

Cowplain Community School

Hart Plain Avenue, Cowplain, Waterlooville, PO8 8RY

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's resolute drive and high ambition have led to significant improvements since the last inspection.
- Senior and middle leaders, and governors, share high expectations and an unswerving commitment to ensure that every student gains the skills and qualifications they need for life after school.
- Teaching and achievement have improved well since the last inspection and are now good. Well-planned training and opportunities to share best practice are ensuring these improvements continue into the future.
- Last year's GCSE results showed that students made good progress overall, so that attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is now average.
- Disadvantaged students are now making better progress than in the recent past.
- Regular tracking of the information about how well students are learning, including the most vulnerable, is used very effectively by leaders to promote further improvements. An extensive range of interventions is in place to support students that are falling behind.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the school. They take an active part in ensuring it continues to improve at a rapid pace.
- The curriculum has been skilfully developed to enable students to achieve the qualifications they need for further education, employment or training.
- Students demonstrate a good understanding of British values, and what is right and wrong.
- Students are very proud of their school. They feel safe and well cared for, supporting each other through their good behaviour and attitudes to learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others, although closing, are still too wide.
- On occasions, students are set work that does not challenge them to achieve at the highest level.
- Students do not regularly respond to teachers' feedback and marking in order to improve their knowledge and understanding. Some teachers do not check that students act upon the feedback provided.
- Whilst attendance has improved, the school has not been successful enough in reducing some hard-core absence, particularly amongst younger students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning in 35 lessons taught by 35 teachers, nine of which were observed jointly with members of the leadership team. Inspectors also carried out two additional short visits to classrooms
- Inspectors attended an assembly and three registration periods. They looked at students’ work in lessons and carried out detailed scrutinies of their written work across the curriculum.
- Students’ conduct was observed throughout the school day, including at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders, and teachers. They met formally with 30 students in four groups and talked informally with others in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including the school’s own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and information on students’ current attainment and progress. They reviewed attendance and exclusion records, behaviour logs and the school’s records of bullying and racist incidents. They also checked the governing body minutes, safeguarding logs, planning documents and classroom reviews by school leaders.
- Meetings were held with a group of six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and the school’s improvement consultant, to consider the impact of external support for the school.
- Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 30 members of staff and 93 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the school’s own parent surveys and one telephone call from a parent.

Inspection team

Hugh Betterton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Smith

Additional Inspector

Martin Watson

Additional Inspector

Anne Cullum

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cowplain Community School is an average-sized secondary school. It converted to become an academy in April 2012 and was first inspected in April 2013. It is not part of an academy chain.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students and those who are supported by the pupil premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The large majority of students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- There have been several recent changes to staffing, including new heads of English, mathematics and science appointed in the last 18 months
- Currently 13 students attend work-related courses away from the school for part of the week at The Woodlands Education Centre, a pupil referral unit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching to outstanding and raise achievement by:
 - ensuring students respond to teachers' good marking and feedback, and that teachers check to make sure that the students' work improves as a result
 - raising the attainment levels of disadvantaged students by matching work to the range of their particular needs
 - providing work that allows all students to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Improve levels of attendance so they are above average by reducing the rate of persistent absence, especially amongst younger students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is committed to ensuring that all students make the best possible progress in all aspects of their development. Governors and all staff with leadership responsibilities support him well in this ambition. Together, they are determined to raise achievement to 'outstanding'.
- The school's view of its own performance is thorough and largely accurate. It leads to carefully planned actions, as seen in the school's raising achievement plan, which have been used well to improve performance. Leaders undertake systematic review using data on students' performance and other information. If any less effective aspects are found, leaders take swift action to improve them. For example, concern about students' achievement in science led to senior leaders making significant staffing changes; these are beginning to make a good impact.
- Subject and other leaders have a clear understanding of their role in raising achievement. They are well supported by senior leaders who value them as an increasingly important source of innovative ideas for the development of the school.
- The school's leaders have devised a curriculum that includes a rich variety of academic subjects and a good range of work-related courses. Planning promotes fundamental British values around democracy, liberty, and respect for different faiths and beliefs. It fosters good relationships and promotes equality of opportunity for all its students. As a result, students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education effectively. This is achieved not only in lessons but also through the participation of a large proportion of students in a varied programme of extra-curricular opportunities, including music, dance, drama and sport. Students enthusiastically engage in fundraising activities for various charities.
- The leadership of teaching is good and the school places high priority on improving teaching through good quality training. Checks on teachers' performance are rigorous. Leaders use information from lesson observations and information about students' progress to set teachers targets for improvement. There is a clear understanding that decisions about promotion and pay rates are based on the impact of teaching on students' progress.
- The school's improvement consultant has supported the school effectively in its drive to raise students' achievement and improve the quality of teaching. Equally, an external review of the impact of pupil premium funding provided leaders with good quality guidance for further improvement. The pupil premium is spent effectively to benefit disadvantaged pupils, particularly in developing the roles of teaching assistants, who provide strong support for such pupils.
- Those students eligible for the pupil premium, Year 7 'catch-up' funding, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, are well supported. This is evident in the impact made by the Gold Curriculum for those students needing additional help in Years 7 and 8. The school's evaluation of its expenditure on the support provided shows that these students are making similarly good progress now to that of their classmates.
- The growing strengths of relationships with parents and carers is, for example, helping to improve attendance, as well as a better understanding of the school's work in raising achievement. However, the school is not yet successful enough in reducing the persistent absence of a small minority of students.
- Leaders check regularly to ensure that students' behaviour, attendance and progress at the alternative provision are progressing well.
- Safeguarding procedures reflect statutory requirements. They are robust and are very effective in keeping pupils safe. The site is safe and secure, with appropriate levels of supervision. All staff are updated regularly so that they are confident in how to address any safeguarding concerns appropriately and effectively.
- High-quality advice and guidance are provided whenever students are considering future courses or career choices. During Year 8, students are offered appropriate guidance about potential Key Stage 4 courses. In Key Stage 4, students receive effective guidance that helps them to make a successful transition to the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the previous inspection, the effectiveness of governance has improved considerably. The governing body is well informed. It challenges school leaders and holds them to account for students' achievement. It compares the school's performance with that of similar schools.
 - Governors also strongly support the school and its leaders, actively promoting the headteacher's vision for the school's further improvement. They manage the performance of the headteacher and other staff well and ensure that the salary progression is justified by the outcome of students' progress and

achievement.

- They also have a growing understanding of new National Curriculum requirements, including the rigour needed for assessment processes. They ensure that the curriculum is preparing young people positively for life in modern Britain well.
- Governors check carefully that the use of additional funds from the pupil premium is improving the achievement of eligible students. Explanation and action from school leaders and managers are called for when performance does not improve as intended. The governing body oversees the management of finance and resources expertly. Governors fulfil their duties diligently, confirming that the school's arrangements for safeguarding students are effective and meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are calm and orderly when moving between lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. They are usually polite and courteous to staff and each other.
- Students are proud of their school. They drop very little litter and look after the site with considerable care. Several Year 11 students have also built picnic benches for their schoolmates. Students arrive promptly to lessons and usually have the right equipment.
- Students concentrate well, are industrious when working, and display purposeful and productive attitudes to their work. Students are confident when contributing to class discussions. Their positive attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress.
- Incidents of low-level disruption in lessons have declined and are now rare. Exclusion rates are considerably lower since 2013 and are now below the national average.
- Students arrive at the school punctually and many arrive before the normal start of the school day to undertake additional learning activities, usually to support their learning in many subjects.
- The school is implementing a number of strategies to reduce higher than normal levels of persistent absence amongst a small group of students. These strategies show signs of making an impact, yet need to be more rigorously followed than at present. As yet, these strategies have not yet had sufficient impact. Overall, attendance levels are in line with the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. It undertakes its obligations for safeguarding, for example in recruitment, with appropriate rigour.
- Students say that they feel safe at the school and parents and staff alike believe that all students are safe and well cared for. The school provides high-quality pastoral care and students understand which adults they should go to if they have a problem or concern.
- The school maintains a detailed log of behaviour-related incidents, which includes details of any action taken. The introduction of Student and Family Engagement (SAFE) Officers for each year group has contributed well to improvements in behaviour across the school. Records show that incidents of poor behaviour have dropped considerably this year.
- Students say that there is very little bullying, and school records show that, when incidents do occur, they are swiftly dealt with well and appropriately recorded. The school makes it clear to students that any occurrences of racism or other forms of prejudice are not tolerated.
- Students develop a clear understanding of how to keep themselves and each other safe in different situations. Important messages about the risks associated with computers and mobile phones are effectively communicated to students throughout the school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Effective teaching has a positive impact on learning in English and mathematics and across the wider range of subjects taught at the school, and students make good progress as a result.
- This was particularly evident in a fast-paced Year 11 English lesson, where students were discussing characters portrayed in *'Of Mice and Men'*. The teacher's very effective questioning allowed students to offer sustained analysis of the writer's intentions. The tasks set were challenging and stimulating, creating a real excitement for the students in what they were learning. Students' commitment was evident throughout and the progress demonstrated was outstanding.
- Teachers create positive, trusting relationships and they ensure that their classrooms support effective

learning. Students listen attentively to teachers' explanations, and are keen to answer and ask questions to support their learning. Good attention is paid to improving students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills across the curriculum, through careful planning. Students are now making better progress with these skills throughout the school, particularly in reading and writing.

- Teachers usually get the best out of their students, giving them a good variety of tasks that stretch and challenge them and capture their interest. In a Year 7 food technology lesson, students were enthused by watching dough rise, discussing how this happens, using technical language such as 'kneading' and 'proving' effectively. All of this was learnt through a practical activity that allowed more vulnerable pupils to gain good knowledge.
- However, on occasions, work set does not always challenge students to achieve their best in a small number of lessons. A small minority of teachers do not plan tasks that provide a sufficient variety of challenge or support to match the wide range of abilities in their classes. This results in these students occasionally finding the work too easy or too difficult.
- Teachers provide constructive verbal feedback to students but written feedback, in the form of marking, varies. In the best practice, teachers' written comments explain to students what they need to do to improve their work and contribute well to the progress that students make. Students value this kind of feedback, particularly when they have the opportunity to reflect and act upon the comments. However, this practice is not consistently effective across the school. Not all teachers check that students act on the advice they are given through marking.
- Leaders have maintained a relentless approach to the well-designed programme of training and other development activities, which has led to improvements in the quality of teaching. All teachers work together in small groups to develop their own practice as part of the school's commitment to build teachers' effectiveness and so ensure that improvement is sustained.
- Students complete homework to a good standard, giving them a strong base for tackling work in the following lesson. Parents agree that homework helps their children to make better progress than previously.
- Experienced and well-qualified support staff ably assist teachers by working in the classroom with individual students with particular educational needs, and with small groups to enable all to achieve well, particularly in the Gold curriculum for younger students.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are well below average. However, by the time they complete their studies at age 16, their performance is in line with the national average. Hence their progress is good.
- The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been rising since 2012, and is now in line with the national average. The school's own data, confirmed by inspection activity, provide convincing evidence that Year 11 will do even better in 2015. More students are likely to gain above the nationally expected proportion of grades at C or above.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students has improved since the last inspection. Progress information in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 shows that these students are now making good progress, similar to other students in school and other students nationally. Gaps in the achievement of these students and their peers remain but they are narrowing.
- In 2014, the gap in the achievement of disadvantaged students in English compared to that of their classmates continued to narrow to about one grade. Compared with other students nationally, the gap was a grade and a quarter. In mathematics, the gap in the achievement of disadvantaged students compared to that of their classmates narrowed to about half a grade. When compared with other students nationally, this gap had also continued to narrow to a grade. For current students, evidence from lessons and school records shows that the gap is continuing to narrow so that it is now in line with national averages.
- In 2014, students made good progress in mathematics. However, progress in English was slower. The school has tackled this, under the new leadership of the English department. Actions already taken, including rigorous monitoring, have resulted in students now making the same good progress in English as they do in mathematics. School information shows that students are on track to attain above-average standards in English and mathematics in 2015.
- The most able students make good, but not rapid, progress in most subjects because of teaching that is usually challenging and stimulating. However, they do not always receive clear information on how to achieve higher standards in their work. This slows the progress that some of them make. At Key Stage 3, the most able pupils are making better progress than previously. The progress made by disadvantaged students in other years is improving well now and is in line with progress made by others nationally. The

achievement of most able students is increasing. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE has risen in the last two years.

- Inspectors' observation of teaching and learning confirm that students are making good progress and that this is sometimes even better. This good progress arising from lessons is further confirmed by the developing knowledge and understanding seen in students' books.
- The school checks the progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs regularly. Because of well-targeted and effective support, these students make good progress from their starting points.
- No students are currently being entered for their GCSE examinations before the end of Year 11. Students who attend off-site provision do not make as much progress in their work-related courses as those in the school. However, they are gaining in confidence in working more independently.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138038
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	462438

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy Converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	943
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Narinder Bains
Headteacher	Ian Gates
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 April 2013
Telephone number	02392612020
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