

Inspection of The Cowplain School

Hart Plain Avenue, Cowplain, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO8 8RY

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The principal of this school is Ian Gates. This school is part of The Cowplain School Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steve Head.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value the warm and welcoming atmosphere here. They are motivated to work hard and be successful. The school's high expectations are evident in many aspects of day-to-day life. Most pupils strive to meet these expectations and conduct themselves sensibly in lessons and around school. Pupils appreciate the support they get from staff, which helps them learn well. While attendance is improving, there remains a small number of pupils who do not attend as often as they should.

Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect. Staff show a genuine care for pupils, who feel safe and happy at this school. Pupils understand the importance of respecting differences between people and celebrating diversity. Should any bullying or discrimination occur, pupils rightly trust that staff will listen and deal with it effectively.

The school is ambitious for pupils to develop their character. For instance, learning is enriched through a vast number of clubs, experiences and trips. Some pupils also flourish in leadership positions by being a 'reading buddy' or as a member of the school council. Pupils are proud to hold these roles and know that they are making a positive contribution to their wider community.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has a sharply focused vision for pupils' success. Despite this, in 2023, pupils in Year 11 did not achieve well in public examinations. Many were adversely affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a number experiencing high levels of absence. Consequently, they did not benefit from the ambitious curriculum that many pupils are now experiencing. Staff are working tirelessly to ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive a good quality of education. The impact of their work is evident and pupils are moving through the curriculum more successfully than before.

The curriculum has rightly undergone significant improvements. It is designed around three central strands, 'thinking hard, developing character and understanding diversity'. Across subjects, the important knowledge pupils should learn, and the order in which they should learn it, is clearly set out. Reading is the bedrock of the curriculum. Pupils at an earlier stage of learning to read are given the help needed to catch up quickly. However, in key stage 4, the number of pupils undertaking the English Baccalaureate is comparatively low. The school is taking appropriate steps to address this, while ensuring that pupils can choose from a wide range of qualifications suited to their interests and talents.

Staff have strong subject knowledge. They explain subject content clearly and introduce new learning in manageable steps. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary. Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND promptly. Pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, receive appropriate support from well-trained staff, so that they can access a

broad and balanced curriculum. Despite this, sometimes, teachers do not check what pupils know and understand carefully enough before moving them on to new learning. This means that any gaps and misconceptions are not addressed effectively. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. In many lessons, clear routines and high expectations enable pupils to settle quickly and efficiently. However, at times when there is some off-task behaviour, teachers do not always address this.

The school considers pupils' personal development carefully. Pupils value learning about different religions and cultures. They learn to take care of their mental health and well-being, including age-appropriate relationships and consent. Pupils receive regular, useful, unbiased careers advice. This means that pupils are well informed about different career pathways and future study options. Consequently, they are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Trustees have a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They provided appropriate challenge and support to the school. Despite this, leaders, including trustees, do not always have a precise understanding of how well staff use the school's agreed policies and procedures to deliver the curriculum. This means that sometimes inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is taught are not always addressed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes teachers do not check what pupils know and understanding carefully enough before moving them on to new learning. When this is the case, gaps and misconceptions are not addressed effectively. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that teachers assess pupils' knowledge consistently accurately, to enable them to make informed decisions about what to teach next.
- Leaders, including trustees, do not have a precise enough understanding of how well staff are implementing agreed policies and procedures to deliver the curriculum. This means that a few elements of curriculum implementation are inconsistent. Leaders and trustees should ensure that quality assurance procedures give an accurate view of how well pupils are achieving across all year groups and make sure the curriculum is adjusted to meet pupils' needs effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138038
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10296373
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	995
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Head
Principal	Ian Gates
Website	www.cowplainschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Cowplain School is a single academy trust for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- The school is currently using one registered and three unregistered alternative providers.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND. Currently, seven pupils from Years 7 to 11 attend the provision for pupils with autism and four pupils access the provision for pupils with dyslexia.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, members of the senior leadership team, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with representatives of the board of trustees, including the chair. She also spoke with a representative from Hampshire local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspection team considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses.
- The inspection team met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons. They also considered the responses to the confidential pupil survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including the school development plan and pupil premium funding plan.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gemma Piper	Ofsted Inspector
Christian Kingsley	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Carlyle	Ofsted Inspector

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