

Court Fields Community School

Mantle Street, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 8SW

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is still much to do before achievement is good despite recent significant improvements.
- The most-able students do not achieve as well as other ability groups.
- Results for science are lower than those for English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching, while much improved, is still not consistently good enough.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons by considering what, and how, students will learn but rather focus upon the completion of tasks.
- Teachers' questions do not always help pupils with their learning.
- Marking does not inform students about how well they are working, or give them tasks to complete or to extend their learning.
- Lessons do not always engage all students so that some then become uninterested and fail to concentrate.

The school has the following strengths

- Achievement has improved greatly in 2013, especially in the proportion of students who gained at least five higher-level GCSE passes, including English and mathematics.
- Results for mathematics in 2013 are much improved in terms of the proportion of students who gained a grade C or better, which is above last year's national figures.
- The gap between standards achieved by students known to be eligible for free school meals and others has closed considerably.
- Senior leaders have worked highly effectively with teachers so that now far more teaching is consistently good.
- Students have a good understanding of the differing types of bullying and they feel safe in school.
- There is a clear, shared ambition within the school. Staff feel supported and have responded very well to the encouragement and challenge from senior leaders.
- Governors use the school's progress data to hold leaders and other staff to account.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons. Most of these were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They also observed sessions from the enrichment day which was happening on the second day of the inspection.
- At the time of the previous inspection, there were 70 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and there have been two further responses since then. Inspectors took account of these responses. They observed the school's work and scrutinised students' books.
- Inspectors looked carefully at examination results for 2013, assessment records, including teachers' predictions for 2014, the governing body minutes, equalities policies and the school's development plans and evaluations.
- Inspectors met staff, the members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, the executive headteacher from The Castle School Partnership, and students, including students who attend part time at alternative provision.

Inspection team

Michael Smith, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charlotte Evers	Additional Inspector
Chris Lewis	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported at school action is broadly average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Around a fifth of students are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, and those looked after by the local authority or from armed service families. This is below average, as is the proportion of students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding.
- A number of students are educated part time at Bridgwater, Cannington and Taunton Colleges.
- The acting headteacher, who had previously been deputy headteacher, started in her new role from September 2013. A number of new staff started at the school at the same time, including a deputy headteacher seconded from The Castle School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- On the second day of the inspection, Year 7 students visited Paignton Zoo and Year 11 students visited a careers convention. The other students took part in enrichment activities.
- In November 2012, the school was judged to require special measures. The school has received monitoring visits in February 2013 and June 2013.
- The school is due to close at the end of December 2013 and open as an academy, sponsored by The Castle Partnership Trust, Taunton, on 1 January 2014. As part of the transition, there have been changes to the governing body and the school has been receiving support from staff and leaders from The Castle School, including a National Leader for Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportions of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan lessons by considering what, and how, students will learn, rather than what tasks they will complete
 - teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to extend learning and which are linked to their subject needs, for example understanding in mathematics, and creativity and analysis in English
 - students have more opportunities to work together in groups so that they are used to this way of working and can settle down to their tasks
 - students are fully engaged in lessons and behave well
 - marking gives advice on how students can improve their work, including tasks which they should complete before, or at the start of, their next lesson.
- Raise students' achievement further by:
 - consistently challenging the most-able students
 - building upon the improvements in science so that more students achieve well in both double award and the three separate sciences (biology, chemistry and physics).

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students start at the school with standards which are broadly average. Achievement requires improvement because, while results for 2013 show that achievement has risen greatly, students do not consistently make good progress from their starting points.
- Results for different subjects vary. For example, while GCSE results in science, including those for students who take the three separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics, have improved, they remain lower than those for English and mathematics. Results for geography history, art and technology are well above those in other subjects.
- The school has been concentrating on raising standards, particularly for those students who are likely to miss gaining a grade C. Consequently, these students progress well, but higher-ability students do not always make sufficient progress given their starting points. For example, in mathematics, the proportion of students gaining a grade C or better has risen from below half in 2012 to over three quarters in 2013. However, the proportion who gain an A or an A* has only improved slightly.
- The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs has improved and these students often make good progress, especially when supported effectively by teaching assistants.
- Students who are being educated off-site enjoy their courses and are making good progress in subjects like construction and hair and beauty. Many see this as a good way to gain valuable experience before continuing on these courses when they leave school.
- In 2013, students are entered early for both GCSE English language and mathematics. The majority then go on to better their grades successfully. The school is considering how best to meet the needs of the students and is reviewing its early entry policy.
- The results for English language in 2013 have improved and show that students make expected progress.
- The pupil premium has been used effectively to give groups of students additional help with their reading, writing and mathematics in preparation for the GCSE examinations. The difference in standards between students known to be eligible for pupil premium and others has closed considerably. It is around two thirds of a grade for English and around a grade in mathematics. The school's accurate data show that the gap is likely to close further in 2014.
- In lessons, students make mainly good progress, except on occasions when teaching does not motivate them. Students develop good interpersonal skills and gain in confidence.
- Funds to support students who start Year 7 with limited skills in reading and mathematics have been used well to help improve their reading and writing. The school's data show this is helping these students make up for lost ground.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, while it has improved and students now make better progress, it is not consistently good. Lessons do not always engage all students so that at times, when teaching is weaker, students do not show the positive attitudes towards their work which they do when lessons are interesting and challenging.
- The school has focused on making sure lessons are planned to meet the differing ability levels within classes. However, in some lessons, more-able students have to work through the easier work first and then do not progress to harder and more challenging work. Lesson plans are often focused upon what activities students will complete rather than what they will learn.
- The quality of questioning by teachers is variable. Some teachers do not ask questions linked to the needs of their subjects. Poor questioning does not help teachers to find out what students know, or extend learning by using further questions. When teachers use questions well in lessons, they are linked to their subjects, for example questioning to ensure students

understand the concepts within mathematics or to extend students' analysis of texts or their creativity in English.

- Marking is variable. Too often, it fails to identify how students can improve and then to give a suitable task for students to complete, either to extend their work or to correct errors or omissions.
- Students say they enjoy practical activities and working in groups. However, some have had limited opportunities to work in this way. Therefore, they do not know how to work well in groups and they become disengaged.
- There has been a strong and successful focus on students improving their literacy skills across all subjects. Students often look at key vocabulary and have opportunities to write in different styles across a variety of subjects. For example, Year 7 students wrote a formal business letter to Paignton Zoo as part of their work prior to visiting the zoo.
- In all lessons, there are good relationships between staff and students. Staff often share personal experiences to bring greater relevance and realism to the work. The use of teaching assistants has improved and they are often used well to support individuals or groups of students.
- In many lessons, teachers have a good overview of how students are progressing by constantly observing their work and then intervening if additional support is needed. Students often have opportunities to identify strengths and areas for improvement in each other's work.
- Students are provided with opportunities for their spiritual development. Art work around the school is of a very high standard. In lessons, students are made to think in a different way, for example considering how music changes moods, and when discussing moral issues, the implications of wasting energy.
- Cultural development is supported through students taking part in cultural events, such as the very good drama work observed when students were acting out mime scenes during the enrichment day. When given the opportunities, students work well in groups to develop their social skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement because some students, who can and do behave themselves most of the time, fail to control themselves in all lessons. When they are not engaged, they lose concentration and their behaviour is not consistently good. The school's records show it is improving and more teachers, but not all, are using the school's behaviour policy.
- Around school, most students respond well to their teachers, and behave well. Behaviour in the majority of lessons is good. Relationships between students and staff are good.
- Students who attend the off-site provision behave well, and the school ensures their safety by checks and close work with the colleges. Students say they enjoy college and it helps them with their self-worth.
- Students say that bullying incidents occur from time to time, but they are rare. When they do occur, they often relate to the way a student looks or expresses their individuality by being different. The school's records show that when these incidents are reported, appropriate action is taken to support both the victim and the bully.
- The personal, social and health education programme, along with assemblies, is used well to inform students of the different types of bullying and also the implications of being bullied or being a bully. Students have received advice on how to prevent bullying that involves using computers or mobile phones, including the sending of inappropriate images on mobile phones (sexting). Advice has been given to students, and their parents and carers, on how to adjust the privacy settings on social network sites.
- Students receive a good range of information to help keep themselves safe. Personal, social, and health education lessons cover essential areas each year. This includes advice on sexual

health and substance abuse, including 'legal highs', cigarettes and alcohol. Students also understand the worth of different types of relationships, including issues around transgender and single sex relationships. The school works well with external agencies, such as those to support students who have social and emotional difficulties.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong senior leadership has brought about significant improvement both to the quality of teaching and to raising achievement. Leaders' realistic school self-evaluation recognises that there is still much to be done before the school will be good.
- Staff say they feel well supported, and they share the drive and ambition from the acting headteacher and other senior leaders. They also say that communication within the school has improved and that senior leaders not only set high expectations but they model what they want staff to do. Hence, there is an atmosphere of determination to continue with improvements together.
- School leaders have reduced the amount of teaching that is not yet good. They frequently visit lessons to identify good practice as well as areas of teaching which may need improvement. They support staff to bring about improvements through a shared improvement plan. This includes identifying further training, which has been successful in bringing about improvements. However, when staff are unable to bring about the improvements, the school uses the current teaching standards to challenge them.
- Subject leadership has improved. Leaders take responsibility for improving the quality of teaching within their departments. They are held to account by senior leaders and know that when they have identified an area for improvement they will receive support. They also know their work will be checked to see the agreed actions have been completed and that they have been successful. Teachers have clear targets for improvement linked to their performance.
- The school has a great deal of information on its students, such as on progress, attendance and exclusions. This information is carefully analysed to show trends or to identify concerns. This also ensures the school is constantly checking on different groups to better ensure equality of opportunity. It has rightly identified that higher-ability students do not make good progress.
- The school has received support from the local authority for mathematics, science, music and for senior and subject leadership. The school improvement adviser has been a frequent visitor and has reported to the group responsible for checking on how well the school has been progressing against the local authority's action plan. Increasingly, the school has been supported by staff and leaders from The Castle School as the school prepares to become an academy.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students well. There is a wide variety of clubs and sports which students enjoy. All students complete a GCSE course in religious studies. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced across all subjects.
- The school employs its own full-time careers officer and students receive suitable careers advice and guidance, including on possible courses to study in both further and then higher education.
- The school has used pupil premium money well to close the gap between the achievement of eligible students and that of others. It is being successfully narrowed at a faster rate than that shown in national figures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are in the early days of working as a body for both the school and its sponsor, and they are challenging the school to improve.
 - The governing body checks to make sure safeguarding meets all current requirements.
 - Governors also check on how well different groups of students achieve to ensure equality of opportunity and that the pupil premium funds are being used effectively to close the achievement gap.

- The governors have a good overview of how well different classes have achieved. They match this to teachers' performance when identifying who has successfully met their targets and should be suitably rewarded.
 - Governors show a good understanding of the school's performance in comparison to national performance information and The Castle School. They challenge why, given a broadly similar intake, Court Fields is not as successful.
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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	123885
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	424240

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	705
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Naylor
Acting Headteacher	Rachael Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 November 2012
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