

# Hadlow Rural Community School

Ashes Lane, Hadlow, TN11 0AN

**Inspection dates** 23–24 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
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.

- School leaders and governors have established a clear vision for the school, resulting in a highly positive ethos. The integration of land-based learning into the curriculum is innovative and highly motivational for students.
- The school is rapidly improving, following some difficulties during its first year.
- Governance is a strength of the school. Governors use their wide-ranging skills to provide effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- The students benefit from the specialised facilities and high levels of expertise of Hadlow College tutors during their one-day-a-week land-based study.
- Most students make good progress over time. Progress in English and science is particularly strong.
- Teaching is good and improving. Highly effective relationships between teachers and students help students learn well.
- Students’ behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Bullying is rare. Students are considerate, respectful and take pride in their work and their appearance. The majority of them are keen to learn.
- The school’s work to keep students safe is outstanding. Students are happy and feel very safe in school. They are confident that the adults in school support them very well.
- Leaders ensure disadvantaged students are well supported and, as a result, they achieve as well as other students in the school.
- The school promotes students’ spiritual, moral and social development well. There is a strong commitment to equality and students show respect and concern for the needs of others.
- The development of character and resilience through the land-based activities also helps prepare students well for future employability and life in modern Britain.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Standards in mathematics are not yet as good as those in English and science in Key Stage 4.
- Teaching is not yet leading to outstanding achievement for all students.
- Attendance is below the national average.
- The restricted opportunity to study some aesthetic subjects limits the development of students’ creativity and cultural understanding.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, four of which were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Every teacher who was present was observed.
- The lead inspector, accompanied by the headteacher, visited groups of Year 7 students working on their land-based studies within Hadlow College.
- Inspectors looked both at students' work in lessons and also at a separate sample of students' books.
- Inspectors met with groups of students from each year group and talked to others in lessons, at break and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and governors. The lead inspector met a representative from the local authority and had a telephone conversation with an adviser from the Department for Education who has been monitoring the school since it opened.
- Inspectors analysed 62 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of the school's documentation was reviewed, including information about students' achievement, the school's evaluation of its performance, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, a wide range of policies and the school's arrangements to keep students safe.

## Inspection team

Theresa Phillips HMI, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Box

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Hadlow Rural Community School is an academy free school which opened to students in September 2013. It was set up by Hadlow College and is located within the college grounds. There is a strong association with the college, which provides many support services. The Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair are the vice principal and Principal of Hadlow College.
- This is the school's first inspection.
- The school is much smaller than average. Currently, it has students in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11. The 60 places available in Years 7 and 8 are not quite filled and there are 58 students due to join Year 7 in September 2015. The 15 places available in Years 10 and 11 are filled.
- The school is housed in temporary accommodation. The construction of a new school building, which is scheduled to open in 2016, has started.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, allocated to support disadvantaged students, is lower than the national figure.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is well above average.
- All students follow a land-based curriculum at Hadlow College one day a week.
- Twice a week, the last lesson of the day is dedicated to compulsory enrichment activities.
- A full cohort of students have not yet taken public examinations, so it is not possible to report on whether or not the school meets the government's current floor targets.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students make good progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4 by helping teachers to plan learning that challenges students of all abilities.
- Improve teaching so that achievement is typically outstanding for all students by ensuring that teachers plan lessons that:
  - are well matched to students' starting points
  - enable students to take greater responsibility for their learning.
- Improve the attendance of students so that it is at least in line with national levels.
- Broaden the curriculum to increase opportunities for students to study a wider range of aesthetic subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The school's senior leaders provide a clear vision for the school and have created a very positive ethos. The close links between the academic curriculum and land-based studies provide an innovative and inspiring experience for students. Within this inclusive and practical culture, students behave well and are keen and able to succeed.
- The school experienced high staff turnover during its first year, including two changes to the post of headteacher. The current headteacher joined the school in April 2014 and brought much-needed stability. He has successfully driven rapid improvement, ably assisted by three senior leaders, two of whom are the only teaching staff remaining since the school opened. Staff morale is high, as seen in the positive responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of what they need to improve to meet their high expectations. Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and marking regularly and thoroughly. Where teaching needs to be stronger, leaders provide teachers with well-focused support and training. This is making a difference to the teaching of mathematics, which is improving.
- Procedures for managing staff performance are rigorous and contribute well to improvements in teaching. Teachers are held accountable for the progress of students in their classes.
- Leaders thoroughly analyse information about students' attainment and progress. They identify those who need support and provide high-quality, extra help. As a result, students make good progress in many subjects during Key Stage 3 and good progress in English and science in Key Stage 4.
- Subject leaders of English and mathematics show insight and are developing their leadership skills. They identified that teaching and the rigour of assessments in both subjects need to strengthen for students to achieve the highest grades in the new GCSEs. The senior leader with responsibility for science has a compelling vision for a strong scientific understanding to underpin students' land-based studies, and their good progress in science demonstrates that this is well underway.
- Students benefit from the one day a week they spend at Hadlow College pursuing land-based vocational qualifications. This restricts the time available for the academic curriculum, which covers English, mathematics, science, humanities, technology and modern foreign languages. Art lessons are included but specialist music and drama are not and this is limiting students' cultural, creative and aesthetic experiences. School leaders are taking steps to address this for the next academic year.
- The school is a harmonious community. There is a strong commitment to promote equality and ensure there is no discrimination. Students wrote the school's equalities policy. Students display high levels of respect and support for each other during lessons and around the school. Their understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, tolerance and respect are strong because these values are reinforced through the curriculum. There is an extensive enrichment programme which all students attend for two hours a week and additional extra-curricular activities. All of these activities help to develop students' spiritual, moral and social development well.
- The land-based activities develop traits which are preparing students well for their next steps in education and employment, such as leadership, teamwork and confidence in unfamiliar situations.
- Students benefit from Hadlow College's expertise in careers guidance and its strong links with employers and further education colleges. As a result, all Year 11 students have secured appropriate destinations for next year and all Year 10 students are about to experience work placements for a week. Within both land-based and academic studies there is an emphasis on entrepreneurship. To provide impartiality, all students in Years 10 and 11 receive independent careers advice.
- The pupil premium is put to good use and managed efficiently, so that there is no gap in the standards achieved by disadvantaged students and others. Year 7 catch-up funding is used well so that students who fall behind with their reading in primary schools are helped to improve rapidly.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs achieve in line with other students in the school. Teaching assistants work effectively with students in and out of lessons.
- Senior leaders give a consistent and very high priority to safeguarding and child protection so students are kept safe.
- School leaders frequently check on the attendance, behaviour and progress of students during their land-based studies within Hadlow College in order to make sure they achieve well, behave appropriately and attend regularly.
- Parents' views of the school are generally positive. A large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school to another parent. However, a small minority expressed concerns about the progress their child was making. School leaders have established a parent council to

strengthen work with parents and carers.

- The local authority provides some support for the school through reviews of the school's progress, which school leaders and governors find helpful.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body makes a highly effective contribution to the overall leadership of the school. Governors are ambitious for the school and are aware of its strengths and also areas which could be improved. They use their detailed knowledge of the school and professional expertise to challenge and support school leaders. Governors attend training to ensure their own skills are fully up to date.
  - The vision for the school was generated by the then Chair of the Governing Body of Hadlow College, along with the Principal and vice principal of the college. They all hold key roles within the school's governing body. This ensures that the founding vision to use land-based education to motivate and inspire young people has been sustained.
  - Governors regularly check how well students are progressing and monitor the school's performance management systems which are part-way through the first full appraisal cycle. Where teaching or leadership falls below expectations, they act decisively. Governors visit the school regularly to check how well policies are being implemented. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding and child protection.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They are polite, kind and get on extremely well together. One Year 7 student said, 'This school is like one big family because everyone knows everyone.' Students are welcoming to visitors and happily express their positive views about all aspects of the school. They wear their uniform with pride.
- Students conduct themselves well as they move between lessons and socialise at break and lunchtimes. Staff and students sit together over lunch to practise manners and forge even closer relationships. Although the playground space is limited, students show consideration toward each other.
- Good behaviour is a result of consistently applied sanctions and rewards and the positive ethos of the school. Inspectors saw very little low-level disruption. Occasionally, a few students lose interest when work is not well matched to their learning needs.
- A few students from Years 7, 8 and 10 explained how much more settled they were than at their previous schools. The combination of the small size of the school and the practical land-based learning has helped to motivate them and improve their attitude to learning.
- Attendance is below the national average. The school is working hard with local authority officers to improve the attendance of a few students who joined the school with a history of low attendance at their previous schools, but the impact of this work has not yet led to significant improvement.
- The behaviour and attendance of students attending the land-based courses are closely monitored and are good.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Students say they feel extremely safe and a very large majority of parents responding to the online questionnaire agreed.
- Students stated that bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively by the school. They are well aware of different types of risk, including when using the internet and social media. Students are confident that the school will help them if they have any worries about any aspect of their schooling or personal lives. They say there is always an adult to speak to and that they are confident that an effective response will be made.
- Safeguarding is given the highest priority and procedures are rigorous. This includes stringent security to enter the school site and thorough risk assessments for the land-based activities.
- The school works very effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that students receive the care and support they require. Staff in the school are determined to help every student overcome difficulties they face and this is building the self-confidence of vulnerable students.

**The quality of teaching** is good

- Evidence from the work in students' books, school progress tracking data and from observing students' learning shows that teaching is good.
- Due to the growth in student numbers and the high turnover of staff during its first year, most teachers joined the school at the beginning of, or during, this academic year. Teachers show passion for their subject and are keen to improve their practice. Well-targeted training has rapidly improved the quality of teaching.
- Clear routines and strong relationships between teachers and students build high levels of trust and confidence so that students are frequently absorbed in their learning. Teachers have high expectations and set tasks which engage and motivate students. However, work is not always set at the appropriate level for all groups of students. Sometimes, the most able students have to complete work at the lower levels before moving on to more challenging tasks, so do not make as much progress as they could. On other occasions, students do not get enough time to really deepen their knowledge before moving on to new work. Where teaching leads to good or better achievement, the activities are well matched to students' starting points and teachers check carefully how well students have understood before moving on.
- Teachers' high expectations and students' pride in their achievements lead to well-presented work in books. Although students are willing to follow their teachers' instructions, they do not always show great curiosity or a strong desire to learn during their school-based lessons. When lessons are planned to meet students' learning needs well, they are fully engaged, for example in a well-structured Year 8 humanities lesson, students were debating fluently the reasons for the defeat of the Armada.
- Teachers' feedback to students is generally good. Students are given time to act on the feedback they receive to improve their work. In some cases, the feedback from teachers is not precise and students are not always sure what they have to do to improve. Inspectors also saw examples of highly effective marking. In Year 8, students had used challenging prompts from their science teacher to significantly improve their writing about in vitro fertilisation. In humanities, Year 7 students had used advice from the teacher's marking to improve the accuracy of their description of mediaeval life.
- Teachers in the school frequently link learning in lessons to students' land-based activities. For example, Year 7 students described how their study of acidity during science lessons was used during soil testing as part of their countryside course. During an IT enrichment lesson, Year 8 students were designing a sustainable farm, using knowledge gained through both school and land-based experiences.
- Similarly, land-based activities are designed to develop students' core skills within a practical context. Numeracy skills were used by Year 7 students who were weighing fish in water filled containers to work out the weight of the fish. In floristry, other Year 7 students were calculating wastage after they had cleared out the chiller cabinet where flowers are kept.
- All subjects are supporting improvements in literacy through a strong focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar. Students who joined the school with low reading skills are given effective help to catch up. However, not all students read aloud confidently and the lack of a library limits opportunities for students to broaden the range of books they read.
- Homework is set regularly and used effectively to practise key skills in each subject.

**The achievement of pupils** is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with starting points well below national averages. The school's own data show that students in Years 7 are making good progress in English, mathematics and science. Students in Year 8 experienced some disruption to their English teaching during their first year and consequently had some catching up to do. The standard of work is improving rapidly. Students in Year 8 are also making good progress in mathematics and science.
- Students who joined the school in Year 10 had results at the end of primary school which were just below national levels. However, baseline tests administered by the school on their arrival showed that many students had not made the progress expected of them during the previous three years. A few students had not regularly attended school. Since joining Hadlow Rural Community School, students in both Years 10 and 11 have made good progress in English and science and expected progress in mathematics.
- In English, most students frequently redraft and improve their written work following helpful advice by their teachers. During discussion of war poetry, Year 10 students used technical language accurately and many made good progress from low starting points. Across all year groups, students' writing skills are better developed than their reading.

- In mathematics, teachers develop students' basic mathematical skills effectively, but the lack of problem-solving activities means that the most able are not challenged enough.
- Although a few of the most able students achieve very well in a range of subjects, generally they do not make the progress they are capable of in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 and 8.
- Disadvantaged students achieve as well as their peers in English, mathematics and science.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs benefit from the high level of interactions with adults during lessons and a well-targeted support programme. As a result, they make progress in line with their peers across all subjects.
- Students who enter the school with low literacy and numeracy skills make rapid progress and catch up with other students of their age.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139697
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	450063

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	137
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynda Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Boxall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 853241
<b>Email address</b>	contact@hrcschool.org

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