



Mark Rutherford Upper School and Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109674
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278243
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Paul Joyce LI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Wentworth Drive
School category	Community		MK41 8PX
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234290200
Number on roll	1074	Fax number	01234290236
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Peter Lord
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr. John Summers

Age group 13 to 18	Inspection dates 22 February 2006 - 23 February 2006	Inspection number 278243
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mark Rutherford Upper School and Community College is larger than average. It serves a catchment area from in and around the town of Bedford. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Fewer students speak English as an additional language than is generally the case in schools of this size, but the number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than average. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties is slightly above average. However, the proportion with statements of special educational need is slightly below average. A purpose built unit for students who have autistic spectrum disorders opened in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The overall effectiveness of this school is inadequate because students do not make the overall progress expected based on their starting points and fail to achieve their potential in many subjects. The overall standards reached by students are too low. They are below average at Key Stage 3 and 4, and have declined in each of the last three years. The quality of teaching and learning varies considerably across the school. Overall it is inadequate and a cause for concern. The school's managers recognise a number of teachers require support although there is no effective formal monitoring of teaching to inform a programme of improvement. The personal development and well-being of learners, together with the curriculum and the care, guidance and support provided are satisfactory. However, leadership and management are inadequate. The headteacher and the senior leaders are not sufficiently focused on making the necessary improvements to raise standards. The monitoring of the quality of provision is ineffective. Insufficient progress has been made in addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection, including the attendance of students. The school judged its overall effectiveness as satisfactory, but the self-evaluation is not accurate. Based on the school's performance it does not provide value for money. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors judged the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form to be satisfactory overall. The school's own judgement was that the sixth form provision was good. Students achieve as expected based on their GCSE results and well enough to reach at least average standards on advanced courses. Some students achieve well and results on some courses in 2005 were above average. The retention rates on a number of courses are too low. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory overall with good teaching in some subjects. The curriculum is satisfactory and appropriately meets the needs and interests of students. The care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory with appropriate careers advice and guidance including support with higher education applications. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the students' achievement and raise standards by improving the quality of education provided.
- Increase the rigour of leadership and management by more timely and focused improvement planning, and more effective quality assurance monitoring and evaluation of departments.
- Raise the quality and consistency of

teaching to ensure all students are engaged in learning. - Improve the students' rate of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards overall are inadequate in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. The school overestimated the standards reached by students in its self-evaluation. Progress made in the sixth form is as expected based on GCSE results with some students making good progress. The standards achieved at Advanced Level are good in many subjects with improvements continuing. However, standards reached at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are below the national average. Students start at the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average although there are fewer higher-attaining students. By the end of Year 9 attainment levels are significantly below average and standards have been in decline for the last three years. In 2004 and 2005, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C was significantly below the national average, and the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to G grades was below average. The proportion of students who did not achieve any passes at GCSE was too high. Students make inadequate progress and do not achieve their potential given their starting points. During 2005, girls made better progress than boys but overall progress levels for girls and boys were below the levels expected. The current progress made by students continues to be below that expected because the quality of teaching is too variable. A significant number of parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressed concerns about their children's progress. Students with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because of effective levels of support. Challenging targets for students' achievements are set and this process has been refined. However, students do not always meet their targets and these are not sufficiently monitored. There is too little evidence of a sufficiently positive impact on standards and many students are underachieving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of students both in the main school and in the sixth form are satisfactory. The school also judged this aspect as satisfactory in its own self-evaluation. Students generally enjoy school and appreciate the variety of opportunities they are given although attendance levels remain below the national average. Many participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities which include a range of different sporting activities and other social and cultural events. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Students do not feel bullying is an issue and the majority get on well with each other. However, a minority of students display a poor attitude to learning and cause disruption within the school, a view shared by a significant number of parents and carers who returned inspection questionnaires. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. There are reasonable opportunities for

students to be reflective though little is done to celebrate and draw on the variety of cultures present in the school. The extent to which students adopt safe practices and healthy lifestyles is good. Well planned work in personal, social and health education gives students the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to equip them with the information they need in order to stay healthy and safe. Opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the community are satisfactory. For example, they demonstrate awareness and understanding of the needs of others in the raising of funds for disaster relief. Students satisfactorily develop skills that will contribute to their economic well-being through a range of activities including the vocational curriculum and work experience.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. There is significant variability in the quality of teaching within the school with too much inadequate teaching and not enough teaching that is good or better. The school identifies the variability of teaching in its self-evaluation and the leadership team acknowledge a significant amount of teaching gives them cause for concern. They have, however, overestimated the effectiveness of teaching overall. Where teaching is at its best, lessons proceed at a brisk pace, expectations are made clear to students and they are given opportunities to participate as active learners. Teaching assistants provide good support to students with statements of special educational need and contribute wherever they can to the progress of other students with learning difficulties. Where teaching is inadequate and where there are shortcomings in otherwise satisfactory teaching, lessons lack pace and challenge and work is not matched sufficiently to the needs and prior attainment of different students. Additionally, behaviour is not always managed as effectively as it should be. The quality of teaching and learning is not monitored successfully and there is no effective means of identifying teachers who require support and improvement. Some development work has taken place, and this continues, but the impact is yet to be seen in the classroom. The school has begun to develop its use of assessment information but is not yet rigorous enough in tracking and monitoring the progress of individuals and groups of students. As a result, the school does not quickly identify where improvements need to be made. The marking of students' work is variable and the comments provided by teachers do not always inform the students of what they should do to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provided by the school is satisfactory in both the main school and the sixth form. A range of learning opportunities that are matched to the needs and interests of students is provided. This includes applied and vocational courses provided at school and through the local college, and opportunities for students to undertake extended work experience and training. Students are given a range of options to choose subjects and courses that are of genuine interest to them in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Enrichment activities within and beyond the school day, such as clubs and educational visits, make a satisfactory contribution to students' personal development. The school is effective in raising students' awareness of the importance of staying safe and healthy. Students have satisfactory opportunities to take responsibility in school and within the local community. They are reasonably well prepared for the future through learning about the world of work and involvement in activities that develop their enterprise skills. They generally have satisfactory opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills as they move through the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support in both the main school and the sixth form are satisfactory overall. The pastoral system is good and students are well cared for. Health and safety procedures are clear and staff understand the arrangements for child protection. Care, guidance and support for students with special educational needs and for those in public care are satisfactory. Careers advice and guidance are provided effectively for students, with appropriate advice about option choices and effective links with the Connexions Service. Recent changes have been made to the tutor group structure with the intention being to improve relationships and behaviour. 'Vertical tutoring', the integration of students from different year groups within the same tutor group, has been introduced. This, although seen as a positive move by some students, has had little impact on reducing the high proportion of students who are excluded. Support and guidance to monitor academic progress are ineffective as they are too variable. Communication between subject teachers and academic tutors is unclear, and for some students the time between effective formal reviews of their performance is too long. However, one initiative, 'Making the Grade', which targets students and provides additional support to enable them to achieve, has had some success.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are inadequate overall. They have not effectively tackled underachievement and the decline in standards. The headteacher and the leadership

team have not been sufficiently focused on improving the quality of education. A number of initiatives that have been introduced are not sufficiently embedded in school practice to have had enough positive impact. There are no robust systems in place for monitoring the quality of provision, including teaching and learning across the school. Over time there has been no regular or systematic monitoring of teaching in lessons by senior or middle managers. Whilst there is some good management practice in departments, this is not widespread and there is still too much variability, allowing students' progress to suffer. Management of the sixth form is satisfactory. The governing body are supportive of the school, but they do not challenge the school's senior leaders sufficiently or hold the school to account for its performance. The school does seek the views of parents, carers and students and includes these in its self-evaluation. However, a significant number of parents who returned inspection questionnaires expressed concern about the extent to which the school takes account of their views and the way in which the school is led and managed. Improvement since the last inspection has not been good enough. Although some of the required improvements have been made, weaknesses in students' progress, monitoring of teaching and learning and attendance are still significant issues. Based on this, the school's lack of success in tackling other identified weaknesses and the fact that the school's self-evaluation is not an accurate appraisal of its performance, the capacity to improve is lacking.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the outcome of the inspection. Before I do, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your cooperation and assistance during our visit. We appreciated your comments and opinions and they helped us form our judgements about your school. We found that many of you enjoy the range of additional activities that the school provides, including sports and after school clubs and that you value the range of course options available to you at GCSE and in the sixth form. We also established that the school promotes your personal development and provides care, guidance and support to you satisfactorily. We did, however, find some areas in which the school needs to do better. Many of you are not making the progress or achieving the standards that you are capable of and the teaching within the school needs to improve to help you achieve more. We also consider that the people running the school are not clearly focused on making the improvements needed. Many of your parents and carers are also concerned about these issues. We have identified that the main aspects that the school needs to address are: - the rate of progress you make and the standards that you achieve - the effectiveness of management in improving the school - the quality of teaching so that you are all engaged in learning - your attendance at school You can help the school staff by cooperating with your teachers and by concentrating and working hard in all of your lessons. We wish you well in the future.