

The Mark Way School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116641
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	388303
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2012
Lead inspector	Helen Barter

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Waldron
Headteacher	Lynda Strodder
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 July 2010
School address	Batchelors Barn Road Andover Hampshire SP10 1HR
Telephone number	01264 351835
Fax number	01264 366276
Email address	admin@markway.hants.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	25–26 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Helen Barter

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The school has been subject to special measures and monitored by the same Additional Inspector for the last four monitoring visits. On this fifth visit, the inspector observed 10 lessons taught by 10 teachers. All lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher, or a member of the senior management team. Discussions were held with the headteacher and the senior management team, the Chair and two representatives of the Governing Body, including the staff governor, and representatives from the local authority. Informal discussions were held with students. As this is a section 8 deemed section 5 inspection and no questionnaires are distributed, a meeting was held with a group of parents and carers to gauge their impression of the progress the school has made. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and action plans, its systems for monitoring and supporting teaching and learning, its systems for tracking students' progress, and the responses to the school's questionnaires for parents and carers and students, and checked that the school meets the requirements to ensure that students are safeguarded.

Information about the school

The Mark Way School is a smaller-than-average special school, which provides for students who have moderate learning difficulties. One quarter of students has additional behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties and a further 16 per cent has an autistic spectrum condition identified as their primary, joint, or additional need. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Three quarters of students are boys. Just over one third of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low, and very few students speak English as an additional language.

The school was placed in special measures in July 2010. Temporary headteachers were put in place for the 2011 summer and autumn terms. The local authority appointed an interim headteacher for one year from September 2011. A substantive headteacher was appointed in February 2012 and she has been working with the interim headteacher, senior management team, governing body and local authority in preparation for commencement of her post in September 2012. There have been some changes within the teaching staff since the school has been in special measures. The senior management team has remained the same, but individuals' roles and responsibilities have been redefined.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The Mark Way School is a satisfactory and improving school. Parents and carers say it has 'come on in leaps and bounds'. However, it is not yet a good school because teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure students make better than satisfactory progress. A few students who are persistently absent prevent the school from meeting its attendance target. The skills of all staff as leaders and managers are underdeveloped. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with an increasing proportion which is good. Students report that 'teachers now help you to learn'. Teaching has improved through rigorous monitoring, support for individual teachers, and focused professional development. Teachers' skills in measuring students' progress have improved because the school's data are now accurate.
- Achievement is now satisfactory for all students. However, progress in science has been slower to improve than in other subjects. The school's drive to improve reading has helped students to make significant gains in their reading age. The promotion of students' literacy, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across subjects is inconsistent.
- The behaviour of students is satisfactory. The school is now a calm learning environment and students say they are happier and feel safe. There have been no exclusions this year. The number of detentions has halved. Attendance is low but improving.
- The headteacher has provided inspiring leadership for the school during a period of significant change, while setting high expectations for the senior management team to secure its capacity in continuing the upward trend of school improvement under new leadership. It has been held to account rigorously in its role and has risen to the challenge. Staff morale is good and all have a shared vision for school improvement. Performance management

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processes are established, self-evaluation is accurate, and action planning is focused on the key priorities for future development. The governing body holds the school to account effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' progress and raise their attainment by:
 - ensuring the quality of teaching and provision for science continues to improve in the next academic year
 - developing students' literacy, mathematical and ICT skills in all subjects
 - ensuring students' potential is reached by entering them for accreditation in 2013 which is appropriately matched to their ability
 - ensuring that the best practice which exists in teaching is spread so that teaching is consistently good across the school.
- Improve the attendance of the small number of students who are persistently absent, and meet the school's attendance target of 94%, by:
 - persevering with the agreed policies and procedures
 - ensuring that students, parents and carers fully understand them.
- Ensure that the senior management team, in support of the new headteacher, continue to strengthen their impact on school improvement by:
 - further developing their active role in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching
 - developing the leadership and management skills of other staff.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most students feel that the school does all it can to help them do well. In a recent questionnaire, 100% of parents and carers agreed that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. Inspection evidence supports that view. Students now show considerable interest and enthusiasm for learning, responding well to practical activities and challenges to solve problems and think independently. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students researched, using the internet to find a suitably sized and priced garden shed, worked out the quantity of slabs needed to make wheelchair access, and calculated the correct spacing between plants. Year 10 pupils are enthused by improved teaching in design and technology, concentrating hard to create a half-butt joint in wood, using tools carefully and following instructions intently, while working as independently as possible.

Although attainment is low, students make progress in line with their peers nationally. The school's data show that a significant proportion of students now makes better than expected progress and that gaps in attainment are closing overall. The school has developed thorough systems for tracking students' progress, including the different groups within the school. As a result, staff are quick to identify

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any areas of underachievement. The school identified that progress in science was not improving at the same rate as in English and mathematics. Individual support for teaching and rigorous monitoring by senior managers have ensured that progress is now satisfactory for most students in science and the school's target is, rightly, for continued improvement. The school has secure evidence to show that all groups of students achieve as well as their peers, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, the very few who speak English as an additional language, and those in the care of the local authority.

Considerable effort has been focused on Years 10 and 11 to ensure these students catch up with the basic skills, knowledge, and understanding they should have learned in previous years. That has been successful in increasing the students' rate of progress. Accreditation in adult literacy and numeracy has helped a number of students to achieve who were otherwise not sufficiently prepared to undertake GCSEs successfully. Improved awareness of students' capabilities is leading to further changes, with plans to increase the numbers of students taking GCSEs and entry-level qualifications in a wider range of subjects next academic year. There is growing evidence of yearly improvement in results. This year, all students will leave the school with external accreditation in English and mathematics, with all going to college or work.

Quality of teaching

Almost all of the parents and carers responding to the school's questionnaire feel that teaching is effective. Inspection evidence shows that there are increasing strengths in teaching, but, overall, it is satisfactory because the content of some lessons does not ensure that the needs of every individual student are always being met. Nevertheless, senior leaders have been successful in ensuring that most, but not all aspects of teaching are now consistent. Regular monitoring has ensured that teachers' planning is thorough and many use assessment data effectively to plan activities that meet students' needs. Feedback to students, through marking, is now matched to their targets better. Students are engaged well in the assessment process, monitoring their own progress through their levels which are displayed on walls. Learning intentions are made explicit, so students know exactly what to do to achieve their targets. Teachers refer to them frequently, so that students can check how well they are doing. Teachers, generally, know students well and many use questioning effectively to check students' understanding. End-of-lesson reviews show that students know the level at which they work and what they need to do to improve.

In the best lessons, teachers make an effort to excite and motivate students and to match work closely to their needs. In history, Year 7 students developed speaking and listening skills well, when keenly recalling many facts about the Plague. They applied literacy skills to write a 'diary', with good written outcomes. In a Year 10 English lesson, students concentrated very well, improving their knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and how to make nouns into plurals. The school's introduction of regular reading sessions and increasing use of phonics and spelling of

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frequently used words is leading to improvement in students' reading skills, with some confident to read out loud in lessons. Teachers, increasingly, promote students' literacy skills in lessons, particularly referring to key words, but opportunities to improve writing remain inconsistent. Improved curriculum planning ensures that there are often good links between subjects, but opportunities to promote students' mathematical and ICT skills fully in other subjects are missed.

In weaker lessons, opportunities are missed to challenge and motivate all students. In a Year 8 science lesson, students enjoyed investigating electrical circuits. However, some found it more difficult to record their work because the worksheet was not at the right level and they did not understand what to do. That resulted in some low-level disruption and affected how well students' learning was reviewed at the end.

The quality of learning support is good overall. Assistants, now, support students' achievement rather than dealing with behaviour. The caring relationships with students and improved expectations encourage students to stay on task. Students enjoy opportunities to work and discuss their learning in groups. In a Year 9 personal and social development lesson, students showed growing self-esteem and ability to express their feelings, speaking in turn about weekend activities undertaken to support their healthy lifestyles. Others listened respectfully and with interest. Students' cultural development is promoted through many subjects, for example, by making Italian food in food technology and participating in disability sports events.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

There has been impressive improvement in students' behaviour. The school is now a calm and orderly place to learn. Students respond to staff's expectations, saying the improved behaviour makes them very happy to come to school. Students expect others to behave well and do not allow themselves to be distracted by the increasingly rare occasions when this is not the case. They are keen to gain behaviour points and the number of detentions is reducing well. In nearly all of the lessons observed, behaviour was good and students had positive attitudes to their work. Students' willingness to learn is reflected in the much-improved lesson attendance data. Senior managers use the data effectively to analyse the trigger points for individuals, related to the quality of teaching, subjects, or times of day. Whole-school attendance is improving gradually and the strategies and support mechanisms are applied rigorously. A few students' poor attendance continues to impact on overall figures. The school is working with the appropriate authorities, where necessary.

Students say there is very little bullying of any kind and that the rare incidents are dealt with effectively. They are convinced that the school is safe and feel that they are treated fairly. Inspection evidence confirms that, as does the recent school questionnaire for parents and carers, nearly all of whom agreed that behaviour is good and bullying is dealt with well. Racist and other incidents related to students' differences are infrequent and have reduced considerably since the previous

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inspection. Students are confident about who they can go to if they have concerns and have faith in staff to help them. All staff treat students respectfully and ensure they receive a high standard of care. Staff are very vigilant in ensuring the most potentially vulnerable students, including those who are looked after, receive individualised support and care. Liaison with partner agencies and parents and carers is effective, where additional support is required.

Leadership and management

The senior management team is clearly focused on raising expectations and is well equipped to support the new leadership. It is committed to its continuing role in raising the quality of education. Performance management systems are established and professional development is planned well to meet the continuing development of the school. Staff report a culture of high expectations and accountability, but feel supported through provision of training to develop the skills they need to do their jobs well. The focus groups, led by senior managers, give staff greater opportunity to be part of the school's continuing improvement, although their skills as leaders and managers are underdeveloped.

Systems for checking the quality of teaching are robust, with senior leaders set to play an even more active role in the process. Data are monitored regularly to check on students' progress. Staff are held to account for any individuals who may be at risk of underachieving. Good links with mainstream schools have led to some effective initiatives, such as peer observations, which have extended senior managers' skills. Good practice is often, but not always shared and effective action taken where weaknesses are identified. As a result, the quality of teaching is increasingly good. Monitoring and self-evaluation systems are thorough, leading to planning which is focused on improvements likely to have the maximum impact on students' achievement. The curriculum is satisfactory, rather than good, while in the process of being extended to ensure that students have access to accreditation which will challenge them to achieve their full potential.

Arrangements for safeguarding meet all requirements. The promotion of equal opportunity and tackling all forms of discrimination has high focus. Through the curriculum, prejudice based on religion, race, and sexual preference is challenged actively. The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well, with students experiencing an increasingly wide range of activities outside school in support of this. Parents and carers are supported well, with all saying that they can approach the school easily. As one said, 'I am now really happy as there is an open door policy, you can always call, staff know your children really well and you can always discuss things.'

The governing body challenges senior leaders well and has a high level of involvement in the school. It has been effective in recruitment, particularly of the substantive headteacher, and ensured that the school is in a secure financial position so that resources are focused firmly on the needs of the school's current students.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

27 June 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of The Mark Way School, Andover SP10 1HR

Thank you for making me so welcome during the time that I have been visiting your school. Every time, I have enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. You told me that you like school more because it is now a much better place to learn. You told me that lessons are much more fun now and that you are happy and feel safe because behaviour is so much better. You all know that adults will help you if you have any worries. I agree with everything that you told me.

Your school has changed a lot since my first visit. It is now satisfactory and ready to move on even further. The standard of your work has improved and you all make better progress. That is because you are now given work at the right level for you and you are told what to do to improve. I have decided that the school no longer requires 'special measures'. That means that the staff and governing body have shown me that they can continue improving the school without me having to check.

I believe you could all do even better, though, which is why the school is not judged as good or outstanding. The people who run your school have made lots of very useful changes and they have many ideas about how they can make the school better. I have asked them to do some things as well.

- Check that every one of you learns as much as you possibly can and gets the best result you can.
- Make sure that those of you who do not attend as well as you should do know how important it is to come to school so that you can learn as well as other students
- Make sure that all of the staff are clear as to exactly what their roles are in securing further improvements for the school.

You can help them to make these improvements by coming to school as often as you can, and by continuing to work hard and behaving well. An inspector may visit you soon to see how you are getting on. I wish each of you every success in the future, especially if you are leaving school this year.

Yours sincerely

Helen Barter
Lead inspector

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