

Cowes Enterprise College

Crossfield Avenue, Cowes, Isle of Wight PO31 8HB

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils make good progress because leaders and teachers have high expectations of them. As a result, most pupils pay attention in lessons and work as hard as they can.
- Leaders focus relentlessly on the quality of teaching and on the progress pupils make. They intervene promptly to support any pupils who may be underachieving.
- Teachers ask questions that probe pupils' understanding and require them to explain their thinking. Consequently, pupils gain and consolidate their knowledge and skills well in a range of subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported to learn well and make increasingly strong progress.
- The differences between outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are diminishing rapidly.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They wear their uniform with pride and ensure that the school site is free from litter and graffiti.
- Pupils enjoy school, as seen by their good rates of attendance, which are in line with the national average for secondary schools.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of clubs, educational visits and after-school activities.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are open-minded, tolerant and reject all forms of discrimination.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress because the curriculum meets their needs and teachers provide consistently high levels of challenge.
- The Ormiston Academies Trust provides effective support to the school.
- Governors carry out their duties diligently and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders are aware that some low prior-attaining pupils do not read or write well enough to make rapid progress.
- In a very small number of subjects, the quality of teaching is variable. Leaders are taking effective action to address this.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils with low prior attainment, in particular boys in the lower years, improve their reading and writing so that they can learn more rapidly.
- Check that teaching, in the very few cases where expectations are too low, is consistently challenging and that work set is well matched to pupils' needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have transformed the school in the last two years, raising aspirations and improving pupils' outcomes. The school's distinctive ethos is summed up in the 'heart' values of honesty, empowerment, awareness, responsibility and trust. Leaders' strong promotion of these values has contributed significantly to the caring, calm and increasingly studious climate in the school. One member of staff said, 'Every change has been made with the pupils in mind.'
- The majority of parents recognise the strong progress that the school has made. Some parents commented on the turbulence in leadership and high turnover of staff in recent years, while others feel that communication between home and school could be stronger. However, most parents feel that the school meets the needs of their children well. One parent, who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, wrote, 'This is an excellent local school and I am proud that my children attend Cowes.'
- The new principal has wasted no time in getting to grips with what needs to be done. She has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. She has set out a clear and compelling vision of the school's priorities for the next three years. Furthermore, she has quickly won the respect of her leadership team and staff, who feel well supported in their work.
- The principal and her team are dedicated to ensuring that pupils each their full potential. They leave no stone unturned in their determination to remove barriers to learning and raise standards of achievement. They make effective checks on the quality of teaching, and on the progress that pupils make. Teachers benefit from high-quality training, much of it led by teachers themselves, as well as by officers from the Ormiston Academies Trust. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good and continues to improve.
- Leaders ensure that pupils accept responsibility for their behaviour and that staff follow agreed approaches to managing behaviour. Consequently, pupils treat their teachers and one another with respect, and low-level disruption in lessons is increasingly rare.
- Effective use is made of the additional funds for disadvantaged pupils and Year 7 pupils who need to improve their literacy and numeracy. Leaders carefully evaluate the impact of actions taken and modify them if they have not had the desired impact. Consequently, the differences between disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and those of other pupils are diminishing rapidly.
- Pupils in Year 7 who need help to catch up with their peers in English and mathematics make steady progress from their starting points. However, leaders have correctly identified that pupils with weak reading and writing skills require more support, in particular low prior-attaining boys.
- Leaders also make effective use of funding provided to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils make strong progress because leaders make accurate assessments of the help needed and allocate support staff and resources to where they have most impact.

- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders have made well-judged changes to the curriculum at key stage 4. As a result, the proportion of pupils obtaining good outcomes in subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate has risen, as has the proportion of pupils obtaining higher grades in English and mathematics. Leaders provide well for those students in the sixth form for whom a vocational curriculum is more appropriate, leading to strong and improving outcomes for these pupils.
- Pupils in all year groups have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Leaders make effective use of their links with the wider community to enrich the offer. Leaders also ensure that activities targeted specifically at disadvantaged pupils are available.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values is strong. Pupils are tolerant of people who are different from themselves, and understand how British democracy works. They firmly reject all forms of discrimination.
- Leaders are also keenly aware that there remains a small and diminishing amount of variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in some subject areas. They are taking effective action to address this.

Governance of the school

- The Ormiston Academies Trust gives effective support to the school. The regional director works closely with leaders, providing them with robust challenge and support. He has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has ensured that leaders and teachers have access to high-quality training on subject leadership, assessment and teaching. In addition, the trust provides strong support in safeguarding, finance and school administration. It has also attracted talented leaders and teachers to the school, and has arranged additional funding for curriculum resources, for example in mathematics.
- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are well organised. Roles and responsibilities are allocated according to governors' skills. Meetings are run efficiently and focus relentlessly on outcomes for pupils. Governors do not shy away from challenging leaders. For example, in a recent local governing body meeting, governors sought reassurance from leaders that there was sufficient focus on attendance and on the quality of subject leadership.
- Governors are committed to the school and carry out their statutory duties, including for safeguarding, extremely well. They challenge leaders on the impact of funding for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up. They have overseen considerable improvements in outcomes for these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a caring, nurturing climate in which pupils thrive. Trustees and governors ensure that pupils' safety and well-being have a high priority. They check that all child protection policies

and procedures are followed. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

- Required checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers are carried out to a high standard. Staff benefit from regular training on all aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty and child sexual exploitation. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are ever-vigilant and know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Leaders are alert to the risks of online grooming or bullying and monitor pupils' use of the internet carefully.
- The school's designated leaders for safeguarding have undertaken relevant, high-level training. They keep meticulous records of all child protection concerns. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies, acting decisively to ensure that pupils who may be at risk of harm get timely help and support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and are ambitious for their success. They are proud to work at the school and are passionate about the subjects they teach. Teaching is particularly effective in English, mathematics, science, humanities and design technology.
- Teachers' planning meets pupils' needs in most subjects and in most year groups. Teachers devise engaging activities that stimulate pupils' interest. For example, in English, pupils in Year 9 relished getting to grips with images of life and death in Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'.
- Teachers provide high levels of challenge in lessons. They use questions skilfully to probe pupils' thinking and encourage them to explain their ideas. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson, careful questioning by the teacher deepened pupils' understanding of the molecular nature of chlorine.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and professional. Pupils feel confident in expressing their ideas because teachers have created an atmosphere in which it is fine to make mistakes and pupils listen to each other respectfully. For example, in a history lesson, pupils became very animated debating the features of great historical figures.
- Teachers are quick to spot any misconceptions pupils may have, and offer additional support if necessary. One pupil reported, 'The teacher really helps me to learn.' Teachers give pupils time to act on any written or verbal feedback in line with the school's policy. Pupils value the time they are given to reflect on and improve their work.
- Teachers work closely with each other, with staff from the trust and with teachers from other schools, to ensure that their assessment of pupils' progress is accurate. Around two thirds of parents who responded to Parent View feel that they receive valuable information about their child's progress. However, some parents feel that communication between school and home is not always timely or clear.

- Over four fifths of parents who responded to Parent View, agree that teachers set the right amount and type of homework. One parent wrote that their child's homework is 'interesting and inspiring'.
- Leaders are aware that in a small and diminishing number of subjects, teaching over time has been less effective. In these subjects, teachers do not take sufficient account of what pupils already know or can do. Leaders are taking firm action to support teachers in improving their practice, and holding them to account for the progress their pupils make.
- A small number of pupils in the lower years, in particular boys with low prior attainment, do not have the reading and writing skills necessary for the curriculum they are following. As a result, they take less care in their work and do not achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to take part in the wider life of the school. As well as attending lunchtime and after-school clubs, pupils enjoy participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or joining the Combined Cadet Force based in the school. The school also works with the fire service to promote healthy lifestyles among younger pupils. The annual drama production is a popular event with all members of the school community.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are taught how to keep themselves safe from a range of everyday risks including fire, road traffic accidents and online crime. Leaders have made a particular point of providing detailed advice and information on e-safety.
- Some parents, who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, expressed concerns about bullying. However, pupils say that bullying has declined considerably in the last two years. When bullying does occur, they say that teachers are quick to respond and resolve it. Pupils helped to design the current anti-bullying policy. Leaders' comprehensive records confirm that incidents of bullying have declined sharply and are now rare.
- Pupils believe that their school is a warm and tolerant community. They are taught to respect people who have different cultural backgrounds or religious beliefs from their own. They understand why all forms of discrimination are wrong. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They wear their uniforms smartly and are polite to visitors. There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the school.

- Pupils are punctual to lessons and move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. They treat the fabric of the building with respect, and the site is free from litter or graffiti.
- Pupils and staff say that behaviour has improved significantly in the last two years. They say that lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. This is because leaders and teachers have put in place a clear approach to behaviour management that pupils understand and follow. Leaders have taken effective action over the last year to reduce significantly the number of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed term.
- Attendance overall is in line with the national average for secondary schools. Teachers emphasise to their pupils the importance of being in school every day. Pupils who are rarely absent receive awards in assembly and rates of attendance are displayed prominently in classrooms.
- Leaders work closely with the families of pupils who are frequently absent. Where necessary, leaders make imaginative use of additional funds to help remove barriers to regular attendance. As a result, there have been significant improvements in the rates of attendance for a small number of disadvantaged pupils who were persistently absent.
- A small number of pupils attend a local pupil referral unit on a full-time basis. They are safe, well-cared-for, and receive the support they need to improve their behaviour and attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published results for 2016 showed that pupils in the school made broadly average progress from their starting points. Pupils' progress in English, mathematics, humanities and languages was also similar to national averages.
- In 2016, most-able pupils made progress in line with that of all pupils nationally in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made broadly average overall progress. However, disadvantaged pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, made progress in English, mathematics and most other subjects that was well below that of other pupils nationally. Pupils with low prior attainment made less progress overall than their peers nationally, particularly in mathematics.
- Early indications from provisional 2017 outcomes suggest that pupils' overall progress across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics, was similar to that found nationally. In addition, the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils are likely to be much closer to national averages. Outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were also much improved compared with 2016.
- In mathematics, current pupils make strong progress from their starting points because teaching has improved. The new subject leader has ensured that the curriculum is more challenging than previously. Pupils gain fluency in calculations and have regular practice in using their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. In all year groups, current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with low prior attainment, are on track to reach their targets.

- In English, pupils have been well prepared for the more demanding content of the new curriculum. Consequently, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make strong progress in their study of literature from the 20th century and earlier.
- Outcomes in science have been below national averages for the last two years. Leaders attribute this to a policy of entering pupils for some of their science examinations a year early. They have wisely stopped this practice. The progress made by current pupils in science is strong and the teaching is effective. Outcomes for those pupils who sat examinations in the separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics were in line with the school's targets in 2017. Most-able pupils performed particularly well, resulting in a sharp increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the highest grades.
- Leaders and teachers make effective use of the pupil premium grant to address the underperformance of disadvantaged pupils. As a result of additional support and resources, the differences between rates of progress for current disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are diminishing rapidly.
- Leaders and teachers promote reading vigorously. The school library is bright, welcoming and busy. Pupils enjoy reading. They read aloud fluently and can work out the meaning of words they do not recognise. However, less confident readers make limited use of their knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words. Pupils who enter the school with low levels of literacy receive increasingly effective support.
- Leaders have rightly identified that low prior-attaining pupils make slower progress than middle or high prior-attaining pupils. The majority of low prior-attaining pupils currently in the school now make better progress, as a result of an increased focus on their literacy and numeracy skills. However, leaders recognise that the reading and writing skills of some low prior-attaining pupils, particularly boys in the lower years, need to improve. There are credible plans in hand to bring about the necessary improvements.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education. Attainment in English and mathematics improved between 2015 and 2017. In 2016, all pupils went on to their chosen destination, either in the sixth form, at a local further education college or with a work-based training provider.
- A small number of pupils who have behavioural, emotional or medical needs attend alternative provision at a local pupil referral unit for all of their timetable. These pupils attend well and are making steady progress on courses that are well matched to their behavioural and learning needs.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Outcomes for students in the sixth form are similar to those seen nationally and are improving. Students do particularly well in vocational subjects, where many of them make exceptional progress from their starting points. The small number of students who need to retake GCSEs in English and/or mathematics make good progress.
- Teaching is effective. Teachers ensure that students receive high levels of challenge. For example, students in an A-level music technology class were engrossed in composing their own pieces of synthesised music. Similarly, A-level history students

have improved their ability to write at length, supported by feedback from their teacher. Elsewhere, teachers' skilful questioning helped pupils to understand new material in physics and economics.

- Students say that they get high-quality support from their teachers. Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly appreciative of the additional support they have benefited from. Teachers have built positive relationships with their students. One student said, 'Teachers care about us emotionally, not just academically.' Students also say that they receive helpful careers advice. During the course of the year, students get advice on university applications, student finances and curriculum vitae writing.
- Students behave well and their attendance has improved. They are tolerant and caring and are strong role models for younger pupils in the school.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Numbers applying to join the sixth form, including from other schools, have risen. Retention rates are in line with national averages. The curriculum meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes. In 2017, around two thirds of students progressed to higher education, with a greater number than previously gaining places at Russell Group universities.
- Leaders are aware that some group sizes are very small and may not be financially sustainable in the future.

School details

Unique reference number	140845
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	10036797

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1064
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	155
Appropriate authority	The Ormiston Academies Trust
Chair of the local governing body	David Sword
Principal	Rachel Kitley
Telephone number	01983 203 103
Website	www.cowesec.org
Email address	info@cowesec.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The new principal took up her post on 1 September 2017.
- The school is a larger than average comprehensive school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally.
- The school became an academy in 2014, sponsored by the Ormiston Academies Trust.
- A small number of pupils attend Thompson House, a pupil referral unit in Newport, Isle of Wight, on a full-time basis.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 65 lessons to observe learning. Around half of these observations were carried out jointly with a school leader. Inspectors also paid visits to a morning assembly, several form-time sessions and the school’s library.
- An inspector listened to a group of pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors also held several meetings with school leaders to discuss and evaluate various aspects of the school’s work.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body, as well as with two representatives of Ormiston Academies Trust.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils by holding meetings with groups from different years and talking to pupils in lessons and around the school. Inspectors analysed 16 pupils’ responses to Ofsted’s online survey.
- Parents’ views were taken into account by evaluating 141 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, including 100 written responses.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and assessment information.
- Safeguarding procedures at the school were reviewed.

Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Debbie Godfrey-Phaure	Ofsted Inspector
James Rouse	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Conway	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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