

Mayflower High School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137048
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	385568
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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

Type of school	Academy
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	1480
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephanie Dawkins
Headteacher	Lee Brumby
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
School address	Stock Road Billericay CM12 0RT
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	24–25 January 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Gulshanbir Kayembe	Additional inspector
Miranda Perry	Additional inspector
Raymond Lau	Additional inspector
Stephen Hume	Additional inspector
Ronald Elam	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 40 lessons and observed 40 teachers. They also visited a number of additional lessons, spending less time in these, but using the observations to gather evidence on the quality of behaviour and the support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. 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 documents such as the school development plan, assessment records and behaviour logs. Meetings were held with staff, groups of students, and representatives of the governing body. The inspection team analysed completed questionnaires from staff and students, as well as 265 from parents and carers.

Information about the school

Mayflower High School is a much larger-than-average secondary school which became an academy in August 2011. It has specialist status for mathematics and science and, more recently, for modern foreign languages. The number of students in the sixth form has increased by more than a fifth since the time of the last inspection. The great majority of students are White British with a very small minority from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low, as is the proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs. The school includes a specially resourced provision for students with dyslexia, called the dyslexia centre. This caters for 20 students in Years 7 to 11, and was fully subscribed at the time of the inspection. The school meets the current floor standard, set by the government as a minimum for pupils' attainment.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Mayflower High School is a good school.
- Students achieve well, making good progress in their learning as they move through the school.
- The sixth form is good and improving.
- Students based in the dyslexia centre are successfully integrated into the main school and make consistently good progress because they are always well taught.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well so that they grow into well-rounded, mature, confident and articulate young people who are well prepared for their next steps in education and future life.
- Students' outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes make a significant contribution to their learning in lessons.
- Students are very well looked after and, consequently, are and feel extremely safe.
- The quality of teaching is good and, in particular, teachers are good at asking probing questions which make students think.
- There is some outstanding teaching. More is not outstanding because teaching in good lessons does not go quite far enough when it comes to developing students' depth of understanding or their ability to work independently.
- Relationships between adults and students are a major strength of the school.
- Students' work is regularly marked. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of guidance and feedback to students on how they can improve.

- The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by his deputies in pursuing the highest standards. He sets a very clear direction, informed by good quality self-evaluation, for the school's future development.
- Many heads of subject provide an effective lead for staff in their areas. However, not all subject leaders' roles are sufficiently well developed, especially in relation to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and driving up standards even further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise standards and achievement further, improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring marking provides clear guidance to students on how to improve their work including the presentation of their written work
 - making sure that all students are extended and challenged to produce their very best work
 - maximising the time that students are actively engaged in their learning, and develop further their ability to work independently.
- Ensure that all middle leaders are monitoring and evaluating the work of students and staff in their areas of work and, hence, effectively promoting higher standards of teaching, learning and achievement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

A very large majority of parents and carers agree that their children are making good progress, and their views concur with the inspection findings. Students attain standards that are above average by the end of Key Stage 4. They perform particularly well in mathematics, where achievement has been consistently high over the last three years. Students also achieve well in the school's other specialist areas of science, which shows an improving trend, and modern foreign languages. In lessons, students work well both on their own and with others. Their strong oral skills mean they are good at providing clear explanations and sharing ideas with one another, which helps the learning of all. However, their presentation of written work is not always of as high a standard. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall because work is well matched to their needs and they receive carefully-targeted support. Practical approaches also support the learning of disabled students and those with special educational needs. In a Year 7 science lesson, for example, students with low prior attainment, including many with special educational needs and/or difficulties, enjoyed making circuits using lemons as 'wet batteries'. They soon picked up the link between the number of lemon halves they connected to a voltmeter and the voltage because of the very practical and visual nature of the work. This then enabled them to predict the voltage if they connected five lemon halves in a row. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others and are well represented amongst the higher attainers. Many students are exceeding their challenging targets which are based on

prior attainment. The school's leaders, supported by the best heads of subject, are, rightly, challenging staff to set even higher targets.

Students in the sixth form achieve well. Attainment is rising steadily with increasing numbers of students gaining the higher grades of A and B. Performance at AS level is particularly good and retention rates are high.

Quality of teaching

A high proportion of teaching seen was good and some was outstanding. Other evidence shows that this is the norm in the school. Lesson plans are successfully supported by a well-planned curriculum and identify clear learning outcomes. High-quality questioning deepens students' understanding. Teachers' strong knowledge of examination criteria is used well to help students understand what they need to do to meet, and often how to exceed, their targets.

In most lessons, students are actively engaged in interesting and relevant tasks, and discussion in pairs or group work are frequently used to support learning. A key difference between lessons that are outstanding and those that are good is that, in the former, teachers structure lessons so that students work far more independently. In many good lessons, there is a little too much input from teachers, leaving fewer opportunities for students to work things out for themselves. This also means that, in lessons where learning support assistants are present, they are occasionally hampered from continuing their good support for individuals and groups of students, usually disabled students and those with special educational needs. Teachers keep a close eye on how well students are working in lessons and this helps to maintain a good pace to their work. They also check understanding, clarify misconceptions and extend thinking as they move amongst students. Sometimes, however, they miss opportunities to extend and challenge students just that little bit further. This is another reason why some lessons, which nonetheless enable most students to make good progress, are not outstanding. Teaching in the sixth form and for students based in the dyslexia centre is consistently good and makes a positive contribution to their learning.

Many books show helpful comments from teachers on how students can improve their work. This, however, is not consistent practice and, at times, students are not clear on their next steps in learning. While the use of literacy is promoted effectively across the school, teachers do not always highlight errors in spelling and grammar when marking work. Teachers are increasingly involving students in peer- and self-assessment of their work. Parents, carers and pupils agree that teaching is good.

Teachers provide lots of opportunities for students to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. In a history lesson, for example, students were asked to think about what makes a good king, which gave them much food for thought.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour around the school is exemplary. They hold open doors for others and are polite and considerate to one another, and to adults including visitors. The very great majority of parents, carers and students are very positive about behaviour

at the school. Though a small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about lessons being disrupted by bad behaviour, there was no evidence, either from direct observations or elsewhere, to substantiate these. Lessons are calm and orderly, and behaviour records indicate that disruptions to lessons are very rare. Students suggested that, 'If our parents came to the school for the day, they would be impressed by how well-behaved we are.' And, 'I don't think parents know how quickly things are dealt with here.' Students certainly respond immediately to a look or the gentlest of reprimands from members of staff on the rare occasions they start to go off task or become a little too excited in lessons.

Students throughout the school, including in the dyslexia centre, get on with one another exceptionally well and show high levels of respect for others. Bullying is rare but is tackled swiftly and effectively should it occur. Students are aware that bullying of all kinds, including cyber-bullying, is wrong and work actively with the school to ensure that no form of bullying is tolerated. Students' behaviour is safe particularly in practical lessons such as science. They show a high degree of awareness of risk and automatically take the appropriate precaution.

The highly supportive and caring environment means that students with behavioural difficulties thrive, completing their education here successfully. One student noted, 'The school sticks with you - and has a long term project with a child to make sure they stay on course.' Attitudes to school and learning are exceptionally positive and this is evident in the above-average attendance rates, including in the sixth form.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has established a cohesive and effective senior leadership team whose members work well together to embed the school's vision and drive through key improvements. Middle leaders are being given increasing responsibility in relation to managing work in their areas and, in particular, to raise standards and students' achievement. Many are responding well and actively developing and improving provision. For example, the head of mathematics has initiated a good system for checking the quality of folders kept by sixth-form students. This is helping them to better manage the large amount of written work they do and the notes they need to keep. The head of the dyslexia centre is providing guidance to teaching staff in the main school on how to support the students from the centre in their lessons. She is now extending this guidance to local primary schools, to help students improve their achievement before they join the school. Some middle leaders are less proactive in managing their areas, especially in relation to monitoring and checking the quality of staff and students' work and promoting even higher standards.

Governors provide good oversight of the school's work and ensure that safeguarding requirements are met. They are particularly strong in checking how well the school is performing and in challenging senior leaders to do even better. As a result of this and the leadership of the staff, teaching and learning are becoming stronger. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. Good use of data to track progress has ensured that gaps in performance between different groups of students are not significant. The school is well placed to improve further.

The sixth form is well led and managed with excellent attention paid to enrichment

and personal development. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the whole school is actively promoted through both the good curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Students take a lead role in numerous fund-raising and community events. The school has made significant improvement since the last inspection on providing its students with opportunities to meet and work with those from backgrounds different to their own. This helps ensure that discrimination is not tolerated.

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.



26 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Mayflower High School, Billericay, CM12 0RT

Thank you for your polite and warm welcome to your school during our recent visit. We really enjoyed talking to you about your school and hearing your views.

Mayflower is a good school because it not only helps you to make good progress in your learning and achieve well, but it also enables you to enjoy a wide range of exciting enrichment and extra-curricular activities. These, together with the opportunities in lessons, make a significant contribution to your personal development. You rightly feel very safe in school. Your excellent behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning help you to achieve well, especially in mathematics. You express yourselves fluently, although the written presentation of your work is not always as good. We have asked the school to make sure that all teachers pick up on this when they mark your work and that written comments help you to understand the next steps you need to take in your learning.

Most of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teaching provides you with a wide range of activities which you enjoy and which enable you to learn. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and their questioning is very precise. This helps you to think more deeply about your work. To make teaching even better we have asked the school's leadership to make sure that time for active learning in lessons is maximised and that there are more opportunities to challenge and extend your thinking.

The headteacher, governing body and senior leaders provide good leadership. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that all middle leaders, such as heads of subject, are equally active in promoting improvement and in checking the quality of teaching and learning.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at Mayflower and keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Gulshanbir Kayembe
Lead inspector

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