

Uffculme School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113560
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311317
Inspection date	1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Anne Looney HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	930
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Carmen
Headteacher	Jeremy Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2002
School address	Chapel Hill Uffculme Cullompton EX15 3AG
Telephone number	01884 840458
Fax number	01884 841570

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; how well pupils were being encouraged to develop independent learning skills in the classroom; the impact of the specialist school status; and aspects of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; curriculum, planning and monitoring documents; observation of lessons; discussions with staff, pupils and a member of the governing body; and from pupils' and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Uffculme is a popular, heavily oversubscribed 11-16 comprehensive of average size. It is set in rural mid-Devon and the majority of its pupils travel by bus from small village communities. The majority of its pupils are white and very few do not speak English as a first language. The social and economic circumstances of pupils are generally favourable, although there are some pockets of rural deprivation. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school gained specialist school status in mathematics and computing in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Uffculme is an outstanding school. There is, as one parent wrote, 'an ethos of achievement' in the school where pupils are proud to be doing well. This extremely positive attitude to learning is a significant factor in the high and improving standards the pupils achieve, as is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. This is an inclusive school that does well by all its pupils, irrespective of their starting points and is recognised as such by the majority of parents who praise the school for the support and challenge it provides for all. The confidence of carers and parents is summed up well by the parent who told inspectors, 'I am totally confident of the school's ability to motivate and steer my son throughout the next five years. The school is run in an impressively professional yet caring way, and as a parent, I have the belief that my child and his endeavours matter to the staff on an individual basis. Amazing school!!!'

Pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average although in some cohorts, attainment on entry is slightly above average. The standards pupils reach at the end of Year 9 are well above average and have been consistently so for the last three years. Standards in English, mathematics and science have also improved markedly over that time, with some pupils reaching exceptionally high levels, as was the case in English in 2006. Similarly, the percentage of pupils who attained five grade A*-C in GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, was well above the national average at 73% in 2006. There has been a very pronounced upward trend in GCSE results, with 2006 and 2007 being 'best ever years'. In 2006, a quarter of the grades attained by pupils were at A* or A. This was even improved upon in 2007. In 2007, the school also exceeded, by 5%, its target for pupils attaining five grade A*-C, including mathematics and English. Pupils make outstanding progress as they move through the school and this progress is equally strong at both key stages. No groups are underachieving but the constant vigilance of the senior leadership group ensures that any subject area not performing as well as it might is identified swiftly. The school then puts in place well targeted and resourced intervention strategies. Progress is monitored regularly and heads of subject held to account. The school has been particularly successful in improving achievement in English by this mix of support and challenge.

Pupils' attitudes are outstanding. They exhibit maturity, confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well developed. Their social and moral development is particularly strong. They willingly take responsibility in school and wear their badges of success with pride. There is a strong community feeling in the school. This is well exemplified by the way that pupils of all ages mix during their lunch hour for activities such as music and sport, or simply socialise in a mature way. Pupils respond well to challenge in the classroom but also enthusiastically embrace the excellent range of extra-curricular activities on offer, recognising that these activities contribute to their development as well-rounded individuals. They want to be involved in improving their school and use the school council very well for this. They also show considerable altruism in their charitable work. Attendance is well above average and behaviour is excellent.

Teaching and learning are good. There are high expectations of pupils, lessons are well planned with clear objectives, and teachers provide good, and appropriate, challenge for pupils of differing abilities. Relationships in lessons are very good. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to talk in an extended fashion, to take more responsibility and be active in lessons. Although some teachers are developing pupils' independent learning skills well, there is a lack of consistency in the way in which pupils are involved in their learning and in the assessment of

that learning. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all of its pupils well. There is very good provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship and pupils' very good spiritual and moral development is supported by a religious education programme throughout the school. The specialist school status has had a positive impact in terms of access to information and communication technology (ICT) across the school and is starting to have an impact on the development on a wider range of learning styles. The school believes that there is a need for greater personalisation of learning and the inspectors agree with their view. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is outstanding. Pastoral support is of the highest calibre and ensures pupils are safe and happy. Target setting is consistently applied and all pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The school is exceptionally well led and managed. The headteacher's leadership and vision are at the heart of the drive for improvement. He is well supported by a committed and well-informed governing body. The headteacher has built particularly well on teachers' strengths and has developed a senior leadership team which has a range of specific expertise but a real coherence of purpose. Management and leadership have a relentless focus on improving both the learning environment and pupils' achievement. Improvement planning at school level is rigorous, carefully costed and very well linked to priorities identified at subject level. Middle managers receive good professional development to support them in their role in this improvement process. Performance is well monitored and ensures that all managers have a clear idea of the strengths and areas for development of the school. It is this accurate self-evaluation, coupled with well-financed and targeted support, that has ensured that standards have risen. Targets for pupil achievement being set for the future are both challenging and realistic. The capacity of this school to improve even further is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the consistency with which teaching develops pupils' independent learning skills, taking advantage of pupils' outstanding capacity for learning.

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Annex A

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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

2 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Uffculme School, Chapel Hill, Uffculme EX15 3AG

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we made about your school. Thank you for making us so welcome and for taking the time to talk to us so politely and fully.

We believe that your school is outstanding. These are some of the reasons why:

- you make extremely good progress throughout the school and your GCSE results are well above national averages; the last two years' results were particularly striking
- your positive attitudes to learning, your very good attendance, excellent behaviour and your confidence contribute a lot to your success at school
- the school develops you very well as rounded individuals, keeps you safe and ensures that your teachers keep a regular eye on how well you are doing
- you told us that you really value the big range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer
- the fact that your school is now a specialist school has helped you with your use of ICT in other subjects
- teaching is good and all pupils are given work that is well suited to them and provides them with challenge
- your headteacher leads the school extremely well and is well supported by the governors and all the staff
- the school has really good potential to get even better.

We do think, however, that your school needs to give you more opportunities in lessons to be active and to take greater responsibility for your own learning.

You can help the school improve by continuing to show the very positive attitudes towards work that we saw when we visited your school.

- With best wishes
- Anne Looney HMI Lead Inspector