

Pewsey Vale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126498
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340992
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Thomas Gibson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Reeves
Headteacher	Carol Grant
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons, undertaking two joint observations, and observed 18 teachers, spending 70% of their time looking at learning. They held meetings with staff, students, governors and with the school improvement partner. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation form, its monitoring of students' progress towards their targets, the school development plan, governing body minutes and the reports of the School Improvement Partner. They also considered responses to questionnaires completed by students, staff and 71 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the school's strategies to raise the attainment of boys at five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics
- the school's effectiveness in ensuring that higher attaining students make sustained and substantial progress
- the school's success in ensuring that vulnerable groups of students gain positive outcomes
- the school's effectiveness in promoting good behaviour and the contribution of students' behaviour to learning in lessons.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving the village of Pewsey and the surrounding rural area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or those whose first language is other than English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has been designated a specialist arts college since January 2008. It has also gained the International School award, Healthy Schools status, and the Sportmark and gold Artsmark awards.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pewsey Vale is an improving and inclusive school. It provides a good standard of education for its students. The headteacher, ably supported by her effective leadership team, has set a clear agenda to raise standards in the school. This has resulted in considerable improvement since the last inspection. Students' attainment when they enter the school is below average. They make good progress and by Year 11, their attainment is broadly average. This progress is a direct result of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, both of which are good, and the good behaviour of students in lessons throughout the school.

The school has started to introduce strategies to raise the level of boys' attainment, by adapting areas of the curriculum and focusing on improving the literacy skills of boys. The impact of this is shown by the improved attainment levels of boys currently in the school. However, girls continue to do better than boys, especially in the proportion gaining five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics in their GCSE examinations.

Pewsey Vale is a small, cohesive, rural community school. Students are known well by their teachers and have high levels of confidence in the school's ability to advise them effectively. They receive outstanding care, guidance and support. Students say they feel safe at school and almost all parents and carers agree with their views. One parent commented, 'I am thrilled by the school, particularly on how they focus on each child as an individual.' Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the personalised provision and support given to them. The school is beginning to offer real challenge to the more-able students that are now in the school. As a result, they make good progress.

Senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and demonstrate good capacity to make further improvements. They critically review and evaluate the quality of the school's work. They have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and areas that could be improved further, and take robust action to tackle identified areas of weakness. Teachers have started to share their most effective practice, but as yet this exchange is not sufficiently explicit to raise the standard of teaching further and ensure that each individual student is challenged to the maximum. The improved tracking of students' progress has started to have an impact, but is not refined enough to ensure that each one makes significant progress in all subjects. Accreditation as a specialist arts college is having a positive impact on the pace of change within the school.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the variation in attainment between boys and girls so that by August 2010 over 50% of boys gain five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics by:
 - sharing best practice in teaching and learning more explicitly
 - continuing to focus on developing the literacy skills of boys
 - refining the tracking and monitoring of the progress of individual students.
- Ensure teachers tailor the content and level of their work and tasks in lessons to meet the needs of individual students so that students of all abilities can make the best progress possible.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the school with below average levels of attainment. Because of good teaching and their positive approach to learning, their attainment when they leave school is broadly average. This represents good progress and achievement. Students enjoy their learning. Relationships between staff and students are good, which creates a productive environment in which to learn. Overall, girls make more progress than boys, as a result of their higher level of literacy skills. In their GCSE courses, students make particularly good progress in biology and drama but not such good progress in physical education and geography. The comprehensive individual profile for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities provides staff with a rounded view of each of these students' needs. Coupled with the effective support of the teaching assistants, this enables students with additional learning and other needs to make outstanding progress.

Students feel extremely safe in the school. The size of the school and the cohesive nature of the community create an environment where students are known well and feel very well supported. Innovative projects such as the development of the 'know zones' and the availability of specialist support ensure students feel confident that issues they raise will be dealt with. Students behave well and are friendly, polite and courteous. In a large majority of lessons, the behaviour of students contributes to their good progress. On occasions, when tasks are not set at an appropriate level of challenge, a small number of boys can become disengaged, which sometimes affects the progress they and other students in the class make.

Students understand the key factors which affect their health, reflected in the Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards. Extra-curricular activities are well attended. Students have the opportunity to make healthy food choices at lunchtime and many take advantage of this. However, a minority of students in their questionnaire responses requested that the school should do more to promote the benefits of a healthy way of life.

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Students value their school community, and willingly take on responsibility and participate constructively in school life. The school council has a positive impact on the life of the school and has been instrumental in introducing the anti-bullying web site 'i help'. Students are punctual to school and levels of attendance are above average. The school has an effective system for monitoring attendance and a clear understanding of the challenges facing individual students. Students make good progress in English, information and communication technology and mathematics. The large majority of students now continue their education beyond Year 11. Students develop good skills to support their future economic well-being.

Creative programmes within the curriculum, such as the themed days for Year 7, afford opportunities for students to think about other cultures. Cross-curricular projects, such as looking at African culture across music and art in Year 10, enable students to broaden their understanding of the world around them. Students have a strong sense of common values and respect the needs and interests of other students.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good and is an improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are planned well and teachers provide a range of strategies to engage students in their learning. Relationships are good and students respond well to individual support and guidance. Good subject knowledge underpins the good teaching. Teachers have a sound understanding of the needs of individual students.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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Effective questioning and the good use of assessment to support students ensure that they make good progress. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, in which the tasks were appropriate and challenging, students responded with energy and enthusiasm, engaging actively in understanding the properties of different shapes. Satisfactory lessons were characterised by a slow pace, tasks not being matched to the needs of individual students and a tendency for the teacher to talk for too long.

The school provides a well-organised curriculum which provides effective opportunities for learning and is adapted effectively to meet the needs of students with highly specific needs. The curriculum is becoming increasingly flexible, with students taking GCSE examinations in information and communication technology and religious education over a three-year course. During Key Stage 4, students have the opportunity to follow courses in motor vehicle maintenance, health and beauty, and construction, at another local school. The arts specialism has enabled a wider provision of examination courses within the art and technology departments. The school has introduced an early-entry system in Year 10 for students in English and mathematics. These changes provide flexibility to the curriculum, but a few parents and carers have expressed concern about the impact of these changes on the potential attainment levels for their children. Inspectors agree that the changes provide greater opportunity for students, but consider that, unless managed very carefully, it may affect the level of attainment of the more able students.

Students enjoy the variety of enrichment opportunities available, including visits to the theatre and the use of the recording studio in 'the shak'. Curricular links, such as that in music with a local college which enabled students in Year 10 to work with sixth form students, have a positive impact on transition to post-16 education. The school's specialism in art has supported the innovative links with the 'theatre in education', Wyvern Theatre and the introduction of a variety of 'artists in residence' to support learning across the creative arts.

Students are known as individuals. Teachers and the tutors understand the different needs of individual students. This is reflected in the outstanding level of care, guidance and support the students receive. The school works particularly well with outside agencies to support vulnerable students and a group has been established to support the needs of 'young carers'. Staff provided striking examples of how they have supported students through troubled periods and demonstrated the positive impact it has had on their achievement, enjoyment and attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team have high expectations for all the students. They are committed to their success and have developed effective strategies to ensure individual students make good progress. This is reflected in a significant increase in the number of students continuing into post-16 education. The school has developed an effective system of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the school. This provides evidence to support plans for further school improvement. The system has had real impact and is a key reason why teaching has improved since the last inspection. The governing body has a sharper focus on providing support and challenge to the school. The reorganisation of the governing body has enabled it to concentrate on the key strategic issues within the school. It provides a robust focus on raising students' attainment further.

In the response to the survey, a large majority of parents were very positive about the school and acknowledged the improvements that have taken place. The school has developed particularly positive and effective relationships with the parents and carers of the most vulnerable students. A small minority of parents and carers were concerned about the consistency of communication between home and school and in particular the need for the website to be a more effective method of communication. The school has developed effective links with a local college to extend the curriculum at Key Stage 4. Its work within the cluster of primary schools in sport and the arts is highly valued and effective. Good links with the local primary schools ensure a smooth transition between Year 6 and Year 7.

The school demonstrates a clear commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity. The school knows its students well and effectively supports those who are vulnerable to underachievement. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and all staff have received regular training. Through its work as an 'international school' and its well-established links in The Gambia, it provides opportunities for students to further their understanding of the wider community. The school has started to evaluate fully its contribution to community cohesion and has identified the need to improve links with people who have retired from employment and school-aged students. The Armistice Day remembrance service in 2009 was held in the amphitheatre of the school. It was attended by students from the school and over 100 parents and carers and members of the local community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Responses from the questionnaires indicate that the large majority of parents and carers are happy with the work of the school. One parent commented positively on how the school ‘gets to know the child as an individual’. A few parents and carers commented on the level of communication between home and school. Inspectors agree that there is room for further improvement in communicating general school information and specific information to parents and carers on their child’s progress and how they can support their child’s learning further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pewsey Vale School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 342 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	35	38	54	7	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	37	43	61	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	37	32	45	11	15	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	34	31	44	11	15	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	26	37	35	49	7	10	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	25	36	51	10	14	3	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	17	45	63	11	15	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	39	38	54	4	6	3	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	27	37	52	10	14	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	28	34	48	12	17	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	20	38	54	9	13	4	6
The school is led and managed effectively	21	30	34	48	11	15	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	44	30	42	6	8	2	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



28 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Pewsey Vale School, Pewsey, SN9 5EW

It was a genuine pleasure to visit your school and see the ways that it has improved since its last inspection. You were friendly and polite and made us feel most welcome in your school. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you in your lessons and around the school. Many of you, your parents and carers spoke very positively about the school and the changes that have been made. We have taken these views into account in arriving at our judgement that Pewsey Vale is a good school.

You have a good working relationship with your teachers and this supports the good progress you make in lessons. The school has high expectations for you and as a result, you achieve well. Your behaviour in class and around the school is good, although a small minority of boys can become easily distracted in lessons.

Your headteacher and senior leaders within the school have made a significant impact on improving the quality of learning that takes place. We have asked them to do two things to improve your school further:

- Ensure that over 50% of the boys gain five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics in their GCSE examinations in 2010 by:
 - sharing the very best teaching methods across all subjects
 - further improving the literacy skills of boys
 - refining the system the teachers use to track your progress in each lesson.
- Ensure teachers plan their lessons so that each one of you is challenged to make the most progress possible.

By your enthusiasm, hard work and support for each other, you have contributed to the improvement in your school and have helped to create a real community within it. You have told us how much you value the help and support you get from the staff in the school. They are committed to ensuring that you achieve your full potential. We hope that all of you will continue to work as hard as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Gibson
Lead inspector

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