

Melksham Oak Community School

Bowerhill, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 6QZ

Inspection dates

25–26 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Too many pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, in the main school and in the sixth form are not achieving as well as they can. The most able are not stretched sufficiently.
- Leaders do not have an accurate enough picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Checks on the impact of actions to improve teaching are not used effectively to secure good teaching and achievement across the curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable in the last few years. The progress of some of these pupils is hindered by their low attendance.
- In recent years students achieved broadly similar A-level results to students in other schools. However, AS-level results for Year 12 students were weaker than in previous years.
- The quality of teaching is too inconsistent. There are examples of good teaching where pupils make strong progress but, too often, pupils' progress is hampered because learning activities lack challenge and do not deepen pupils' understanding sufficiently.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, pupils have not developed good attitudes to learning. In some subjects, pupils' books show too many gaps because work is left unfinished. Elsewhere, poor presentation is not challenged.
- Governors do not hold school leaders to account with sufficient rigour. They receive reports and involve themselves in the work of the school but they have not challenged leaders sufficiently over how well pupils achieve.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are now taking action to improve the school. For example, there is a renewed focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils and sixth form students make better progress. There are positive signs but it is too early to judge the full impact of these changes.
- Leaders have created a culture which provides high levels of care and support for pupils, especially those who might be vulnerable.
- Pupils' personal development is a strength. Their conduct around the school is good. They treat each other with good humour and tolerance and they treat adults with courtesy and respect.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, including in the sixth form, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils of all abilities, including disadvantaged pupils, can achieve and challenge them to attain higher standards
 - teachers plan work which enables pupils to meet the raised expectations of the new national curriculum
 - teachers' high expectations of all pupils build positive attitudes to learning in all year groups.
- Improve leadership and management, including in the sixth form, by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels embed a culture of rigorous monitoring, evaluation and analysis so that they have a complete and accurate understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school
 - leaders use the knowledge gleaned from monitoring to address weaknesses in teaching swiftly and secure improved achievement where required
 - pupil premium funding is used precisely to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils so that they reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Improve pupils' attendance by decreasing the proportion of pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils, who are persistently absent from school.

External reviews of governance and of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to improve these aspects of leadership and management.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders are not sufficiently ambitious for what pupils might achieve. Although they want the best for all pupils, and especially for disadvantaged pupils, this ambition is not reflected in the academic achievement of too many of these pupils.
- Senior leaders do not have an accurate enough view of the quality of teaching in the school. While they monitor lessons, at times they do not pay close enough heed to the progress that pupils are making over time. They therefore have an overgenerous view of the academic performance of the school.
- Senior and middle leaders do not ensure that all teachers consistently plan work which enables pupils to achieve in line with their capabilities. This limits the progress that some pupils make; for example, too many of the school's most able pupils are not reaching the highest levels.
- In the past, leaders have not ensured that pupil premium funding is spent effectively. Plans and strategies to raise the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have not been monitored or evaluated with sufficient rigour. As a result, disadvantaged pupils have not made as much progress as their peers nationally. The recently appointed leader with oversight for disadvantaged pupils has implemented new initiatives and gained a better overview of the support each pupil receives. It is too early, however, for the impact of these changes to be evaluated in relation to pupils' progress.
- School leaders have used neighbouring secondary schools to provide external support, particularly in terms of developing the quality of teaching. This support is valued by teachers. However, it is not effective in raising the quality of teaching consistently across the school because school leaders have not focused tightly enough on its impact to secure improved achievement for different groups of pupils. Consequently, there is still a significant variation in the quality of teaching that pupils experience between and within subjects.
- The headteacher has tightened the school's procedures to manage the performance of teachers more effectively. He has tackled well those areas where teaching was weakest but efforts to reduce the level of inconsistency in teaching elsewhere across the curriculum have yet to have the same positive impact.
- Leaders' actions to strengthen the leadership of the sixth form are beginning to make a difference. Higher expectations of what teachers and learners can achieve are already seen in the quality of learners' work. While leaders have a good understanding of the next steps required to improve the sixth form further, it is too soon to see the full impact of their newly implemented plans.
- Leaders have recently improved the curriculum so that there are appropriate pathways for different groups of pupils to study at greater depth and, as a result, these pupils are beginning to make better progress. There is a wide range of examination courses available in key stage 4 which cover academic, technical, physical and artistic options.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are keen that pupils develop into well-rounded adults who can play a positive role in their communities. They have ensured that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well planned and effective. The

curriculum allows good opportunities for pupils' personal development. A well-developed programme gives pupils the chance to discuss moral issues and to prepare them for life in modern Britain. They learn to work well together in a number of subjects, for example in music. Many also benefit from a very broad range of after-school clubs and groups.

- Leaders use the funding available to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. They know these pupils well and ensure they are well supported in their lessons. Some vulnerable pupils benefit from a nurture group when they first join the school from their primary schools. This is effective in helping them adjust to secondary school life. Catch-up funds are used effectively to provide additional resources that improve the reading skills of less able pupils. This has allowed them to access mainstream lessons more effectively.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not hold school leaders to account with sufficient rigour. At times, they do not ask challenging enough questions to evaluate the school's effectiveness or the impact of the work of school leaders. For example, they are given achievement information by school leaders but do not analyse it with sufficient precision to pick out potential concerns. This has allowed some aspects of the school's underperformance to go unchecked.
- Governors know the school's context, and the community within which it sits, very well. They are very committed to the school's values of inclusion and support for vulnerable pupils. However, they have not been effective in ensuring that funding for disadvantaged pupils has had a sufficiently positive impact on these pupils' progress.
- The trust board is not effective in holding the school to account for its performance. There is a link trustee for the school and the trust seeks expert advice about how well the school is performing, but this approach has failed to address weaknesses in the school's performance. Governors and the headteacher agree that the trust has had very little impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture which pervades all areas of the school. All staff take their responsibilities very seriously. They are well trained and know what to do should they have a concern over a pupil's safety or well-being.
- Governors oversee safeguarding effectively. They work with school staff to make sure safeguarding arrangements are in place and up to date.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They know who to go to if they have any concerns and they are confident they will be taken seriously and action will be taken if needed. They also understand how to keep themselves safe online.

- School leaders have good relationships with other agencies responsible for the safety of children, such as social workers and the police. This enables them to ensure there is a strong safety net around vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching is too inconsistent. Too often, teachers set work which is too easy and does not enable pupils to achieve as well as they can. In such cases, pupils' work is characterised by repetitive and low-level tasks that lack academic challenge. Consequently, pupils' progress is hampered because they are unable to demonstrate how well they can apply their knowledge and understanding to solve problems and/or when faced with unfamiliar situations.
- The development of literacy and pupils' ability to write in detail and at length to secure the highest marks is also too inconsistent across subjects. At times, the most able pupils are unclear how to organise their thinking and/or of the depth and quality expected if they are to maximise their progress. For other pupils, the acceptance of simplistic answers is hindering the development of the written skills necessary for them to reach higher standards.
- At times, teachers do not insist that pupils finish their work. This sets an expectation for pupils that they can leave questions or topics incomplete. Consequently, this limits their progress and too many books contain gaps where pupils have left work half-finished.
- Not all teachers comply with the school's feedback policy. Consequently, pupils receive varying degrees of advice on how to improve in different lessons. Some pupils are clear about the next steps they should take to improve their work, while others are unable to explain what they should do next or how they have improved their work in light of the feedback they have received.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not been given effective additional support to raise their levels of achievement. Work in pupils' books indicates that some high-ability disadvantaged pupils are not challenged sufficiently and are not given the support they need to do better. As a result, they fall behind other pupils.
- There are examples of very effective teaching, which lead to pupils making good and better progress. This teaching is characterised by teachers knowing their pupils well and setting work which deepens their understanding and develops their subject skills. As a result, pupils develop their ability to solve problems and structure detailed answers that show they are capable of high-quality thinking. However, this is not sufficiently widespread across the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving in the sixth form. Teachers and leaders have raised their expectations of what students might achieve, particularly of their commitment to learning. Students have responded well to this and so they are making better progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **Requires improvement**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have ensured that there are positive relationships across the school. Pupils treat each other well. They are tolerant towards each other and are welcoming and inclusive. They enjoy good relationships with staff too. The atmosphere across the school is friendly and supportive.
- School leaders have successfully created a culture that promotes pupils' welfare. Pupils are safe and they feel safe thanks to good pastoral systems and staff who are approachable. Vulnerable pupils are well cared for. Leaders ensure that their needs are addressed so that they can play a full part in school life wherever possible.
- The Year 7 pupils who are in the nurture group are well cared for and are given the support they need so that they can join the mainstream classes and feel comfortable in lessons.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare and that they are confident staff deal with any instances effectively. They are confident that when they come to staff with a concern they will be taken seriously and any issues will be addressed promptly.
- A small number of pupils with behavioural issues attend an off-site unit which caters for their needs. Pupils generally grasp this opportunity positively and work well in this environment.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are keen to take part in extra-curricular activities and represent the school in sport and arts events.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is mainly because, although their conduct is generally good, too many pupils do not have good attitudes to learning and are easily distracted when their work fails to challenge them sufficiently.
- For too many pupils, particularly boys, work in books is frequently poorly presented. Their general lack of pride in their work contrasts with the pride they feel in their school. In many cases, the quality of presentation in books begins well but as pupils lose interest in the subject the standard of presentation falls away.
- Pupils' attendance is too low. Most pupils attend very well but a small number of pupils attend rarely and this has a significant impact on the school's overall attendance figures. Leaders have recently increased their focus on attendance and as a result it is slowly improving, particularly in key stage 3.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not high enough. Almost a third of disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent. This is having a significant impact on their ability to make better progress.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school. Most pupils arrive at lessons punctually, although the start of some lessons is delayed by a small minority of pupils arriving late. Teachers manage these delayed starts well. Similarly, most staff

deal well with any lapses in behaviour. They have worked well with pupils who have in the past been poorly behaved and, because of their efforts, the behaviour of these pupils has improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress of current pupils is not consistently strong across different year groups and subjects. While the progress overall of Year 11 pupils who took their GCSEs in 2016 was broadly in line with the national average, there were significant variations between subjects.
- Standards and progress in English are low and have declined over time. In 2016 pupils achieved less well than pupils in other schools. The quality of work in the books of current pupils indicates that standards show some improvement but that this is not yet consistent across the school.
- In previous years, pupils' progress in mathematics and science has been in line with national expectations. However, current key stage 3 pupils' books indicate that pupils are not achieving as well as they can. Senior and middle leaders have not ensured that higher expectations outlined in the new national curriculum have been sufficiently addressed in their plans for improving teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. This has been the case for a number of years. In 2016, outcomes for this group of pupils were adversely affected by the non-attendance of a small group of disaffected pupils. The progress of current disadvantaged pupils shows some signs of improving, although they are not yet making the same progress as their peers nationally.
- The most able pupils are achieving in line with pupils in other schools. However, their progress is inconsistent between subjects. This is because not enough is expected of them in some subjects. Where teaching challenges them, they do well, but this is not the case in all subjects and as a result they do not always reach the high levels of which they are capable.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making progress from their starting points that is broadly similar to that of pupils in other schools. Pupils who have an education, health and care plan are receiving effective support from leaders and teachers. This is enabling them to access mainstream lessons where appropriate.
- Pupils benefit from effective careers advice and guidance across all year groups, including the sixth form. Pupils are well informed about their options for GCSEs, their choices once they have taken their GCSEs and their opportunities for further or higher education.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Students taking A-level qualifications in the sixth form have made broadly similar progress to those in other schools over the last few years. More learners in Year 13 secured higher grades in 2016. However, there was a dip in the performance of Year 12 learners. This has resulted in significant recent changes to leadership, the

curriculum, and in the tracking of learners' performance. These changes have halted further decline and equally have laid the foundations for more secure improvement.

- In 2016, those students who joined the sixth form with a number of GCSE C grades achieved poorly at A level. This was the result of insufficiently rigorous tracking of progress and a failure by leaders to intervene when necessary. The boys in this group did significantly less well than girls. Changes to the guidance that pupils receive when choosing courses and a more rigorous tracking and intervention programme are now enabling leaders to take swift and positive action when learning starts to falter.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is improving, although there is too much inconsistency between subjects. Progress is slowed in some subjects by difficulties with recruitment, which leaders are struggling to address.
- School leaders recognise the need to address weaknesses in the sixth form and have begun that process. Students commented to inspectors that procedures for monitoring and checking their progress are more thorough. They feel they are now receiving the quality of support they need to enable them to be successful.
- There is a lack of clarity between senior and subject leaders as to who is responsible for developing the quality of teaching in the sixth form so that achievement is maximised. The school's leadership recognises this and is taking steps to set out clear lines of responsibility and accountability for all staff. This is timely so that weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment can be tackled quickly and rigorously.
- Students benefit from a comprehensive tutorial programme which is effective in preparing them for the next stage of their education. It contains a good balance of work-related and careers topics and items which focus on, for example, community, society and democracy. The quality of careers guidance in the sixth form is a strength. Year 13 learners were successful in progressing to the higher education destination of their choice last year.
- Students are appreciative of the pastoral support they receive from staff. They feel known as individuals and cared for. They feel safe and are comfortable in approaching staff if they have a concern.

School details

Unique reference number	141911
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10033995

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,279
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	174
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Glynn Ashforth
Headteacher	Stephen Clark
Telephone number	01225 792700
Website	www.melkshamoak.wilts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@melkshamoak.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Academy Trust of Melksham (the trust). The trust was formed in April 2015 and its work is overseen by a board of trustees. The trust is responsible for seven primary schools and one secondary school.
- The school is larger than the average comprehensive school.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average.
- Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and almost all speak English as their first language.

- The number of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above the national average
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the school’s headteacher, senior leaders, a wide range of staff, and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils, covering all age groups and including disadvantaged pupils and sixth form students. In addition, inspectors talked to a number of other pupils informally around the site at break and lunchtimes, as well as before and after school.
- Inspectors visited classrooms, often with senior leaders, in all year groups and across a wide range of subjects. They observed tutor time and an assembly. In lessons, inspectors looked at pupils’ work and discussed it with them. Inspectors also looked at a wide sample of pupils’ work in books across the school.
- Inspectors met with the school’s designated safeguarding lead and looked at a wide range of documents and records concerning safeguarding. Inspectors also checked that safeguarding arrangements, such as the maintenance of the single central record, met all statutory requirements.
- Inspectors evaluated information and other documentary evidence including that relating to assessment and the school’s self-evaluation. Inspectors took account of the 72 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, as well as the school’s own parent survey. They also evaluated 74 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Karl Sampson	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Simon Rowe	Her Majesty’s Inspector
John Laver	Ofsted Inspector
Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Ben Sillince	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Thompson	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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