

The Cottesloe School

Aylesbury Road, Wing, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 0NY

Inspection dates	7–8 July 2016
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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are passionate about improving all aspects of the school for the benefit of every pupil. They have successfully driven improvement over the last three years, including boosting the academic performance of pupils.
- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is well respected by the school community.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are now securely good overall.
- Governors and leaders hold staff to account and provide high-quality training so teachers continually hone their skills.
- All staff have worked effectively to embed an ethos of warmth, care and support.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the quality of education it provides for their children.
- Pupils are rightly proud to belong to their school. They enjoy learning. They are courteous and have a high degree of respect for others.
- The sixth form is good. Sixth form programmes provide well for students, resulting in increased numbers with successful applications to top universities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching in key stage 3 does not challenge the most able pupils consistently well enough.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils does not promote rapid progress consistently well.
- A few middle leaders are not routinely monitoring the impact of their actions to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Governors do not always receive clear information about strengths, weaknesses and actions taken. As a result, governors cannot always ask incisive questions.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further to secure consistently rapid rates of progress of all pupils by:
 - making sure the needs of all disadvantaged pupils are met
 - ensuring the most able pupils at key stage 3 routinely have more in-depth and stretching activity.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - clear, evaluative information is provided to governors to enable them to ask incisive questions
 - all middle leaders routinely monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team are passionate about improving the school and have successfully ensured a culture of continual improvement. They are ambitious for their pupils and this has raised expectations. They have successfully tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection report, for example improving pupils' progress and achievement in mathematics.
- Strong senior leaders have put in place clear policies and procedures for all aspects of the school. Leaders at all levels understand their role in ensuring pupils receive effective teaching so that they make good progress.
- Staff are united in ensuring the school ethos that 'High achievement for all is our shared responsibility' is a reality. They all share the view that they can continue to improve their skills for the benefit of the pupils. Staff morale is very high.
- Leaders have put in place an effective system to manage the performance of teachers so that staff are supported to update their skills through continual professional development. Weak practice, or colleagues new to the profession, have a bespoke training package to enable them to improve.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with 94% of the parents responding to the Parent View online questionnaire recommending the school to other parents. Indeed, one parent summed up their view, 'We applaud the school for everything they are doing to give the pupils a great start to life', and another said, 'We could not be happier with the level of support and teaching'.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders respond to changes in need so that the pupils are best served. For example, English and mathematics have more curriculum time in Year 7 so literacy and numeracy skills can be improved. At key stage 4, a more academically demanding curriculum has been introduced with increased numbers of pupils expected to follow a humanities and language GCSE option.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have good provision in school, with a stated 'no stone unturned' approach to ensure pupils get the support they need to make good progress. This support is clearly evident.
- The school effectively promotes extra-curricular activities and trips, including sports, dance and drama. A science club at key stage 3 has successfully supported pupils to make better progress as their interest has been stimulated.
- School leaders make good provision across the curriculum for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain through the 'Cottesloe Charter' which lays out the key values of the school. The school instils a sense of tolerance, respect and empathy for others' views. The recent accolade of being chosen as a beacon school for Holocaust Education was discussed in a Year 7 assembly, enabling the pupils to think independently and critically about prejudice. The whole school is proud and honoured to be chosen and this reflects the ethos of the school as a caring, inclusive community.
- School leaders have used the additional funding for pupils that are disadvantaged to ensure that they make better progress. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is approaching that of others, although leaders have identified that more needs to be done to fully close this gap.
- Middle leaders check the success of the areas for which they are responsible. They use information from observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and analysing progress information for different groups of pupils. In most cases this is effective in raising standards and enables leaders to make effective plans to improve if learning falls short. However, a minority of middle leaders do not routinely monitor the impact of their plans for improvement to enable pupils' rapid progress.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are committed to improving the school and are dedicated to their role. They know the school well through visits and meetings with school leaders. They have effectively monitored the use of funds to support disadvantaged pupils and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
 - As the school has improved, governors have increasingly been given accurate information showing trends and patterns of pupils' performance. This enables governors to review progress and hold leaders to account.
 - The information provided by school leaders to governors does not always clearly explain the strengths, weakness and the specific actions taken to improve outcomes. This means that governors' questioning does not completely drill down to help leaders reflect on the success of their actions.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders have created a safe culture. Staff are vigilant so pupils are kept safe. Pupils explain that they feel safe and that they are listened to, should they have any worries. Leaders use visiting agencies effectively to support, for example, the delivery of messages about e-safety. Parents confirm that they are updated, in good time, should there be any concerns. Governors ensure there is regular planned safeguarding training, including keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. Inspectors noted that the school was calm and orderly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and has many significant strengths. Pupils recognise this and a group of Year 10 pupils told an inspector 'teaching is incredible'. Teachers know pupils well and track their progress, intervening when they fall behind.
- Pupils' learning is effective because teachers plan highly motivating activities, using their specialist knowledge. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 8, a practical geometry session about properties of circles prompted much excitement as pupils developed their own investigations.
- Pupils remark positively about the quality of feedback they receive from teachers to help them improve. In many books, pupils respond to specific focused feedback. Pupils report that when they are given time to consider their teacher's guidance, they feel more confident. There is clear evidence when looking in pupils' books that when improvement advice is of good quality, pupils make better progress.
- Pupils make good progress as a result of teachers' open, probing questions which stimulate deeper understanding. When pupils have the opportunity to discuss their thinking and explore their views, this adds significantly to their enjoyment.
- Most teaching enables rapid progress through tailor-made tasks matched to pupils' ability. Through careful monitoring during lessons, teachers reshape tasks and extend pupils understanding.
- Pupils appreciate a number of self-help strategies that teachers put in place for them. These include: help desks in information and communication technology where pupils help each other; bunting in science that pupils can write tips on for others; and help cards and prompts in other subjects. Pupils make good progress when they are able to utilise this support.
- Deliberate and effective action has been taken to improve pupils' writing skills. Writing is well developed across the curriculum and year groups.
- Pupils read widely, including aloud to their peers. They study advanced texts including Shakespeare, modern classics and poetry. There is good vocabulary development across the ability range. Lower-ability pupils are encouraged to use dictionaries to check meaning and improve the accuracy of spelling.
- Teaching assistants are well briefed by teachers so that they can effectively support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- There is some variation in the quality of teaching across year groups, although teaching is generally stronger in key stage 4 and 5 than key stage 3. Less effective teaching does not make the best use of information about pupils to plan learning activities. As a consequence, there are examples of most-able pupils at key stage 3 not being sufficiently challenged and disadvantaged pupils needing more support to make rapid progress.
- Homework is set regularly in line with the school's policy. The vast majority of parents believe their child receives appropriate homework for their age.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are eager to learn and have positive attitudes in lessons. They cooperate with each other and have an understanding of others' needs. They have high levels of concentration and are rarely off-task. They take pride in their work. All these positive features contribute to their good progress.
- Pupils are proud to belong to the school. They are courteous, unfailingly polite and respectful. Staff model their expectations well and pupils rise to the challenge. Pupils are very appreciative of the care and support their teachers and other staff provide. They made the point to inspectors about the exceptional

support by the pastoral team to resolve all manner of problems quickly. This was also backed up by numerous comments from parents about the good quality of care their child receives.

- The very successful LINC centre, situated within the school, supports the emotional well-being of pupils. Many pupils spoke positively about the impact of the support they have received.
- Pupils and parents praised the motivation programme organised for key stage 4 boys to improve their progress.
- Impartial advice and guidance enables pupils to make choices about careers and next steps in their education, employment or training. Some pupils, including those that are disadvantaged, have more detailed support.
- A very small number of pupils learn in an off-site alternative provider for pupils. They make effective progress and are well cared for because the environment better suits their needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils follow well-established routines at break and lunchtime. The school has an orderly, calm and positive atmosphere. Pupils show consideration for others, for example holding doors open and saying 'Good morning'. No derogatory or offensive language was heard at any time by the inspectors.
- Punctuality is good and pupils move purposefully, without fuss, around the school site.
- Parents are positive about the behaviour of pupils and say they are managed well. Staff are similarly positive about the behaviour of the pupils.
- Exclusions are below average and have fallen significantly since the last inspection, reflecting the high standards of behaviour in the school.
- Attendance has improved and is above average overall. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend school as often as their peers, although their attendance is improving in all year groups due to deliberate action from school leaders. The proportion of pupils that are persistently absent is falling.
- Pupils reported to inspectors that bullying is extremely rare, but if it does occur is dealt with effectively. Only 1% of parents report that bullying is not dealt with effectively by the school.
- In a small minority of lessons, behaviour was less good. This was confirmed by pupils and a small number of parents. It is usually linked to weaker teaching that does not challenge the pupils sufficiently.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in pupils' progress. From different starting points the progress of pupils is strong, reflecting the improvement in teaching and higher expectations of the pupils.
- In 2015, progress in English, mathematics and humanities was significantly above the national average. Overall the school performed above the national average figures and was within the top third of schools.
- Performance of pupils currently in the school is continuing to improve. There is, however, a variation with the school's own assessment information showing that current pupils do better in some subjects compared with others. Inspectors also noted variation in progress across subjects; for example, generally progress in English and mathematics was better than science.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress compared to previous years; however they are not matching the performance of other pupils nationally from the same starting points. For current Year 11 pupils, the gaps between non-disadvantaged pupils and disadvantaged pupils are predicted to close further, although not be completely eliminated.
- In key stage 4, the most able pupils make similarly good progress as their peers. Previously, they have made better progress in mathematics than they have in English. In this academic year, the most able pupils' work in English shows effective challenge and good progress.
- The school has been particularly successful in improving the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which reflects the good support given to them by staff. Indeed, their progress outstripped that of other pupils in 2015. The school forecasts this trend to continue with the current Year 11 pupils. Inspectors also saw good progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in other year groups.
- In key stage 3, pupils have ambitious targets and the school has high expectations of them. The school's own information shows variation between year groups and currently the progress of pupils overall in Year

8 does not match the good progress in Year 7 and 9. School leaders are rectifying this through clear strategies and monitoring. Pupils needing to catch up in English and mathematics from a lower start in Year 7 are given good support to help them improve.

- The most able pupils in key stage 3 make better progress when they have activities matching their abilities. However, at times the most able pupils finish work early or are not sufficiently stretched.
- Pupils achieve above the national average in terms of English and mathematics and have good literacy and numeracy skills, enabling them to move on to their next stage of education and training.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Leadership of the sixth form is strong, with an ambitious vision for an academic sixth form. There are high expectations of students, with stretching targets set. The head of sixth form knows the students very well.
- The head of sixth form monitors the progress of students and the teaching they receive. He liaises with subject leaders in good time if there are any concerns. He is committed to improving outcomes in all subjects. There has been some variation in the achievement and progress of sixth form courses in the past, although the performance gaps between subjects are closing. In particular, the few vocational course outcomes which lagged behind are now improving.
- A-level performance is set to improve in 2016 with nearly half of grades forecast to be A* to B. The school is rightly proud of the growing academic performance of the students. Vocational performance is also forecast to improve. In Year 12, challenging and skilful questioning by teachers results in the good progress of the students.
- Students are advised carefully about their study programme and clear criteria are applied to ensure they are on the right course. The prior attainment of the student is carefully considered so they can make good progress. For example, should a student not achieve a C in GCSE mathematics, they are required to take this subject to improve their numeracy skills. All are expected to have achieved English GCSE at grade C.
- Students feel well supported by the school and have a three-day induction programme in the summer break. As a result, they are prepared well for their chosen courses and retention rates are high compared to national figures. It is made clear that they are expected to contribute to the school and wider community, which they do with maturity and enthusiasm.
- Students report that they are enjoying their time in the sixth form. They are appreciative of the support provided by the school, in particular the helpful information and guidance about next steps. They feel well looked after and have good personal support to understand how to keep themselves safe online, respect individuality and observe the values of modern Britain.
- Work experience is offered to all students relevant to their chosen area of study and career aspiration. The vast majority leave to go on to further and higher education or training, including apprenticeships, with the remaining few entering employment. An increasing number are making successful applications to high-performing universities.
- Students relish positions of responsibility and understand their roles as leaders. They feel empowered to take on new and challenging situations as representatives of the school.
- Teaching is good in the sixth form. Lessons are planned carefully and students enjoy the opportunity to take part in more in-depth learning. For example, in a forensic science lesson about criminology, the students were critically examining samples of work, against examination board criteria, in order to help their peers improve. At the same time, they explained that it helped their own understanding.
- There are small pockets of inconsistency in teaching of information and communication technology and sociology. Leaders have taken effective action to improve these areas.

School details

Unique reference number	110533
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10012277

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,101
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Collis
Headteacher	Andrew McBernie
Telephone number	7–8 July 2016
Website	www.cottesloe.bucks.sch.uk
Email address	office@cottesloe.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 April 2014

Information about this school

- Cottesloe School is a larger than average non-selective secondary school in a local authority that operates a selective system.
- The school has a sixth form.
- Nearly all pupils are White British and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged, who attract additional government funding known as the pupil premium, is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students who have special education needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The school uses the Aspire centre as an alternative learning location for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.
- The school website meets the requirements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons, including tutor periods, of which 21 were jointly observed with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors scrutinised work of selected pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers.
- Meetings were held with four groups of pupils including sixth formers. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally throughout the two days.
- A meeting was held with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. A further telephone call was made to a second representative of the local authority.
- An inspector had a telephone conversation with an alternative learning provider (Aspire).
- Documents were scrutinised, for example the school self-evaluation document, action plans, information relating to students' progress, attendance and exclusions, reports to governors, governor minutes and school policies.
- Inspectors took account of 174 parents' responses to the online questionnaire, with 128 parents contributing written comments.
- Inspectors considered the views of 96 members of staff who completed the online questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Caroline Walshe	Ofsted Inspector

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