

The Vyne Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116440
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312310
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jennifer Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	724
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Crook
Headteacher	Mr Peter Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Vyne Road Basingstoke RG21 5PB
Telephone number	01256 473003
Fax number	01256 816956

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Vyne Community School is a smaller than average comprehensive school. It attracts students from three main primary schools. There are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls in most year groups. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals, those with English as an additional language and those with a statement of special educational need are lower than the national average. However, the proportion of students with some learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The school achieved specialist status for performing arts in September 2003 and secured re-designation in 2007. It also has gained the Investors in People award in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Vyne Community School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students and standards are rising. The school has been through a period of staff turbulence, which has had a detrimental effect on the rate of improvement and on students' progress in some subjects. The relatively new headteacher has restructured management posts but there are still some key responsibilities that remain to be tackled. There is a clear understanding that a drive for further improvement in students' standards and in their levels of literacy is paramount. The school understands its strengths and areas for development and self-evaluation is satisfactory overall. There are good links with outside agencies to support students and to help teachers improve aspects of teaching in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Satisfactory progress has been made in the areas identified for improvement in the last inspection. The school has sufficient capacity to make further improvements.

Many students enter the school with standards that are below the national average, and for some, well below. Levels of literacy in particular are often poor and result in students having difficulty in properly accessing their learning. This issue is not adequately addressed by all teachers across a range of subjects. The support provided for those pupils with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, and high-quality provision is made for students with speech and language difficulties in an inclusive unit within the school. Students who enter the school with considerably fewer literacy problems make good progress and their results at the end of Years 9 and 11 in tests and examinations are good. Girls generally outperform boys. Overall, the school came close to meeting its target for 5 or more top grades in GCSE at 48%, whilst 38% of students achieved 5 or more GCSEs at A*–C, including English and mathematics, a marked improvement on 2006. However, there is too much variability across subjects, and this is reflected in the quality of teaching, which can sometimes be outstanding, but more frequently is only satisfactory.

Students' personal development and well-being is satisfactory with students representing their peers' views through year and school councils. Their social and cultural development are good, and moral and spiritual development satisfactory. In discussion, staff acknowledge that the majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well, but a small minority of students misbehave and cause a disproportionate amount of teaching time to be wasted. Strategies for dealing with this are being pursued with some success, reflected in the considerable reduction of fixed term exclusions over the last year. Attendance has fluctuated and has frequently been significantly lower than the national average, more recently this has improved and is now near the national average.

The curriculum is good, providing appropriately for students to follow a purely academic course, an applied option or one with a strong vocational element. For a small school this is good. The school has forged good links with the local college and an extended school day provides well for a wide range of extra curricular activities. The school is at the hub of the community with activities and adult learning continuing into the evening. The performing arts specialist status is having a significantly beneficial effect on the opportunities provided for students and the quality of dramatic and musical events are excellent. The extended school service based at the school helps support vulnerable students and their parents well.

The care guidance and support are satisfactory overall, with good pastoral and welfare support and good induction for Year 7 students. A high proportion of students continue with their

education or enter training or employment when they leave school. They receive good advice and counselling about options open to them. Academic tutoring is relatively new and as yet academic target setting is not sufficiently understood by students. Furthermore, it is not used rigorously enough by teachers to act as a lever to aid more rapid student progress.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall, but the new line management of departments is not yet sufficiently rigorous or consistent in its approach. Governors are playing an increasing role in challenging the school to do better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more systematic use of assessment information and ensure that academic target setting is thoroughly understood and used by teachers and students in order to improve the rate of students' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that the variations in standards between different subjects are markedly reduced.
- Ensure that teachers address the issue of students' low literacy levels in all subjects and seek to engage more firmly lower attaining students in their learning through improved teaching.
- Reduce the poor behaviour of a minority of students.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are rising in national tests at the end of Year 9 and are now at the national average, meeting the targets set for the school. This represents satisfactory achievement in all three core subjects. GCSE results in 2007 showed an improvement from previous years, with particularly impressive results in combined science, geography, physical education, music and statistics and in the BTEC National examination in performing arts. Results in business studies, design technology, mathematics and religious education were below the national average. Overall, the percentage of students gaining 5A*-C is below the national average. However, some very creditable results were achieved in 2007 by fifty students who gained more than 8 GCSEs at grades A*-C. There are fluctuations year-on-year in the achievement of students in mathematics and science. The main causes of underachievement in particular subjects are the variability of teaching, insufficient attention being given to literacy issues, and the lack of systematic attention to individual pupil target setting and its appropriate regular use. The proportion of students leaving with no qualifications is low. This represents satisfactory achievement overall. The progress made by some higher attaining students is good due in part to their positive attitudes to learning. However, there are a small number of students who, despite rigorous efforts by the school, do not achieve well due to attendance or social problems. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress due to the support and guidance they receive, as they follow their personalised curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Students say they enjoy school, feel safe, and that any

incidents of bullying are of a minor nature and are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students understand the benefits of adopting healthy lifestyles but admit to not always eating healthily. They are appreciative of the wide range of sporting opportunities offered in which a significant number actively engage. Students are involved in making a positive contribution through a number of opportunities offered across the school. For example, the school council is involved in helping to appoint staff and review school policies. Students act as prefects and also visit primary schools to help with the induction of new students who will come to The Vyne School.

The attitude and behaviour of students in most lessons and around the school are satisfactory. The majority of students are polite and very helpful. Parents and students rightly identify a small minority of students who exhibit unsatisfactory attitudes to their learning and have poor behaviour, which disrupts their own learning and that of others. This is limited to a few lessons and is not endemic.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is typically satisfactory but varies considerably between departments and individual teachers within departments. Many lessons observed had good features, and some outstanding teaching was seen. In these lessons teachers planned carefully to provide clear and challenging tasks, and used a range of teaching strategies to interest and encourage students. This was evident, for example, in a music lesson where all students participated in creating Salsa rhythms. In successful lessons, assessment information is used effectively to establish individual targets for students. Students respond enthusiastically and produce work of high quality. This is most noticeable in performing arts, physical education, geography and art. However, a significant minority of lessons lack these qualities and do not engage students or provide appropriate levels of challenge. Most teachers show good subject knowledge and their classroom management is on the whole at least satisfactory. However, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning, and consequently some weak practice continues. Having experienced higher quality teaching, students have become less tolerant of mediocrity. In the less effective lessons, teachers have lower expectations and work set is not sufficiently challenging. Weaknesses in students' literacy are not addressed and assessment data is not used effectively to monitor pupils' progress. In a minority of lessons, the quality of marking is also variable. In the majority of lessons, students have good relationships with the teachers, work productively, develop their capacity for independent learning, and make satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has implemented a number of changes to the curriculum to ensure it fully meets the needs of all students, and consequently is good. A strong feature of the curriculum are the three alternative pathways at Key Stage 4, offering range of vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11, linked college courses and a number of alternative accredited courses for those students for whom GCSE is too demanding. The range of subjects offered at Key Stage 4 is extensive and includes academic, vocational and applied choices. The specialist school status has a positive impact, with outstanding provision in the many well-regarded school productions and excellent extra-curricular activities. The range and participation of students in extra-curricular activities

is good, especially in physical education and the arts. Students also have many opportunities to gain further help with revision and homework clubs after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care guidance and support are satisfactory overall and pastoral and welfare support good. Students' needs are identified early through good liaison with primary schools and implementation of a thorough induction programme. Additional induction booklets for incoming students who have English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs are produced. An induction experience during the holiday period for those students who are anxious about moving to secondary school is provided. Students with learning disabilities and difficulties are well catered for in school and through appropriate involvement of external agencies. The speech and language unit provides good support for those with specific language difficulties, and is especially helpful to these students with careers guidance. The school liaises well with further education institutions and this adds to good careers guidance and work experience, helping to prepare students for their future economic well-being. Arrangements for safeguarding students and the management of health and safety are in place and regularly reviewed. Target setting is, however, not consistently applied nor rigorously monitored across the school. Students are often unaware of their targets in key subjects, and do not understand what they need to do in order to improve their work and make more rapid progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The recent past difficulties with staff recruitment and limited use of data by some departments has impeded students' progress. Performance management is now firmly in place and significant changes in the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team now established, create a more equitable allocation of departmental line-management. However, there remain inconsistencies in the approach and rigour to line-management, which is limiting the pace of change. The drive to improve standards is understood by all as a priority. The greater stability of staff this academic year, and the growing strength in middle management, augers well for the future. Well-targeted support and professional development focussing on teaching and learning has begun to improve students' standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 but there is further to go. The school has a number of very capable teachers and their expertise is rightly seen as a nucleus for spreading good practice. The school now has a far more robust system of departmental review, action planning and clearer accountabilities. The whole school improvement plan is well focused on key priorities, which if achieved, will raise standards further. Governance in the school has improved and now provides appropriate challenge.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

05 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Vyne Community School, Basingstoke, RG21 5PB

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the way in which you welcomed the inspectors to your school. We enjoyed talking with you in meetings and in lessons. You were friendly and polite and most of you were keen to participate well in lessons.

You are well cared for and most teachers are working hard to make sure you all achieve as well as you can. We agree with you and a number of your parents and carers that a small minority of students behave less well in lessons and make it difficult for others to learn. However, we were pleased to see most of you were keen to learn, behaved well and appreciated lessons where you were challenged to think and where the teachers' expectations of what you could do were high. Many of you were also very enthusiastic about the range of extra activities available for you after school, especially in the performing arts and physical education. We were pleased to hear of the involvement of the school and year councils and the very good effort made by all to welcome new students to the school in Year 7. Overall, we judge that the school is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education.

We believe that there are things that the school can do to become even better, these are:

- using assessment and target setting more regularly so that you have a very clear idea how to improve your work
- ensuring that teaching in all subjects is as good as the best
- helping you to improve your literacy, not just in English but in a number of subjects
- improving the behaviour of the small minority of students who disrupt others in their learning.

You can play your part in making sure that these improvements are made and that you continue to make better progress. We wish you well in your future studies and hope that you all have much success.

Jennifer Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector