

Poole High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113907
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	357450
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1647
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs L Young
Headteacher	Mr Chris Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
School address	Harbin Campus Poole BH15 2BW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 40 lessons taught by different teachers, conducted one 'learning walk', and visited one tutorial group session and two assemblies. Meetings were held with groups of students, staff and two members of the governing body. Inspectors also looked at a range of documentation including policies, data and analyses, records of the school's monitoring, minutes of governing body meetings and questionnaires completed by 115 staff, 107 students and 303 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- the current attainment, quality of learning and progress of students across the school
- how well provision promotes equally strong outcomes for all students including less able girls and those at risk of underachieving
- the effectiveness of assessment practices in addressing underachievement
- the extent to which leaders and managers at all levels contribute to school improvement.

Information about the school

Poole High School is a larger than the average secondary school. It gained specialist status in business and enterprise in September 2009. Students come from a wide range of primary schools in the Poole area. Most are from a White British background but a few are from a range of minority ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average and the number with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. A well-below average proportion is known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved a number of awards including a Sportsmark. The headteacher has been in post since January 2009.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement, especially in English.

Staff, students and parents share a common view that the headteacher has reinvigorated the school, for example by achieving business and enterprise specialist status and by refocusing the school on the importance of teaching and learning. The restructured senior leadership team now has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and is providing effective leadership for middle leaders. All these measures are beginning to have a positive impact on students' attainment and progress, but change has not been rapid enough to reverse the decline identified at the last inspection and make up for the legacy of significant underachievement. Governors have not appreciated the extent of the school's underperformance. The school's development plan correctly identifies the areas for development, but proposed actions are not sufficiently set out against measurable success criteria. Consequently, evaluation does not focus rigorously enough on the impact of actions to ensure that all groups of students fulfill their potential. School data and evidence from lessons suggest that students are beginning to make better progress. In addition, attendance is now average and behaviour is good. While significant challenges remain, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

Students feel very safe in school, their personal skills are satisfactory and they appreciate the good care and support they are given. Attainment has been below or well below national averages for the last three years, notably in English. While there have been some small improvements, overall the gap between the school's results and the national average has widened. Low levels of literacy and a lack of independence in their learning, contribute to students' poor progress.

Teaching and the use of assessment are satisfactory. While some good teaching was observed, there is not enough of it to accelerate progress and enable students to make up for past low attainment. Planning rarely takes account of assessment information to meet students' different abilities and learning needs. Lessons rarely excite students or engage them sufficiently in their learning because teaching strategies are limited. There are too few opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning and teachers' questioning does not consistently develop their oracy and literacy.

◆ The school has worked hard to put in place a comprehensive tracking system. At regular intervals, this closely monitors the progress of students towards targets individually and across subjects. However, there has been insufficient focus on, and

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analysis of, the performance of groups to ensure equally strong outcomes for all students. As a result, provision has not been adapted rapidly to address weaknesses in students' learning and secure at least expected progress. Although work is regularly marked, the quality of written comments is uneven such that students are unclear how to reach the next grade. Responses to the parental questionnaires indicate that parents and carers would welcome more information about students' progress and how to support their child's learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to raise attainment, especially in English, by:
 - improving planning so that teachers take full account of information about the achievement of individuals and groups of students, so that teaching meets the learning needs of all
 - using a greater variety of resources, activities and contexts to make learning more interesting and engaging for all students
 - ensuring students can work independently, show initiative and take responsibility for their learning
 - providing informative feedback to students so they clearly understand how to improve
 - taking every opportunity in lessons across all subjects to develop students' oracy and literacy
 - involving parents and carers more in students' learning.
- Improve school monitoring and development planning at all levels to ensure all students have the opportunity to do as well as they are able to, by:
 - including measurable success criteria so that the progress can be accurately judged and used to inform future actions
 - developing the new tracking system so that the outcomes for all groups of students are closely monitored
 - using monitoring data so that leaders and managers at all levels can continually adapt provision to meet the needs of all groups.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

When students join the school in Year 8 their prior attainment is just below the national average. As they move through the school they make insufficient progress so that when they leave in Year 11 their attainment, despite some small rises over time, is below average overall and significantly below in several subjects, most notably in English. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C has been below the national averages since the last inspection, and the unvalidated GCSE results indicate that this fell further in 2010 with particularly low results in English. However, more than the average proportion of students achieve five or more A* to G grades and

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results in a few subjects such as physical education and art are close to or above national averages.

Recent school data, including GCSE module results, indicate improvement. Observation of learning in lessons also shows that, for many students, learning is improving and that their current progress is satisfactory, although there is variation within and across subjects. Students enjoy being at school but most students in the main school are not excited by, or willing to take responsibility for, their own learning. There are exceptions to this, and when lessons offer a variety of tasks and stimulating resources, students' engagement rises and with it their progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.

In general, students are amenable, but not independent learners. Behaviour observed in lessons, as well as around the school, was good and students show courtesy and consideration for each other. Students understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle but do not always choose to put this understanding into practice. Students feel very safe, and they are confident that any difficulties will be promptly and effectively resolved either by staff or by student mentors. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, although there are too few opportunities for spiritual reflection.

◆ Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory as a result of the school's focus on persistent absence, although this remains higher than the national average. Students have sound information and communication technology skills and new cross-curricular learning events, some associated with the business and enterprise specialism, are enabling them to develop team and other work-based skills.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

How effective is the provision?

Almost all teaching is satisfactory, and a small minority is good. When teaching challenges and involves students they make the progress expected. However, weaker teaching can quickly result in deteriorating behaviour. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and form good relationships with students. Students say they appreciate the help teachers give them but, when asked in lessons, most were unsure what they needed to do to improve. Students' independent learning skills are not well developed because they are not given sufficient opportunities to take the initiative in their learning. As a result, out of lessons they often find it difficult to work effectively on their own, for example when revising or taking examinations. In too many lessons, activities are not varied or interesting enough to develop students' enthusiasm for learning. Teachers frequently use questioning, but too often they accept short answers that do not develop students' oracy and literacy: they do not involve all students or effectively use students' responses to consolidate and extend learning.

Teachers accurately assess students both in lessons and through their written work. They understand the new personal minimum and aspirational targets set by the school and the monitoring of students' progress has improved significantly. However, not enough use is made of this and other achievement information to plan and teach lessons. As a result, too often teaching is aimed at one level of ability, not catering for the most or least able

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students. Notable exceptions to this are in art and physical education, where teachers respond effectively to the varying needs of students.

The curriculum has been developed at Key Stage 4 to include a wider range of vocational subjects including Diplomas and BTEC courses. These are helping to improve students' achievement. Support for literacy is developing, with a determined approach to make improvements in all subjects, but the impact of this support is not yet apparent. The majority of students participate in a reasonable range of enrichment activities, particularly in sport, although levels of participation decline as students move through the school.

Care, guidance and support are good. The house system is a strength and students say there is always someone there to listen or support them. The school's work with outside agencies to support students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and those who need additional help is good. Students are guided well at transition points, with targeted work to aid some Year 9 students into Key Stage 4. Students comment very positively on the impartial support and guidance they receive for post-16 choices.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has made every effort to include all school staff in changing the culture of the school so that it focuses on teaching and learning and students' outcomes. However, leaders and other staff have not acted rapidly enough to arrest the decline in progress identified at the last inspection. This said, the decline in GCSE results in 2010 have acted as an impetus to leaders at all levels who have investigated the reasons behind it. As a result, middle leaders are beginning to take responsibility for students' achievement in their areas and there are already indications that academic results will be better in the coming year.

Self-evaluation is reasonably accurate and has appropriately identified the areas for improvement which inform development plans. However, since there are few measurable success criteria to ensure that all students do as well as possible, it is difficult for leaders to adapt the provision suitably. A new whole-school policy for teaching and learning has been put in place to underpin its improvement and the school's judgement about the quality of teaching is accurate. A lesson observation system has been developed and newly formed department networks are enabling good practice to be shared. However, these have yet to have significant impact on the quality of teaching and students' progress. The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination through its improving curriculum and the good care and guidance given to vulnerable students. However, it is

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inadequate overall because of the variation in achievement between different groups of students and subjects.

All aspects of safeguarding, including child protection, have been improved and there is a good understanding of what is needed and good application at all levels. The school satisfactorily promotes community cohesion, although more strongly locally than nationally, and has yet to fully evaluate the impact of its actions. In the past there has been very little partnership working, but this is changing with the specialist status helping to extend the curriculum.

Governance is inadequate because, during the period since the last inspection, the governing body did not sufficiently challenge students' poor performance, monitor the effectiveness of action plans to raise it or ensure equality of opportunity for all. Recent governor training, restructuring and a new focus on teaching and learning appear to be addressing this. Financial management is secure but the inadequate outcomes mean that the school is not giving value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Sixth form

The sixth form, known as the 'Senior School', takes almost all its students from Year 11. Overall they make good progress from their lower than average starting points so that by the end of their A-level courses their attainment is close to the national average. There is some variation in performance, both in and between subjects, and fewer students than expected achieve the highest grades. Students are mature and articulate and the majority remain until the end of their courses. Students enjoy sixth-form life, work well together and benefit from better teaching and higher expectations than they experienced in the

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main school. They are expected to take an active role in school life, for example as leaders of Young Forum or as mentors to younger students. ♦

♦ The improved sixth-form area provides good facilities, including access to computers for study, although students feel they could do with more space. Teachers have good subject knowledge, but, as in the main school, independent learning is not sufficiently promoted in lessons. The curriculum is a good mix of vocational and academic courses, well matched to students' abilities and interests, and includes BTEC courses as well as opportunities to retake GCSE examinations. Progress is tracked and students have a good understanding of what their examination grades should be and where they are in the journey towards attaining them. They have good relationships with staff and value the regular feedback and additional help they receive from teachers and tutors. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive good care, guidance and support and almost all progress to university, employment or training. Systems to monitor attendance have improved so that it is now satisfactory. The leadership has recently been strengthened and a greater focus on evaluating and addressing variations in performance is beginning to have a positive impact on students' achievement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire or by telephone were very supportive of the school and almost all felt that their child was safe. However, some raised concerns about communication and the quality of teaching; some felt they were not sufficiently informed about their child's progress or helped to support their child's learning. Inspection evidence supported some of these views which have been included in the points for improvement. Some parents and carers also expressed concerns about students' behaviour. During the inspection, around the school and in lessons, behaviour was good and the number of incidents of poor behaviour has fallen.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Poole High 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 303 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,647 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	37	178	59	11	4	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	117	39	181	60	2	1	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	120	40	157	52	19	6	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	98	32	179	59	15	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	98	32	191	63	5	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	76	25	196	65	17	6	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	21	205	68	21	7	1	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)	83	27	189	62	8	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	89	29	195	64	10	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	94	31	172	57	15	5	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	21	191	63	15	5	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	125	41	158	52	7	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	144	48	147	49	10	3	2	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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). 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">■ 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.

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.



5 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Poole High School, Poole BH15 2BW

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and sharing your views with us in meetings, lessons and around the school. We are concerned that you are not achieving as well as you might, so we have given the school a 'notice to improve'. This means that there will be another inspection in 12 to 16 months or so and, in the meantime, inspectors will visit the school to check it improves. ♦ Here is a summary of our main judgements.

- The teaching you receive is satisfactory and good in some lessons. However, you sometimes rely too much on your teachers and have difficulty working on your own or taking initiative in your own learning.
- By the end of Year 11 your attainment is below or well below the national averages, notably in English. However, there are some signs that this is improving.
- You behave well and show considerable respect for each other.
- You say you feel safe in school because you receive good care and support.
- You enjoy life in the sixth form and make better progress there because of the good teaching and higher expectations.
- Most of you enjoy coming to school and say you like the good facilities.
- Your attendance has improved and it is now satisfactory.

To help the school improve we have asked senior leaders to:

- raise your achievement, especially in English, by improving the quality of teaching and encouraging you to take more responsibility for your own learning
- improve school monitoring and development planning at all levels so that you can all fulfill your potential.

You can all help, for example, by further improving attendance and working to become more independent learners.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett Her Majesty's Inspector

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