HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	759
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Horner
Headteacher	Ms Hilary Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001
School address	Micheldever Road Whitchurch RG28 7JF
Telephone number	01256 892061
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average school which has had performing arts specialist status since 2005. It serves the small town of Whitchurch in Hampshire and the surrounding rural areas. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is low as is that of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

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 where pupils achieve well and where their personal development and well-being is of the highest order. Parents rightly have a great deal of confidence in the school. One parent encapsulates the essence of what this school is about, stating that her son 'is encouraged to achieve at a high level academically but also to develop as an individual'. Standards are above average in both key stages as a result of good teaching and excellent care, guidance and support. Good leadership and management are successfully improving the quality of provision, raising standards and providing an environment where pupils can thrive. A great deal of the school's success is because of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher whose vision and inclusive philosophy underpin the work of the school.

The school has undergone a period of transition through changes in personnel including major changes in the senior team and in subject leadership. Further changes in subject leadership are imminent. As result of this turbulence, progress overall in 2006 at Key Stage 3 and in 2005 and 2006 at Key Stage 4 has been satisfactory rather than good. In addition, standards at Key Stage 3 declined from 2004 to 2006, although always remaining above average. This decline has now been reversed as a result of effective action by the newly-formed senior leadership team, together with improvements in subject leadership over the last year. Consequently, pupils currently in the school are making good progress and are on track to achieve challenging targets. Subject leadership, however, still varies in its effectiveness in raising achievement and standards and improving the quality of teaching. For example, in English, improvements in leadership and management have led to closer monitoring of pupils' progress, more effective teamwork and a sharper focus on raising standards at Key Stage 3. In mathematics, however, temporary arrangements in leadership and management have led to satisfactory rather than good progress at Key Stage 4 whilst maintaining good progress at Key Stage 3. Senior leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The quality of self-evaluation, including the detailed tracking of pupils' progress, and the action taken as a result, varies between subjects.

A great strength of the school is the outstanding sense of community amongst pupils and staff. This manifests itself in the excellent staff-pupil relationships and the supportive, caring approach pupils have for one another. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. The school's performing arts specialist status provides many opportunities for personal development through music, dance and drama. Pupils readily embrace these and the wide range of out-of-school provision available to them. Pupils also make a strong contribution to the life of the local and wider community. Their commitment to supporting and working with a school in Uganda, for example, is highly commendable.

Teaching and learning are good which is enabling pupils to make good progress in lessons. There is some variation in the quality of teaching both between and within different subjects. The curriculum meets the needs of the great majority of pupils effectively. Care, guidance and support are excellent. Vulnerable pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being and good progress owe much to the excellent support provided. Pupils are also committed to the school's highly inclusive approach as shown by their positive attitudes to their peers who face greater challenges than most.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide training and support to ensure that further staffing changes do not inhibit the improvements currently underway.
- Ensure that leadership and management are of a high standard in all subjects in order to bring about more consistently good or better teaching across the school.
- Ensure that self-evaluation, including the detailed tracking of pupils' progress, leads to sustained improvement in achievement and standards in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards overall at Key Stage 3, as shown by the results of national tests, have been above average from 2003 to 2006. Standards in English, mathematics and science were broadly average in 2006. Standards are now rising in all three core subjects and are above average. Pupils are on track to achieve challenging targets, particularly in science. Progress has improved in Key Stage 3 and is now good. This is as a result of good teaching and effective intervention when signs of underachievement by individuals or groups of pupils are identified by subject leaders and year heads. There are no groups of pupils underachieving. Standards in Key Stage 4, as shown by GCSE results, are above average. In English, standards are exceptionally and consistently high, having been well above average since 2004. Standards are continuing to rise including the proportion of pupils gaining five higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics, which is well above average. GCSE results in 2006 showed progress to be satisfactory with pupils making good progress in English and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Pupils currently in Key Stage 4 are making good progress as a result of good teaching, closer monitoring of their progress against their targets, raised expectations of them by the senior leadership team and greater accountability for achievement and standards by subject leaders. In 2006, there was some underachievement by girls. This has now been tackled as girls in Key Stage 4 are making good progress towards challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress as a result of effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as a result of the excellent care and guidance and good curriculum provision. The whole school is fully supportive of the activities run by groups of pupils to raise funds to support development in Uganda and other worthwhile causes. Pupils get on very well with each other and behave exceptionally well without any diminution of their individual personalities. Attendance is now above average as a result of successful action taken by the school in the last year. Pupils enjoy school very much; indeed those who discussed their school experiences with the inspector were at a loss to suggest any major change that could be made to improve their lot at Testbourne. They feel safe and can confidently turn to an adult in times of difficulty. Bullying is effectively dealt with on the rare occasions it occurs. Pupils fully understand the need for a healthy lifestyle. Many are involved in sport and other activities as well as taking advantage of the good food offered by the canteen. Their contribution to the community is outstanding. They support activities within school and also the wider community, to the hilt. Opportunities for leadership development and responsibilities abound, notably through the Year 11 prefects system, but also through sports captains, mentoring of younger pupils, opportunities for organising other events including dance and drama, and school council membership. The school council is active and the school

takes note of its views. Pupils' good literacy, numeracy and rapidly improving skills in information and communication technology (ICT) help ensure they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils make good progress in lessons as a result of a variety of different activities which engage and interest them. For example, in a good drama lesson pupils built effectively on their prior knowledge, worked well in teams and used ICT resources imaginatively as they developed a radio play. In a good history lesson, the brisk pace and detailed planning helped pupils understand some the social and political context of the battle of the Somme, as well as reflecting on the horror of war in some depth. Good teaching takes place in all subjects although there is some variation. As a result pupils' progress in some subjects is satisfactory rather than good. Teachers are increasingly using data which show what pupils have learned previously to help plan activities which are better matched to their needs. They also track pupils' progress against targets and help them understand how to achieve well in specific pieces of work. However, this is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is under constant review. Further changes are planned to broaden and improve the provision. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been improved recently so that it now effectively meets the needs of most groups of pupils with different aptitudes and abilities. Vocational provision is now well established, particularly through partnerships with other institutions, and set for further improvement. Significant improvements in the leadership, management and provision for of ICT are raising standards. The curriculum is well supported by the school's 'virtual learning environment' where pupils, staff and parents can use a variety of resources and activities to support pupils' learning. This is used effectively by some subjects including science, mathematics and physical education but is not yet consistently well used by all subjects. The school's performing arts specialist status has effectively enhanced provision in music, dance and drama including improvements in accommodation and resources. There is a great deal of extra-curricular provision which is much appreciated by the pupils. This includes courses leading to GCSE qualifications as well as a rich programme of activities including sport, performing arts and a variety of educational and recreational trips both home and abroad. The pupils' involvement in these activities makes a strong contribution to the school's vibrant community spirit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are very well cared for and provided with a safe environment for their education. Frequent whole-school and year assemblies make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Teams of staff charged with the care, guidance and support of pupils, including tutors, year heads, support staff and special educational need coordinators, are highly effective. Their work is well coordinated and ensures that all pupils feel welcome, secure and are effectively supported at Testbourne. The school is rightly proud of its successes in supporting

vulnerable pupils, some of whom have struggled in other schools. The determination, perseverance and skill of staff enable vulnerable pupils to thrive, thoroughly enjoy school and make worthwhile progress after leaving. Careers guidance is highly regarded by pupils and greatly helps their preparation for adult life. Year 9 pupils choosing their optional subjects at GCSE are given clear, accurate guidance. This is echoed for Year 11 for pupils in selecting their progression routes before they leave school. Good academic guidance is provided by tutors and heads of year. This is helping pupils to achieve well and is becoming increasingly effective at tackling underachievement when difficulties arise with an individual pupil's progress in more than one subject.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has successfully assembled an able and effective senior leadership team. Under her excellent leadership this team is bringing about rapid improvements in all major aspects of the school's work. Existing strengths in care, guidance and support are being improved as heads of year take a more active role in tracking and promoting pupils' achievement. Innovative approaches to make the best use of curriculum time are being sought in order to bring about further improvements in provision. Improved arrangements for the line management of subjects are ensuring subject leaders are much more accountable for achievement and standards. As a result of these changes, achievement and standards are improving. This track record of rapid, well managed and effective change demonstrates that the school's ability to bring about further improvement is strong. Leadership and management are not outstanding because there has not been time for these recent improvements to be sustained. In addition, although much of the subject leadership is good, there are variations across the school. However, subject leadership is being effectively supported by professional development and staff are being encouraged to work effectively in teams to support each other's work. The school's self-evaluation procedures are improving as a result of the programme of rigorous subject reviews which enable leaders, including governors, to have a clear picture of what needs to be done.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1

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.

Annex A

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

4 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Testbourne Community School,Whitchurch,RG28 7JF

I am writing to inform you of the findings of my recent inspection of your school. I would like to thank those pupils who discussed aspects of their education with me.

Testbourne is a good school where pupils achieve high standards. The way you are developing as young people is particularly impressive. Teaching is good and you are very well cared for and supported. Your behaviour is excellent and you get on with each other very well. The community spirit at Testbourne is excellent. You are proud to belong to the school and get on well with your teachers. Many of you make excellent use of the opportunities presented to you in music, drama and dance and a whole range of other activities. There have been a lot of staff changes recently and this slowed down the progress pupils were making. There will be more changes in staff for the next school year. The new senior team and your teachers, under the headteacher's excellent leadership is now bringing in lots of improvements.

I have asked the school to make sure that:

- teachers new to the school are well prepared so that you can continue to do well
- all subjects are run as well as the best ones so that you receive good teaching at all times
- all your teachers know how well you are doing and help you to achieve as highly as you can.
You can help by making sure you understand what you should be achieving in each subject and how to go about reaching your targets.

Yours faithfully

Tom Winskill

Her Majesty's Inspector