

Ousedale School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137052
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	397455
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	John Daniell HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
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	2,051
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Collins
Headteacher	Sue Carbert
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 October 2008
School address	The Grove Newport Pagnell Buckinghamshire MK16 0BJ
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Daniell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Jones	Additional Inspector
Niel McLeod	Additional Inspector
Karen Roche	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 48 parts of lessons taught by 47 teachers and also visited a number of lessons for shorter periods of time with a specific focus in mind; for example to monitor the progress of disabled students and those students with special educational needs. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, including those students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable to underachievement, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement documentation, records of teaching, school performance data and school policies. The inspection team scrutinised responses to questionnaires from 417 parents and carers and from 179 students.

Information about the school

Ousedale School is larger than the average-sized secondary school and is based on two separate campuses in Newport Pagnell and Olney. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is half the national average, and those who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average. A below-average proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs attend the school. Of these, the proportion of students with a higher level of need or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. The school meets the current floor standards which are the minimum standards expected by the government for attainment and progress. The school has gained a number of accreditations including the Continuing Professional Development and International School Awards. It also holds the Healthy Schools Award and has achieved Investors in People status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Students' achievement is good over time and continues to improve. Students make good progress based on their starting points. The school has been successful in narrowing gaps in achievement between different groups of students. Disabled students and students with special educational needs attain higher than similar students nationally. The school is not yet outstanding because there is not enough teaching that is consistently outstanding.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and benefit from good quality teaching. The sixth form offers a suitable range of courses, and students receive effective guidance with regard to the next stage of their career. Students make a positive contribution to the life of the school.
- The majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Most teachers plan lessons which contain a wide range of activities and, therefore, stimulate students' desire to deepen their knowledge. Where teaching remains satisfactory, teachers do not present sufficient challenge in lessons or develop their independent learning skills because their planning over time does not match the needs of different groups of students.
- Good behaviour in lessons and around school is a noticeable feature on both campuses. Students are courteous and respectful, and rightly proud of their achievements. Any incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour that occur in lessons are linked to weaker teaching which does not fully engage all students in their learning.
- Leaders and managers demonstrate a good understanding of school improvement strategies and performance management. They handle the challenges of leading a split-site school successfully and have implemented strategies which continue to raise standards. They communicate their high expectations well and have strengthened leadership at all levels. Leaders and managers have clear procedures in place for communicating with parents and carers. However, responses to the inspection parental questionnaires suggest that systems for communicating with them could be improved.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide a greater proportion of outstanding teaching, and eradicate any remaining low-level disruption, by:
 - using a broader range of strategies to develop students' independent learning skills
 - ensuring that all teachers' planning matches the needs of different groups of students more precisely and presents them with an appropriate level of challenge.

- Build on existing systems for communicating with parents and carers in order to engage them fully in their child's education.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

There has been a rising trend in outcomes over time since the previous inspection and students' attainment continues to be above the national average. A slight drop in the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics in 2011 has been swiftly addressed. Current available data, including examinations already taken, and inspection evidence show that the proportion of students falling within this category is set to increase significantly in 2012. Students achieve highly in mathematics, and actions taken in English and science have significantly raised attainment and accelerated rates of progress for all groups of students.

Students' progress in lessons is good and this is accelerated by the effective development of their literacy and reading skills. The vast majority of parents and carers rightly believe that students make good progress at the school. In the majority of lessons, teachers demonstrate an accurate understanding of how students learn and make progress. For example, in a good English lesson in Key Stage 3 based on understanding the key features of a tragedy, opportunities for focused group discussion were effective in involving all students. The content of the lesson was correctly pitched because the teacher had taken into account students' prior attainment to produce resources which supported and challenged them in their learning. Consequently, all students made good progress.

Gaps in performance between different groups of students have been effectively narrowed. For example, the gap between girls' and boys' attainment in Key Stage 4 has narrowed significantly. Scrutiny of data also demonstrates improvements in achievement for those students known to be eligible for free school meals, as well as disabled students and those with special educational needs. The effective use of a personalised learning base for students who are potentially vulnerable to

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underachievement has raised their aspirations and secured improved outcomes.

Students in the sixth form make good progress to achieve standards which are above the national average. Performance in many subjects exceeds standards achieved nationally.

Quality of teaching

As a result of good and better teaching across the school, students' outcomes are improving over time. There is also much good and outstanding teaching in the sixth form. Most parents and carers rightly believe that their child is taught well at the school. No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection. Students are generally exposed to stronger teaching as they progress through the school.

Lessons are characterised by secure and enthusiastically communicated subject knowledge, high expectations and good use of resources, including information and communication technology. Consequently, students demonstrate good behaviour and engage in their learning, while forging positive relationships with their teachers. In a good BTEC business lesson on 'marketing your business', students in Year 10 made good progress because the teaching had pace and the teacher's high expectations were clearly communicated. The teacher had made effective use of information gathered on students' prior attainment and planned the lesson so that everyone's needs were met. The lesson featured ample opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills. In typically good lessons, teachers make effective use of questioning at regular intervals during the lesson to check for students' understanding. Appropriate use of students' prior attainment and specific needs is particularly evident for disabled students and those students with special educational needs, which is why these students make good progress. In the satisfactory lessons, some students become less engaged because planning is less finely tuned to meet their needs. Hence, there is some low-level disruption.

In most lessons, marking is regular and constructive. Students appreciate the comments provided by teachers and fully understand what they have to do to move up to the next level of attainment. The introduction of the 'star and next step' approach to marking is appreciated by students and is securing improved rates of progress.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' development are taught effectively across the curriculum. As a result, students learn about tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions, as well as having opportunities to reflect on issues such as drug abuse, racist behaviour and equalities.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The good behaviour modelled by students in the vast majority of lessons has been a determining factor in building positive relationships between teachers and students, and in enabling teachers to deliver high quality lessons. Although the majority of

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students who responded to the questionnaire believed behaviour to be good in lessons, some of those questioned through discussions commented on a small number of lessons being affected by low-level disruptive behaviour. A significant minority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires expressed a similar concern. Inspection evidence shows that in the vast majority of lessons students are respectful and motivated to achieve. However, a small amount of low-level disruptive behaviour remains in a few lessons. Teachers implement behaviour management systems effectively when necessary and students respond positively to these.

Students report they feel safe in school and there are few incidents of bullying. They are confident that any incidents that do occur are responded to quickly by teachers. The school's records of sanctions issued for unacceptable behaviour show a decrease in the number of incidents over time and a reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions. Parents and carers are also of the opinion that the school does all it can to ensure their child's safety and the curriculum covers important aspects relating to safety, including cyber-bullying.

Students' positive attitudes to school are reflected in their attendance rate, which has been well above average for a number of years. Strategies for maintaining above-average levels of attendance are thorough and supported through the effective work of the school's matron and attendance officer. A parent of a particularly vulnerable child reported that 'The school always looks for solutions and strategies to support my child. He would never have managed alone without their help.'

Leadership and management

Leaders, managers and members of the governing body have made a concerted effort to embed systems which secure school improvement. They have demonstrated a good capacity to sustain further improvement, based on progress made over time. School self-evaluation documentation is largely accurate and supported by sufficient evidence to inform judgements. Inspectors concurred with senior leaders' judgements when conducting lesson observations jointly.

The school's senior leadership team is effective in creating a cohesive school community across two campuses underpinned by a shared vision. Since taking up post, the headteacher has made some key decisions which have had a positive impact on students' achievement and the quality of teaching. For example, the creation of directors of core subject areas means that these members of staff can now spend time on both campuses and be fully strategic in their approach to raising standards. Leadership and management of the sixth form are highly focused and great effort has gone into creating appropriate pathways to match students' prior attainment. A comprehensive staff training programme is in place which addresses topics pertaining to students' achievement. There is a close link between the performance of teachers and staff development. Underperforming staff are closely monitored and supported through additional training and a coaching programme. A minority of parents and carers in their written responses to the questionnaires stated

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they would welcome improved ongoing communication between them and the school relating to issues around behaviour and their child's progress.

The curriculum offers a broad range of subjects to support all students. Those students who are potentially more vulnerable to underachievement are well supported through targeted provision, as are gifted and talented students through, for example, the provision of additional mathematics. The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, social, moral and social development well and students speak positively about the wide range of activities provided in and beyond lessons. Established links with students in India offer opportunities to students in both countries to experience each other's cultural differences.

Leaders, managers and members of the governing body ensure that arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and effective. Members of the governing body provide an appropriate level of challenge and support, and maintain a positive working relationship with staff. The school is effective in tackling discrimination and it also implements its equal opportunities policies effectively through the monitoring of the progress of different groups of students, and its success in narrowing gaps in achievement among these groups.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Ousedale School, Newport Pagnell MK16 0BJ

Thank you very much for making the inspection team feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed visiting both campuses and talking to you about your achievement. You were positive about your school both in discussions with members of the inspection team and in your response to the questionnaires.

- Ousedale is a good school. Your achievement is good over time and you make good progress in your lessons.
- The quality of teaching is good because your teachers plan lessons well to ensure that you are usually challenged and are able to work well independently. A few teachers continue to deliver lessons where all students do the same work. This sometimes leads to low-level disruptive behaviour in some lessons.
- Your behaviour around school and in the vast majority of lessons is good. We found you to be very courteous to each other and respectful of each other's views.
- Your school's leaders, managers and members of the governing body are doing a good job in identifying the school's strengths and in improving less effective aspects of the school. They have made some important changes which have had a positive impact on how well you achieve in school. Some of your parents and carers believe communication between them and the school could be better.
- Your school has a good sixth form where students achieve well and appreciate the good range of courses and the guidance and support they receive.

We have asked leaders and managers to work with staff to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching you receive. We have asked them to consider how they can improve the ways in which they communicate with your parents and carers. We ask you to make every effort to work independently in lessons and to concentrate at all times with a view to eradicating any remaining low-level disruptive behaviour.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector

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