

# Iffley Mead School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123338
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359414
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jon Carter

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	104
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cormac O'Hara
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kay Willett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 July 2008
<b>School address</b>	Iffley Turn Oxford OX4 4DU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons taught by 13 members of staff and held meetings with school leaders, two groups of students and a representative from the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, the school's analysis of students' progress, curriculum plans, minutes of governing body meetings and many other documents. Inspectors analysed the responses on questionnaires received from 35 parents and carers, 55 students and 32 staff.

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

- How well students are supported to overcome their learning and behavioural difficulties, realise their potential and achieve accredited qualifications that represent significant progress in their learning.
- How effectively school leaders are driving improvement in students' basic skills as preparation for future well-being, especially in information and communication technology (ICT).
- How effective sixth form provision is in building on students' achievements in Key Stage 4.

## Information about the school

Iffley Mead is a special school attended by students from across the county of Oxfordshire, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. The school admits students with moderate and complex learning difficulties who often have associated social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. An increasing proportion of students at the school have been assessed as having behavioural difficulties as their main need. Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced provision for sixth-form students. While the school has a designated age range of five to 19, there are currently no students on roll in Years 1 to 5. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The proportion of students who are not from White British backgrounds is broadly average. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Activemark 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

Iffley Mead is a good school with a clear focus on equipping students for life as independent citizens. Well-structured learning activities enable students to make good progress, especially in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Expertise in 'Restorative Approaches', a system which promotes problem-solving and discussion instead of blame and punishment, has been used very effectively to create an environment in which students feel exceptionally safe and behave well. The school's work to ensure that particularly vulnerable students make progress at similar rates to their peers is extremely successful.

Through outstanding care and support, and exceptionally effective partnerships with a comprehensive range of external agencies, students are helped to overcome their complex difficulties well and develop very positive attitudes to learning. As a result, students show outstanding levels of spiritual, moral and social development, for example through their enquiring comments and the respect they have for others. The success of the school in these areas is clear to parents and carers. One, writing about their child and echoing the views expressed by others, said: 'The school has not only looked after his education, but also helped him to develop as a whole person.'

In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress. This is starting to improve because of recent changes to how the provision is led and managed. While students in this part of the school benefit from the same high quality care as students in other year groups, the curriculum is not yet sufficiently well matched to their interests and aspirations to build strongly on the good progress they make in Key Stages 3 and 4. This is because there are not enough opportunities to develop basic skills and achieve accreditation in work-based contexts.

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and senior leaders of the school have developed strongly in their roles and have successfully established a culture of continual improvement which is shared by teaching and support staff throughout the school. There is good capacity to sustain this improvement because good systems for self-evaluation and planning for the future involve staff and members of the governing body at all levels. This ensures that the school's strengths and areas for development are thoroughly understood by all. Actions taken so far in response to such areas have been largely successful. Good quality teaching, for example, has been maintained during a period of staff change, due to very effective monitoring and support.

While many aspects of the school's practice have moved forward successfully, less emphasis has been placed upon addressing identified issues in the promotion of community cohesion. The issues relate particularly to securing better involvement of parents and carers in family learning to counter the effects of socio-economic deprivation.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the learning and progress of students in the sixth form through developing a curriculum which:
  - is sufficiently broad, balanced and diverse to better meet the range of needs, aspirations and interests of students
  - provides daily learning opportunities which effectively develop students' basic skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT
  - provides students with opportunities to participate in accredited work-related learning to enhance their future economic well-being.
- Promote improved community cohesion through activities which engage parents, carers, members of the governing body and staff in family learning opportunities.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Students usually make good progress in lessons because they are strongly engaged by the well-planned learning activities provided for them. They especially enjoy practical tasks, such as experiments in science and using computers, although they also usually approach written tasks with similar enthusiasm. Students' literacy skills develop well because teaching often makes good use of opportunities to read, write and discuss as they arise naturally during lessons. They demonstrate their increasing confidence and understanding of mathematics well, such as in a lesson where they used their knowledge of money to select items they could afford to buy and to calculate the change they would receive from a known amount. The use of ICT supports good learning in optional vocational courses in Key Stage 4, for example where Year 11 students demonstrated through digital photography their good understanding of threats to wildlife and their habitats.

Over time, students achieve levels of competence in basic skills which reflect good progress from their starting points. While attainment compared to all students nationally is low due to the students' learning difficulties, an increasing proportion of students are achieving entry level qualifications in English, mathematics and science. Vocational qualifications at Level 1 in land management and sports leadership were successfully achieved by all Year 11 students in 2010. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, those known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children make progress at similar rates to their peers.

Students consistently demonstrate a fascination with learning and have an increasing understanding of diversity and ethical issues, which is apparent in the respect they have for each other and the adults who work with them. The award of Activemark and Healthy School status supports the fact that many incorporate regular exercise into their lifestyle although, while they have a good understanding of what healthy eating means, there are fewer that successfully apply this knowledge to their daily lives.

The approach taken by the school to address undesirable behaviour through restorative principles has enabled students to learn to reflect upon their experiences. As a result, students are more aware of the consequences of their actions and their behaviour is usually at least good, both in lessons and around the school. They readily take on responsibilities within the school in roles such as mentors and have good relationships with the local community, especially in respect of their environmental work.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

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

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

## How effective is the provision?

Staff at the school ensure that the needs of the individual are at the heart of all they do. Teaching takes good account of the needs of individual students because information about their prior learning and the difficulties they experience is used very effectively when planning lessons. The specialist provision for those with, for example, speech and language or mental health needs is seen as an integral part of school life because of the way it is built into the timetable for those who require it.

Some teaching is exceptionally dynamic and engaging, such as in a drama lesson for Years 8 and 9, where students recounted a story based in Greece with enjoyment and enthusiasm. In such lessons, learning moves on quickly. Where lessons are less well paced, it is often because too much time is spent having to listen to the teacher before starting independent work. Teachers have a good understanding of how to use technology such as interactive whiteboards and these are used at appropriate times for suitable activities. Occasionally, teaching assistants are not sufficiently well directed, which reduces the impact they have on students' learning.

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Students strongly value the outstanding quality of care they receive from staff and relationships are exceptionally strong. When asked to describe this aspect of her school, one student said: 'It's actually brilliant.' Safe space and responsive help to overcome problems are available at all times to supplement planned support activities. The school's principle of integrating the work of external support agencies into school life that is most noticeable to visitors are the 'Pets As Therapy' dogs, who support students' emotional well-being and help develop a sense of responsibility. Highly effective transition arrangements ensure that students joining the school are successful and happy. The school's focus on preparing students for their continuing education or working lives ensures that they receive very effective guidance at appropriate stages of their school life. Consequently, all students leaving Key Stage 4 at the end of 2010 went on to further education, employment or other suitable training.

Students have access to a broad and well-organised curriculum which provides relevant learning opportunities for everyone. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 4, where opportunities for individuals are particularly flexible and students can choose from a range of optional subjects, such as 'build a band' and 'gardener's world'. These lessons utilise the strengths of staff and build strongly upon the interests of students. Off-site and residential activities, such as the Atlantic College trip, foster personal development and promote independence well.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have the confidence of staff at all levels. This has been established through regular and open communication and has ensured that there is a strong and corporate approach to securing improvement based on high expectations. Routine monitoring of how well students progress in their academic and personal skills is evaluated robustly and drives plans for improvement which are usually implemented quickly and effectively. In response to one such evaluation, recent changes to leadership are starting to have a positive impact in science and ICT, where more appropriate curriculum planning and accreditation is leading to improved outcomes for students.

The governing body provides good quality support and challenge to the school. They have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths of the school and what it needs to do to continue to improve. Safeguarding procedures are well established. Staff and members of the governing body receive appropriate and regular training, and management systems are secure. The school works effectively with appropriate external agencies to ensure that

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the most vulnerable children are provided with suitable care and support so that their complex needs are well met.

The school's effectiveness in promoting equality and eliminating discrimination is outstanding. Monitoring of the progress and welfare of students in vulnerable groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, shows that they learn and develop as well as their peers. Restorative practice ensures that relationships between students of different heritages are extremely positive and there are very few incidents of racist behaviour.

While school leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds of the students, plans to address the main issues that they have identified have not been a priority for the school in comparison, for example, to securing the quality of teaching and learning and improving leadership of the sixth form. Consequently, the effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion is not more than satisfactory.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Sixth form**

Learning and progress for students in the sixth form are satisfactory and improving under new leadership arrangements put in place at the beginning of this school year. Tracking and monitoring systems, which previously lacked rigour, are now more secure. This has enabled clear plans to be made to address weaknesses and improve provision. While school leaders have developed a balanced curriculum which provides some choice to students, they recognise that this is often driven by the number of places available on a particular course rather than the actual level of interest shown by students. Programmes for developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills often offer similar learning to, rather than building upon, students' work at Key Stage 4 and are not yet part of the daily programme.



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Strong links have been established with employers providing work experience opportunities, who have positive views of the students that are placed with them. However, while courses provided at the school and in partnership with the local college are accredited, work-related learning activities are not. In this respect, students' perceptions of their value is less positive.

Students in the sixth form develop sensible and mature attitudes, particularly to looking after their personal well-being, and they display appropriate concern and respect for others.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was broadly average. They are exceptionally supportive of the school. Few questionnaires included additional written comments. Those parents and carers who did provide a comment mainly wrote positively about the care provided for their child by the school, a view endorsed by the inspection team.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Iffley Mead 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 104 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	77	7	20	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	80	6	17	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	66	11	31	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	63	11	31	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	46	18	51	0	0	0	0
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)	21	60	12	34	1	3	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	60	13	37	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	71	9	26	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	77	8	23	0	0	0	0

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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 November 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Iffley Mead School, Oxford OX4 4DU**

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome that you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We were pleased to see so many of you enjoying your lessons and working hard.

I am writing to tell you that you go to a good school. We describe the care at your school as 'outstanding' because it would be hard to make it much better. You told us that the help you get makes you feel exceptionally safe at school. We could see that in lessons because everyone supported each other, even when someone made a mistake.

Most of you are learning well and making good progress. The older students, who are in the sixth form (which you call 'Post-16'), are making satisfactory progress. This means that they are not getting quite as much out of school as the rest of you. Your teachers have a good understanding of how well each of you is doing and what your strengths are. They also know what you need to improve and they are good at making sure your work helps you to get better at these things.

The teachers in charge of your school have some really good ideas about how to improve it. We have asked them to make sure that sixth form students do better by giving them more opportunities to do subjects like literacy and numeracy, as well as getting to study what they are really interested in.

We have also asked the teachers to give you and your families more opportunities to learn together.

You can all help by encouraging your parents and carers to take part in as many of the school's activities as they can.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter

Lead inspector

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