

Mill Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113001
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	378629
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	1156
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex Wood
Headteacher	Sarah Graham
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2009
School address	Peasehill Ripley Derbyshire DE5 3JQ
Telephone number	01773 746334
Fax number	01773 570685
Email address	enquiries@millhill.derbyshire.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	12–13 October 2011
Inspection number	378629

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 38 teachers, visiting 38 lessons. Seven of the lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the analysis and tracking of students' progress, records of lesson observations, students' work, and a wide range of other policies and school documents. The inspection team received 117 completed questionnaires from parents and carers, and scrutinised questionnaires completed by students and staff.

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

- The achievement of students in mathematics.
- The extent to which the school's provision meets the needs of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management in tackling underperformance and promoting improvements in teaching and learning.
- The rigour with which the sixth form is monitored and evaluated to bring about improvements.

Information about the school

Mill Hill is a larger than average school. Almost all its students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has achieved a number of national awards, including Healthy Schools status, Gold Artsmark, Investors in People and the Eco-Schools Silver award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Mill Hill is a satisfactory school with a satisfactory sixth form. It has improved significantly in some areas of its work. It has some good features and the ambition of the headteacher is bringing about some important changes to the culture of the school and raising the expectations of students and staff.

Achievement is improving and is now satisfactory. The school obtained its best ever GCSE results in 2011 with 93% of students gaining five A* to C grades, although when English and mathematics are included the results were broadly average. Students made outstanding progress in English, but in mathematics results have not been as good as in other subjects due to changes in subject leadership and inconsistency in teaching. Since the last inspection a number of developments have contributed to the improving overall picture. Identified strategies to improve attendance and behaviour have successfully led to above average attendance and good behaviour. Changes to the curriculum have ensured that it meets students' needs well, so all leave with a qualification. In addition good care, guidance and support have enabled students to receive targeted support and led to improvements in their personal development. Students feel safe in school and enjoy good relationships with staff. They make a good contribution to the school and local community by, for example, producing art displays for a local hospital, the eco group planting a thousand bulbs in the community, and volunteers working with a local radio show. Many strong partnerships with local colleges and other agencies enhance provision for all, and ensure effective support for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Teaching has improved and this is reflected in the satisfactory or better progress seen in lessons. Inspectors also observed a small minority of outstanding teaching. There remain insufficient opportunities for independent learning so that students can take more responsibility for their work. Not all teaching meets the varying needs of individual students sufficiently well because lessons sometimes do not contain enough challenge for the most able students, or enough support and structure for those students who are struggling. Provision in the sixth form is also improving, but recent initiatives have not yet had an impact on student outcomes.

The headteacher provides clear direction and has managed the school well though a period of change. Target setting is challenging and the robust use of data is helping to identify underachievement early so that action can be taken. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for development

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

and are successfully accelerating the pace of improvement. There is a good track record of improvements and the school has a good capacity to sustain current levels of performance and improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise attainment and the rate of progress students make in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - all teachers take every opportunity to reinforce numeracy skills whenever appropriate across the curriculum
 - good practice from other curriculum area leaders is used to develop the leadership in mathematics

- Improve the quality of learning in the main school and sixth form so that at least three quarters of lessons are judged good or better, by ensuring that:
 - work is consistently well matched to students' individual abilities and needs
 - opportunities for active learning and independent learning are routinely built into lessons
 - lessons are consistently taught with good pace and challenge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with broadly average attainment and make satisfactory progress during their time at the school. There has been a marked improvement in attainment. The percentage gaining two science GCSEs and A* to A grades has also risen over the last few years. Standards are continuing to rise because many students in the current Year 11 have already gained, through early entry examination, a grade C or above in English and mathematics. The progress of different groups is carefully tracked. As a result, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress broadly in line with what is expected. Students who are at the 'school action plus' level of support have not progressed as rapidly as their peers in the past, often because alternative courses outside the school did not meet their needs. Changes to the curriculum have addressed these issues and the current progress of 'school action plus' students shows more on track to achieve or exceed their targets, particularly lower down the school. Where teaching assistants attend lessons they support individual needs effectively, but when they are not there teachers sometimes struggle to provide specific support and tasks for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspectors' own observations showed progress in lessons to be satisfactory and in some lessons good. Students generally have good attitudes to learning and develop

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

skills and knowledge appropriately. They are responsive to their teachers' encouragement and willing to share ideas and show their understanding of the work. Learning was good when teachers used questioning effectively to ensure students give reasons for their answers. In an outstanding lesson, learning was impressive because students were presenting their ideas and challenging each other.

Students say that the premises are very secure and staff are very visible during the break and lunchtime. They feel confident that adults in school will deal with bullying/name calling effectively and that everyone in school has an adult they can turn to for help. Behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Students are courteous and polite to visitors, demonstrating their good social skills in interacting with adults. Students are encouraged to live healthily. There is a high take-up of school meals and sport. An Olympic week of activities involved close to 300 students. Their basic skills are strong in literacy and information and communication technology, and developing in numeracy. A financial qualification is currently being undertaken by 150 students in Year 11 to improve their numeracy skills.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students recognise right from wrong and this is demonstrated by the range of charities they involve themselves in, and the supportive activities they engage in with their fellow tutor group members and across the school. Students participate in a range of activities on 'super learning days' that bring them in contact with adults in different situations. They involve themselves in a range of activities and events outside the curriculum, further developing their social skills. Students gain an understanding of national and international diversity, but have limited opportunities to interact with young people from other cultures not represented in the school or local community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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

The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and use a suitable range of learning activities to promote learning. In the best lessons, teachers provide memorable opportunities for students to learn actively and independently, and experience the chance to speak, listen and think together. This is supporting them to be highly effective learners, as seen in an environmental geography lesson where students keenly led the majority of the lesson. In a textiles lesson, students were supported to make exceptionally swift progress with printing skills and the application of their newly acquired understanding. Opportunities to assess by questioning are well used and teachers are thoughtful in what they ask, relating their guidance back to the learning objectives of the lesson. Where assessment was less effective, lesson planning did not take prior learning or ability into account, so as to secure challenge and meet the needs of students who are less able. In the weaker lessons teachers often spoke for too long or led and directed too much, so that students often sat passively. Opportunities for active learning are not yet a common feature of lessons.

At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is well organised and provides a broad range of options to meet the needs of all learners. For example, triple science, early entry options, vocational courses and alternative courses for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. At Key Stage 3, students start GCSEs in Year 9 in all subjects. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities with good uptake. Trips and visits enhance provision with opportunities to travel abroad.

The arrangements made for entry to the school are good, with many opportunities for interaction with primary schools and prospective parents and carers. As a result, students settle quickly. There is a good range of support for students who fall behind with their work and those who need additional guidance. Effective partnerships are established with a range of agencies to extend the breadth of support and guidance which the school is able to offer. The school has successfully improved attendance and works hard with those who are persistently absent so that this group is reducing gradually in number. The work of the Open Learning Centre is particularly helpful and viewed positively by students. Particularly good is the help provided to students returning from exclusion to reintegrate and catch up.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Purposeful leadership has brought about many improvements in the school’s work since the last inspection. There is a sharp focus on the use of performance data to track students’ progress. Effective quality assurance methods introduced by the headteacher and their successful adoption by a majority of middle leaders are leading to rigorous self-evaluation and stronger mechanisms of accountability. Middle leaders have grown in confidence, demonstrating a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities for driving improvement at subject level. The headteacher has wisely paired up curriculum area leaders where performance is strongest to coach subjects which are not improving at a fast enough rate. The monitoring of teaching and learning is robust and accurate. Coherent plans to raise the quality of teaching have started to improve standards. Effective action has been taken to support and challenge staff where satisfactory or inadequate teaching has been observed.

Procedures for safeguarding are good. Procedures for child protection are well established and staff training is comprehensive and up to date, enabling staff to identify when students are at risk. The governing body and senior leaders prioritise safety on the school site. The governing body is well informed and has a stronger focus on academic success alongside the well-being of students. It holds curriculum area leaders to account through regular presentations to the governing body and at meetings with the headteacher. It celebrates the successes the school is having, but is realistic that there is more to do. The school communicates effectively with parents and carers, especially those who are hard to reach. There are half termly parent forums, and regular use of text messages keeps them up to date.

Equality of opportunity and inclusion are high on the school’s agenda. The school’s robust tracking systems allow it to analyse the performance of different groups of students through its monitoring process. This is allowing it to drive interventions to reduce the gap between groups, with some success. There are some strengths in community cohesion relating to the internal and local community, with which the school engages well through its partnerships. International links are being developed and current experiences relate to trips and activities that take students abroad. Although the school has identified a weakness in its community cohesion action plan related to broader British diversity, it has not yet compiled substantial plans to provide suitable opportunities for students to resolve this issue.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the	2

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

school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Sixth form

Numbers in the sixth form are increasing and the vast majority of students stay on until the end of the two-year course. Attainment is broadly average and students make satisfactory progress. The most recent results show considerable variation in progress between subjects, particularly in Year 13. In response to this, sixth form leaders have recently introduced rigorous systems to track students’ progress and to enable teachers to set more challenging targets. Students receive improved guidance to ensure that their subject choices are better matched to their abilities and talents. Students are good role models to younger pupils. They are making an increasingly important contribution to the life of the school and are keen to take on responsibility. They mentor younger students and organise the popular ‘Glee Club’. Relationships between students and teachers and between the students themselves are relaxed and conducive to a pleasant and productive learning environment. The recent focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning is starting to bear fruit. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and make better use of assessment to ensure that students know how to improve their work. In the more successful lessons there are many opportunities for students to work independently or in groups.

The sixth form curriculum has recently been augmented by additional vocational courses and an enrichment programme. The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme has proved to be a very popular activity. Students’ aspirations and requirements are constantly under review. Students speak very highly of the good support and guidance they receive in their studies and in their higher education and career choices. Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. The new leaders are enthusiastic and have been responsible for many initiatives, but it is too early for these to have had a noticeable impact on outcomes for students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3

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

The quality of provision in the sixth form Leadership and management of the sixth form	3
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of responses was below that normally seen for a secondary school, but the parents and carers who returned them were generally positive and said their child enjoyed school. A few responses highlighted issues which were considered as part of the inspection. Inspectors judged the school has effective policies with regard to behaviour and procedures are followed consistently, contributing to the good behaviour of the students. The school has consulted parents and carers on a number of issues, including school meals, times of the school day and uniform. Senior leaders have acted on suggestions and concerns accordingly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mill Hill 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 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1156 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	28	75	64	5	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	33	68	58	7	6	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	24	21	77	66	9	8	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	28	68	58	5	4	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	25	21	74	63	6	5	3	3
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	27	23	74	63	8	7	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	15	72	62	20	17	2	2
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)	23	20	74	63	7	6	2	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	27	23	77	66	8	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	16	69	59	18	15	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	15	60	51	20	17	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	18	15	71	61	12	10	5	4
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	32	27	69	59	5	4	2	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 8 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Mill Hill School, Ripley, DE5 3JQ

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome at your school. We all enjoyed talking with you and you helped us to find out about your school, which is satisfactory and rapidly improving. The headteacher and staff have worked hard to bring about many improvements. Here are some good things we found out about it.

- Staff know each student well and work hard to care for and support you.
- You enjoy school, feel safe and behave well.
- Your attendance has improved and is now good.
- You make a good contribution to the school and local community.
- GCSE results have improved significantly and in 2011 the school had its best ever results.
- In English you make outstanding progress.
- The curriculum increasingly offers you a broad range of courses which suit your needs and abilities well.
- There are many strong partnerships with local colleges and other agencies, all of which bring you many benefits and support you academic and personal development.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements.

- Continue to raise attainment and the rate of progress you make in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of learning in the main school and sixth form so that at least three quarters of lessons are good or better.

You have your part to play by continuing to behave well, by working as hard as you can and by taking an active part in lessons. We wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**