

Manshead CofE VA Upper School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109705
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	377971
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Middleton HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1094
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Hughes
Headteacher	Jim Parker
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2008
School address	Dunstable Road Luton LU1 4BB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 46 lessons, observing 44 different teachers. The support bases for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and school assemblies were also visited. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders and managers, the Chair and Chair-elect of the Governing Body, and staff. Discussions were held with groups of students in Years 9 to 13, with their work, and included boys and girls of different abilities, curriculum interests and responsibilities. Inspectors analysed 130 questionnaires received from parents and carers, 87 from teaching and support staff and 123 questionnaires from students.

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

- Are students making a sufficiently strong start in Year 9 and are different groups of students progressing equally well?
- Are improvements in teaching and learning widespread and are students on the right courses as a result of appropriate information and guidance?
- Are targets sufficiently challenging and are the actions required to sustain recent improvements implemented by all?

Information about the school

Manshead Church of England Voluntary Aided Upper School is an average sized upper school. Most students are White British. A below average proportion is from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. There are currently eight students supported by specially resourced provision for students with autism spectrum disorder. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average.

The school was awarded specialist status in science and mathematics in 2004. The school's awards include Artsmark.

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

Manshead is a school that provides good opportunities for students to succeed, in a supportive and collegiate environment. The performance of boys and girls across the school is satisfactory and improving. Effective initiatives designed to increase attendance, improve behaviour and raise standards through better teaching demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. However, overall effectiveness is satisfactory because variations in the rate of students' progress as they move between year groups and subjects, has limited the achievement of higher grades.

Partnerships with highly successful schools reflect the determination of the leadership team to set high expectations for students and staff. The impact on transforming weaker areas of provision into strengths is evident. For example, in English, where standards have risen sharply improvement is underpinned by the skilled use of assessment to diagnose individual needs, to shape teaching and target interventions. In other subjects that consistently attain above average standards, for example design and technology, students are highly motivated because clear, constant and critical feedback is provided within a context of engaging subject matter and teaching methods. Although the very best approaches, particularly in the use of assessment, are not yet widespread, the work of talented staff working as an 'improvement team' is proving effective. In areas such as science, where improvements have been slow, recruitment of new staff is helping to quicken the pace. A challenging but supportive rapport between the senior team and the governing body successfully promotes a culture of positivity, pride and improvement. However, it is the skill of middle leaders in building a strong team of teaching and support staff that has proven to be of paramount importance in overcoming difficulties in staff recruitment which have slowed the school's improvement in the past. The limited impetus provided by the school's specialist status is improving gradually. However, the positive impact of the school's resource based provision on the progress of students with autism spectrum disorder is a significant strength.

Good teaching is now the norm. Overall curriculum provision is good. However, the quality of teaching and the opportunities for students to specialise improve as students move through the school. Provision is best where it is tailored to students' individual needs. Many teachers excel in their sixth form teaching, where lessons are pitched appropriately, support is personalised and courses are often closely linked to career aspirations. However, not enough of the school's best practice meets students' needs starting in Year 9, for example, through early intervention for gifted and talented students or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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Effective pastoral liaison with middle schools, coupled with the grouping of students in Years 9 to 11 in small groups led by a learning guide, ensures that students feel safe and supported throughout. Nevertheless, curriculum continuity, particularly with the earlier parts of Key Stage 3, is underdeveloped. So too are the daily sessions managed by learning guides, where there are missed opportunities to involve students in collaborative work across years and subjects. Initiatives designed to improve collaboration between school and home are increasing: responses to the questionnaire indicated that communication has improved; computer-aided resources to support students' learning out of school have expanded; opportunities to discuss students' progress with staff in community centres have started. However, examples of good guidance given to students about working independently, and optional opportunities to improve grades that are not taken, indicate there is still more to do.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of students to consistently above national averages by:
 - diagnosing students' individual strengths and weaknesses early in order to differentiate levels of challenge and support for all from the start
 - focusing work with feeder schools on strengthening curriculum continuity and moderating standards, particularly on transition from Years 8 to 9
 - focusing students' time with their learning guides on working individually and collaboratively to capitalise on strengths and overcome any difficulties
 - enhancing mentoring and enrichment for staff and students, where subject teams are less experienced or effective, for example, in science
 - increasing opportunities for staff to share and learn from best practice, particularly in the use of assessment, including target-setting and marking
 - working with harder to reach parents and carers, to support students' lesson preparation or follow-up, and participation in optional sessions.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Achievement is satisfactory. Students start at the school with levels of attainment nationally expected for their age. GCSE results improved between 2009 and 2011 to reach average standards. The proportion of students attaining five or more A*-C grades at 76% was broadly average. English and Mathematics GCSE results also improved to the national average. The school's tracking data indicates that the performance of students currently in Year 11 is set to sustain improvements, in line with targets that are suitably challenging. The lessons observed by inspectors and scrutiny of students' work indicate much learning that is good; teaching is effective in ensuring that students are motivated and engaged. However, the impact of good teaching on students' progress throughout their time at Manshead, to reach above

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average examinations results, remains unproven overall. Students’ consistently good progress and above average GCSE results in business studies, design and technology and modern languages shows what is possible. Girls and boys progress at similar rates. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is mixed: students with statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress; others make less progress than their peers. The timing and tailoring of support are critical factors; where progress of students with special educational needs/and or disabilities is less marked, late diagnosis of their needs delays the impact of interventions. The support bases promote good learning by focusing intensively on overcoming barriers to learning. However, other lessons observed showed that actions taken to increase opportunities to learn practically are effective in promoting inclusion and engagement by all student groups.

Students react responsibly to the teaching that invites active participation; behaviour is generally good. Lessons that involved students in demonstrating skills or sharing knowledge showed they are supportive to their peers, and positive about learning. Although an area of inconsistency, the most effective sessions led by learning guides also displayed cooperation, collaboration and growing confidence between year groups. The students interviewed valued the school community ethos that contributes to their sense of safety and support. They also make a good contribution to local and wider community partnerships, for example through their successful participation in leadership award schemes. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the popularity and success of subjects that involve physical and creative development, and in students’ reflection and readiness to debate issues of personal or common concern. While boys and girls showed a good grasp of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and why it matters, the fact that not all appear to apply it led some students that replied to the questionnaire to consider this an area for further attention. Since the last inspection, the proportion of students involved in work experience has increased, as has their attendance, both of which prepare them well for the world of work.

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

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

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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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The good quality of teaching shares a number of common features. Lessons are well planned, resources are attractive, tasks are time-limited and involve practical activity. Relationships between staff and students are professional, personable and positive. Questioning is used well to engage individual students and evaluate their understanding. The best teaching goes further, cultivating whole class interaction between students, for example by inviting individuals to add to, or probe, the responses made by others. In subjects where students achieve particularly well, the lessons also promote the subject through the learning environment created. For example, in a business studies lesson, a very professional computer presentation by the teacher modelled a business scenario well. Most lessons make the purpose of the lesson clear, but the best challenge students by indicating how to aspire to higher standards, for example by using examples or by modelling. Although the majority of teaching is now good and promotes learning well, evidence of the impact on students' progress over time is too inconsistent to say that the quality of learning and progress is better than satisfactory. The use of assessment is a contributory factor. Staff monitor students' progress regularly but not all stimulate progression equally well by designing assessments that test specific skills, knowledge or understanding as an integral part of lessons, adapting teaching intuitively. Nevertheless, staff with limited experience to draw on, are keen to refine this area of their work.

The curriculum meets students' needs increasingly well as they move through the school. A wide range of academic and vocational courses are offered, enhanced by extra-curricular opportunities. Sports and arts activities are particularly well supported by students and are also areas of the curriculum in which they do well. Students' personal development and workplace skills are promoted effectively through the curriculum; the popular and successful business studies courses combine well with enterprise initiatives and leadership awards. Positive views expressed by students about modern languages and 'European languages day' also stressed the importance of links between the curriculum in the classroom and wider experiences. However, curriculum continuity across Key Stage 3, to support students in making well-informed choices, is a weaker area of provision. Conversely, partnerships that promote progression into post-16 are strengths. The curriculum is good overall with evident links between course provision, extra-curricular enrichment and achievement.

All groups of students are given good quality care, guidance and support, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Pastoral liaison with middle

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schools and the system of grouping students in Years 9, 10 and 11 in small groups supported by a learning guide, enables students to integrate quickly. Nevertheless, not all sessions with learning guides are equally well focused on supporting students' learning and progress. There are good examples of student mentoring, but also some missed opportunities to add to the information and guidance provided by staff. In some subject areas, for example science, succinct guidance given to students, parents and carers helps to inform the advice given by non-specialist staff, including learning guides. Opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community exist from the start, for example through the college house and school council structure. Roles and responsibilities increase as students progress through the school. A range of agencies support the inclusion of students who may otherwise become disaffected.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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

How effective are leadership and management?

The effectiveness of leadership and management is good overall, strengthened since the last inspection by more experienced senior and middle leaders who are clear and passionate about their purpose, and confident through their proven track record. The vision for a good school, underpinned by 'student centred, achievement driven, personalised learning', is communicated clearly and consistently to staff and reinforced through the focus of improvement plans at all levels. The use of explicit, measurable success criteria is an area of variability. The senior team is outward-looking, willing to learn from and adapt practice that has proven successful elsewhere. Partnerships with other schools have a clear purpose linked to maximising resources. In this respect, work with the national network of specialist schools has proven effective, although the impact of the school's own specialist subjects is negligible. The importance of an ethos distinctive to Manshead nevertheless remains prominent; respect, responsibility, faith and compassion are values shared across the school community. Staff are loyal and morale is high, borne out by comments expressed by those that completed the staff questionnaire. Their support was overwhelmingly positive, although several thought that behaviour could be better managed and self-evaluation made more inclusive by increasing the involvement of staff.

Successful and less effective areas of the school's work are identified through accurate monitoring and evaluation. The judgements made by inspectors about the quality of teaching aligned with those made internally. Subject reviews involving

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lesson observations, scrutiny of work, interviews with students, and questionnaires, routinely inform the direction of staff and priorities of the governing body, who challenge and support the work well. Equality of opportunity and discrimination are tackled effectively, evident in the similar progress made by different student groups and low number of recorded incidents. While students, parents and carers expressed some concerns about the openness of the school site, safeguarding arrangements fulfil government requirements. Recent strategies to involve parents and carers who are less involved in school life have included opportunities to discuss students’ progress in their community centres. While these are indicative of the school’s commitment to better communication, it is too early to judge the engagement of parents and carers as better than satisfactory. The headteacher is at the early stages of leading an initiative to provide more cohesive education across the Manshead community of schools. This complements the school’s work to increase students’ outreach work locally and their awareness of more culturally diverse communities nearby. Both school and Ofsted questionnaires included replies from parents and carers of students new to the school, who were pleasantly surprised by Manshead indicating there is work to do in sharing the school’s achievements more widely.

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 school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

In relation to their starting points, students make good progress in the sixth form. Standards are rising and retention between Years 12 and 13 is improving. Good progression onto higher education courses and careers is evident. The proportion of A*-B grades is low, but increasing. Students enjoy their studies and make a positive contribution to school life through their roles and responsibilities, including leadership of arts and sports initiatives, and acting as learning buddies and mentors to younger

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girls and boys.

Teachers particularly enjoy their sixth form work and this is reflected in students’ positivity, participation in lessons and good attendance. The vast majority of sixth form lessons observed were judged good or better. Assessment was used more consistently and effectively than in the main school. This includes early use of information to ensure that targets at the start of Year 12 are both attainable and aspirational; the impact on progress made in 2011 in A2 courses is impressive. Wide course choices, offered in partnership with a local school, include a good range of academic and vocational opportunities that appeal to students’ interests and needs.

Infectious enthusiasm, efficiency and high expectations characterise the leadership of the sixth form, which is motivational to staff and students. Improved pastoral systems since the last inspection and specific improvements in sixth form teaching, contribute to students’ growing confidence, independence and initiative, qualities valued highly in higher education and employment. The school’s improvement planning, progress monitoring and feedback from students indicate good capacity to sustain and build on recent successes.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
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

The proportion of parents and carers who returned a response to the questionnaire was below average. Responses indicate general satisfaction with the school’s work. The main concerns expressed by parents and carers were about behaviour. Inspectors investigated these concerns. They took into account the first-hand evidence observed during the inspection, including observing and speaking to groups of students in lessons, in meetings and around the school site, and considered the documentary evidence provided by the school. The evidence enabled inspectors to judge behaviour as good. Some parents and carers also commented that they would like more information about how to help their children’s learning. School leaders valued this feedback and shared recent strategies to improve communication through the use of computer technology and visits to community centres.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Manshead CofE VA Upper 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 130 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1094 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	34	78	60	5	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	42	32	80	62	7	5	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	48	37	74	57	5	4	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	29	76	58	12	9	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	34	26	80	62	10	8	2	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	35	27	78	60	16	12	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	12	88	68	21	16	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)	42	32	68	52	8	6	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	37	28	79	61	7	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	19	77	59	19	15	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	20	77	59	12	9	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	44	34	75	58	10	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	54	42	69	53	5	4	1	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	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 08 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.



17 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Manshead CofE VA Upper School, Luton, LU1 4BB

On behalf of the inspectors who visited Manshead on 13 and 14 October, I would like to thank you for welcoming us into your school. We valued the opportunity to share your achievements and talk to you in discussion groups and lessons.

Your school is satisfactory and has the following good features:

- You receive good care, guidance and support which contribute to your sense of safety, security and being part of a community.
- You have a broad range of opportunities to pursue through the varied courses and awards available which meet your individual needs well.
- You make increasingly good progress as you move through the school and your sixth form is a good one.
- Your lessons are generally good, enabling you to develop interest, participate actively and enjoy your learning.
- Your attendance and achievements are improving, supported by regular monitoring of your progress.
- Your school is well led and managed by senior staff, subject leaders and governors who are adapting well approaches used in highly successful schools.

We have asked the school to support you in attaining higher standards by:

- Finding out earlier about things you find easy or difficult, working with middle schools more often to get Year 9 students off to a good start.
- Using time with your learning guide, your peers and students in different years who are also in your group, to help you learn from each others' experiences.
- Learning from the most successful subjects, and improvements made in English, in order to make all subjects equally successful.
- Using assessment approaches that provide you all with clear and regular feedback, and your parents and carers with information that enables them to help you.

Yours sincerely
Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector

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