

Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Watery Lane, Newent, Gloucestershire, GL18 1QF

Inspection dates 23-24 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, senior leaders, governors, and staff have worked highly effectively, including with external support, to bring about rapid improvements to leadership, the quality of teaching and behaviour so that pupils achieve well.
- Students who start at school with broadly average standards make good progress to achieve above average standards in their GCSE examinations.
- Additional support for less able students and those with special educational needs means that all students make good progress.
- Good targeted support makes sure students eligible for the pupil premium achieve well.
- The good sixth form prepares students well for their futures. Many students leave to study at very good universities, while others take up apprenticeships.
- Teaching is mainly good with some that is outstanding, especially in art and drama.
- Relationships between staff and students are excellent and the behaviour around school and in lessons is good.
- Students say they feel safe and well cared for. The school responds well to relevant issues regarding the personal safety of students as a focus for assemblies and lessons.
- Middle leaders have developed well to support teachers within their departments to improve the quality of teaching.
- Leaders and governors have a clear understanding and ambition of what the school needs to do to improve even further.
- The close support from the headteacher and staff from the support school has been highly effective in bringing about improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There remains variation in students' achievement across sixth form subjects and between AS and A level.
- Results for GCSE science and modern foreign languages do not yet match those of English and mathematics.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching to raise achievement higher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 27 lessons. Most of these were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They observed the school's work and scrutinised students' books.
- Inspectors looked at examination results for 2013, assessment records, including teachers' predictions for 2014, the Academy Executive Board (AEB) minutes, letters and records of meetings from the AEB to parents and carers following complaints, and the school's development plans and evaluations. They also looked at safeguarding and other policies which were on the school's website.
- Inspectors met staff, members of the AEB, the National Leader for Education from Cirencester Deer Park School, and students.
- The inspectors also drew on evidence from the previous monitoring visits.

Inspection team

Michael Smith, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Raye Allison-Smith	Additional Inspector
Peter Clifton	Additional 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 larger than average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported at school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Around an eighth 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 Hartpury and Gloucester Colleges.
- The headteacher, who had previously been deputy headteacher, started in her new role from April 2013. At that time two assistant headteachers were promoted to acting deputy headteachers.
- The school appointed an Academy Executive Board to oversee the main functions of a governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In January 2013, the school was judged to require special measures. The school has received monitoring visits in May and September 2013.
- The school has been receiving support from the National Leader for Education from Cirencester Deer Park School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement further by:
 - increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching by sharing and developing the outstanding practice within the school across all subject areas
 - ensuring achievement in GCSE science and modern foreign languages is as high as in English and mathematics
 - reducing variation in students' achievement across sixth form subjects and between AS and A level.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start school with standards which are broadly average. In Key Stage 4, students mainly study GCSE subjects with a few vocational subjects as appropriate. Students make good progress to attain standards that are above average because they are well taught and they show positive attitudes in lessons.
- The strong focus on improving achievement for disabled students and those who have special educational needs means they make good progress from their starting points. This is because they receive good support, often from teaching assistants during lessons.
- The most able students respond well to the challenge in lessons to make good progress, particularly in English literature, mathematics and humanities subjects.
- Less able students are given better support than previously across the curriculum so that they make good progress. There are opportunities to attend local colleges where they study a variety of options including construction, motor vehicle, hair and beauty, land-based and animal and horse care studies. Students enjoy these courses and they say it helps them with other subjects in school.
- Achievement in English is good. The proportions of students who make or exceed expected progress are in line or better than national figures, as are the proportions for mathematics.
- Nearly all students take at least two GCSEs in science, with around a half taking the three separate sciences. Achievement is good but not as high as in other subjects. In French and German, students make average progress compared to national figures.
- Each year, a few students are selected for early entry in GCSE English and mathematics. This is successful in ensuring these students, who may not be able to complete all of their GCSEs, achieve at least a pass grade for both subjects. Each year a small number of sixth form students successfully resit their English and mathematics GCSEs.
- Pupil premium money has been used effectively to support targeted groups to improve their reading, writing and calculations. The school's evaluations show that students have made rapid progress with their spelling and reading. In 2013, the difference between GCSE results for English, mathematics, science and humanities subjects for students eligible for pupil premium, and those who are not, was around half a grade. This was less than in 2012 and well below the national difference. The school's records show this is predicted to reduce further this year.
- Additional funds for students who arrive at school in Year 7 with standards below average have been used effectively so that these students are supported to make rapid progress. They are taught English and mathematics as a group with a highly effective teacher and teaching assistants who build upon good primary practice and help students adjust to secondary school.
- In the sixth form, students study A-level courses. AS-level results have been well above average over the last few years. However, students have not then gone on to achieve as highly when they complete their A-level courses. The current focus on improving A-level results is making a difference so that A-level results are expected to improve to broadly average this year.
- The school is successful in supporting students to gain places at their first choice university, with many studying at prestigious universities. The school also supports students who want to enter the world of work, including gaining apprenticeships. All students complete a work experience placement in Year 12 to help them consider in which area they may wish to work. These are not just based locally. For example, a student who wants to be a meteorologist visited an RAF base in Oxfordshire to see how they worked. All Year 11 students also complete a work experience placement.
- Students develop good literacy and numeracy skills across a variety of different subjects. Sixth form students support other students with their reading as part of their enrichment course.
- Standards of art and drama are outstanding and do much to enhance students' cultural awareness and spiritual development.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching has improved greatly so that no inadequate teaching remains. Teaching is now mainly good with some that is outstanding. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students enjoy the majority of lessons.
- Teachers' questioning is a strength, particularly how teachers use questions to challenge the thinking of the most able. Students are expected to explain their answers. This ensures they acquire a good understanding of their work as well as developing their speaking and listening skills.
- Students make best progress when teachers devise activities which extend learning by giving opportunities for students to use what they have been taught and apply it for themselves to a new situation as, for example, in mathematics using the work on drawing triangles given two angles and the length of a side and applying it to situations where students needed to work out how they were to draw triangles when given the length of two sides and one angle.
- Teachers in all subjects ensure students improve their reading and writing during lessons. For example, in mathematics, the correct spelling of mathematical language is emphasised. Students use discussion well to help them prepare for writing. This has supported the improvements in the standards of speaking and listening as well as writing. Drama is also used well. The standard of teaching in drama is outstanding and students get opportunities to role play in lessons to improve their understanding of characters.
- The quality of marking is good. In the very best marking, teachers correctly identify what students need to do to improve their work and then give clear advice on how they could achieve better. Each comment includes an activity for students to complete at the start of, or before, their next lesson. Students then respond to the teacher's comments.
- In sixth form lessons, learning is good because staff carefully plan for a variety of activities, often giving students responsibility for their own learning and help prepare them for the style of learning they will meet if they go on to higher education. This includes opportunities for students to research and then write up their findings, which are discussed with others.
- Students are provided with good opportunities for their spiritual development across a wide variety of lessons, for example considering how they would feel as different characters in a book. Students often discuss moral issues, for example eco-issues within science.
- Cultural development is very evident around the school. Display is used well to support learning and students could be heard during the inspection enthusiastically preparing for the school production of *Les Miserables*.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good**

- Behaviour is good. Students know how to behave and respond very well to stimulating teaching. Their attitude to work in lessons is good and often excellent. Students take pride in their work. Exercise books are well kept and presented with virtually no graffiti.
- Behaviour around school and during break and lunchtimes is good. Students are rightly proud of their school and of their different houses and they work well to try and gain housepoints for their admiral. Ex-students are similarly proud of their school and the school is keen to show current students the power of such role models in raising aspirations. For example, recent visits by ex-students, one a leading game designer, one a professional footballer and also an international rugby player, show students what is possible for them to achieve if they persevere.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good, including those who attend courses at local colleges. Students say they feel safe in school and their only concern is the poor state of some of the toilets.
- Students have a good understanding of the key issues of keeping safe, appropriate to their age. This includes aspects of e-safety, sexual health and of substance abuse, including cigarettes and alcohol. For example, sixth form students tried (poorly) to drive while wearing specially adapted 'beer goggles' to understand the risk and consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol.

- The school ensures students understand the risks of stress when preparing for examinations or when under pressure. Assemblies and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons are adapted to take account of any issues which are relevant, for example discussing issues around self-harming or as part of internet awareness week students performing a drama presentation on the dangers of sending sexually explicit images from phones (sexting). Aspects of sexual exploitation have also been discussed and important information is made available to parents and carers through the school's website.
- Bullying incidents are rare and when they do occur students say they feel secure that if reported it would be dealt with, with support for both victim and also the bully. Students know about the different types of bullying, including issues around single sex relationships and transgender. They are aware that staff challenge any student who make inappropriate comments or uses expressions like 'gay' as a form of abuse.
- Heads of house are seen as being highly supportive when students have issues or problems and school records show they are very supportive to students, including arranging additional support from other agencies for students as well as their parents and carers.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about rapid improvements since the school was placed in special measures. Her attention to detail and determination that nothing but the best is acceptable for the students in the school have ensured the quality of teaching has improved significantly.
- Senior leadership has improved and is good. The acting deputy headteachers have responded very well to the challenges within the school and now are central in bringing about improvements. There is clear purpose and ambition within the school. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have identified areas which they school needs to develop next; for example, extending the opportunities for students to study more vocational courses in the sixth form.
- The acting head of sixth form has a good overview of how well students are achieving and how the quality of teaching in their lessons can be improved. The curriculum ensures students can achieve well at A level, have a week to experience what it would be like to work in a specific vocational area, resit English and mathematics GCSE if they have not yet gained a good grade, and take part in a variety of enrichment courses, including supporting other younger students. Students receive good advice and guidance during Year 11 to decide if they wish to continue at the school or to seek employment or training elsewhere. Good advice and support are also given when students are deciding if they want to go onto higher education or into employment.
- Subject leadership has improved after some very good training and joint working with staff from the support school. They now take responsibility for checking on the quality of teaching within their departments and have been successful in bringing about improvements.
- The school uses information on its students well to check on how well they make progress and on attendance issues. It also uses progress information well to identify which classes make good progress and this is then used to inform the annual check on how well teachers are performing. Teachers have clear targets for improvement linked to their performance and this is used to ensure that those who successfully meet their targets are suitably rewarded.
- All teachers have benefited from good professional development. While all lessons have certain non-negotiables, the school rightly recognises that teachers should be able to identify how they teach their lessons, providing students make at least good progress.
- The headteacher and school have received excellent support from the headteacher and staff from Cirencester Deer Park School and lately from the Cotswold School. Other external agencies have provided good support along with Gloucestershire Association of Headteachers (GASH) for financial and personnel issues.
- The curriculum is based upon students studying mainly GCSE courses that prepare them well for their next phase of education, training or work. There is a good variety of clubs and sports which

students enjoy. Students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced across all subjects. The close work and visits to, and from, a partner school in Kenya give students an excellent opportunity to understand at first hand how children live and work in completely different circumstances. Students who visit Kenya say it is a life-changing trip.

- The school has used pupil premium money well to close the gap between the achievement of eligible pupils and that of others. The gap is being successfully narrowed at a faster rate than national figures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved greatly and the AEB is effective in ensuring the school continues to improve. Through effective training, governors are far better informed and know what they must do to hold the school to account for actions. This has meant greater understanding of what constitutes effective leadership at all levels within the school, and challenging when leadership of some subjects has not been good enough. Governors find the AEB, which was set up to monitor the school while it was in special measures, to be highly effective in holding leaders to account and are intending to carry on with this group now the school is judged good. Good progress information, which is shared with governors, lets them check effectively on how well additional support is being used for disabled students and those who have special educational needs and for students for whom the school receives the pupil premium. The governing body closely checks on how these groups are progressing compared to others within the school, and nationally. This is linked to the quality of teaching. Information is also used by governors to ensure only staff who meet the necessary requirements receive pay increases. Governors have very good systems to check that safeguarding systems in the school are as good as possible and fully meet statutory requirements.
 - Governors work well with parents and carers and respond swiftly to any complaints which come in, including at times the chair meeting parents to discuss issues. However, they rightly recognise that at the time of the formation of the AEB an important correspondence was missed. Governors have written to this parent to explain and to express their regret at the oversight.
 - Governors recognise that the number of students expected to attend the school has fallen and they have reluctantly made the necessary changes to staffing levels and responsibilities.

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	138746
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	432718

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,108
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	165
Appropriate authority	Academy Executive Board
Chair	David Pettit
Headteacher	Kirsten Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2012
Telephone number	01531 820550
Fax number	01531 820707
Email address	admin@newent.gloucs.sch.uk

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