



The Purbeck School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113855
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279266
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Marsh HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Worgret Road
School category	Community		Wareham
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		Dorset BH20 4PF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01929 556301
Number on roll	1217	Fax number	01929 554025
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Giles Sturdy
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Richard Holman

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Purbeck School is a large mixed 13–19 comprehensive school in Wareham, Dorset. Almost all the 1217 students are White British. Relatively few are entitled to free school meals. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has a full staff complement. It was awarded specialist status as a science school in 2004. Nearby Poole and Bournemouth operate a selective grammar school system which draws some local students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Purbeck School judges itself to be satisfactory and inspectors agree. It has a realistic view of its own strengths and weaknesses. Key members of the senior management team, ably led by the headteacher, have taken effective steps to promote improvement and are now having a discernible impact on the quality of teaching and learning; but students make slow progress, particularly in years 10 and 11. The school has a good capacity to improve because the measures already in place are the right priorities for the school and have already had a demonstrable impact upon mathematics, which is now good throughout the school.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A good number of lessons are well structured and stimulating; but some fail to demand enough of students, who consequently make insufficient progress. Students develop well socially and emotionally, and behaviour is good. The school runs efficiently as an equitable and equitable community and a positively inclusive ethos prevails. The use of regular assessment, target-setting and monitoring of students is developing but is still inconsistent.

The curriculum offers good breadth and depth and is highly responsive to the students' needs and interests and to the particular locality of the school. Imaginative use is beginning to be made of the school's specialist science status. There are very good links with outside agencies and students benefit considerably from the community services that operate from the school premises. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school also judges its sixth form to be satisfactory and inspectors agree. Under new leadership, standards are rising but students' progress is slow. Teachers do not do enough to foster their independent thinking, and so some do not reach the levels of which they are capable.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable students in Years 10 and 11 to make better progress.
- Raise standards further in the sixth form by providing students with greater challenge.
- Improve teaching and learning by raising expectations, so that more is good or better.
- Ensure that the assessment and tracking of students' progress is carried out regularly and consistently throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, students reach average standards but make inadequate progress. Most students make good progress in Year 9 and reach standards that are broadly average. Standards

in English remain just below average. In mathematics they have improved significantly: standards are now above average and students' progress is good. Standards in science are average and progress is satisfactory.

Students reach average standards by the end of Year 11 but they do not make as much progress as they should. This is because of the low expectations some teachers have of students' potential, and inconsistent use of assessment information to identify which students are at risk of underachieving. In particular, students of lower ability do not do as well as they should. However, in English and mathematics, students have made good progress as a result of improvements in approaches to teaching and learning.

Standards in the sixth form are average and improving. Students' progress overall is satisfactory but in too many subjects they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the effective support they receive, and some exceed the targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Students work well together in lessons and show respect for each other around the school. Behaviour is good. Sixth form students give pastoral support to younger ones, to mutual benefit. Students mostly feel confident and safe. When bullying occurs, it is usually dealt with effectively. The school is committed to an inclusive culture and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are fully integrated. There are few formal exclusions. There are good links with African and European schools which foster empathy with their cultures but students are less well prepared for life in a multicultural British society.

Although overall attendance is just below average, there is little unauthorised absence and students generally enjoy school. They take part enthusiastically in sport and are generally healthy. The quality of the food provided has improved and students show good dietary awareness. Very good use is made of a confidential support service which offers guidance to students who seek advice on either understanding or improving their health.

The school provides good opportunities, through the re-launched student parliament, for students to contribute to their community. Students in the sixth form work on their own initiative to organise fundraising for charity. Students are adequately equipped for future employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a reasonable proportion of both good and outstanding teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. However, not

enough of the teaching, particularly between years 9 and 11, makes high enough demands on students and so some of them do not make as much progress as they should. The use of assessment and targets to motivate and monitor students is inconsistent. The school's leadership knows this and recognises the need to improve the proportion of teaching which is consistently good. Lesson observations are rigorous and are effectively allied to training and to performance targets for teachers and subjects. Where teaching is good, students are clear about what is expected of them and are motivated to reach challenging targets. Teachers structure their learning well and make regular checks on their progress. The best lessons are very lively: students are actively engaged because teachers skilfully stimulate their interest and extend their learning.

In less productive lessons, too little work is covered. Students are not always clear about the purpose or potential of activities nor the standards they are expected to reach. Unaware, they settle for mediocrity. In the sixth form, not enough is done to wean students off derivative ideas and make them think for themselves.

Many teachers set homework purposefully, mark work in detail and provide helpful advice on how students might improve, but these practices are inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good, both in the school overall and in the sixth form. Substantial changes have been made to the breadth and quality of provision. For example, the school has introduced a wide range of vocational courses which include exciting options reflecting both students' particular interests and employment opportunities within this semi-rural community. Courses such as animal care, stonemasonry, beauty therapy and catering are offered in conjunction with local colleges and businesses. The large sixth form offers a broad range of academic and vocational courses at different levels. There is good networking linked to the school's specialist science status. Large numbers of students take part in the many and varied extra curricular activities. These include using the outstanding community sports facilities in the school and frequent educational trips both at home and abroad. Stimulating links have been forged with schools in Europe and Africa. The individual needs of students are carefully considered and mostly met within a strongly inclusive curriculum; but little is yet done to stretch the most able.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's pastoral services are satisfactory. Students' health and safety are assured, both on site and during activities away from school. Child protection procedures are rigorous and record keeping efficient. Liaison with outside agencies is good. Students who find full-time attendance in the mainstream curriculum difficult are individually supported and re-integrated through an exemplary specialist unit. The school makes good use of outside agencies to provide specialist support and guidance. It is very watchful of the care and progress of vulnerable children. The 'Fast Forward' programme

gives good support to those with weak literacy skills. Students receive detailed and balanced advice on curriculum, career and higher education choices. However, guidance and support for most students have more impact on personal development than on academic progress, because they are insufficiently linked to rigorous and consistent assessment and tracking. Students' individual short-term targets are not yet well enough established to help them make the sort of progress of which many of them are capable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management both of the school overall and of the sixth form are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior leadership team, several members of which are relatively new to their roles, are steadily making the school more effective. They share a strong sense of purpose and set clear direction. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is insightful and they show both a determination and a capacity to use this intelligence to raise standards and improve the rate of students' progress. They have identified the right priorities for development and improvements are already apparent in standards in mathematics, arrangements to include all students within the main curriculum, and improving how students learn from teachers. They are well supported in this work by knowledgeable governors who enjoy frequent, transparent communications with them and who are equally committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve.

Leaders have firmly set higher expectations of their staff who in turn are beginning to hold higher expectations of their students. A climate has been created in which responsibilities are clear and people now expect to be held to account for their performance. The lesson observation scheme is rigorous and teachers are fairly and rightly challenged and supported to become better at how they help students learn. Good use is being made of advanced skills teachers and links with other schools to develop imaginative ways of improving learning. The school already works very well with other agencies and services to support students' personal and social development.

Many of these initiatives are in the early stages of being implemented throughout the school, and in some areas they are not yet applied consistently or with sufficient rigour. Students still make too slow progress in Years 10 and 11 and in some subjects in the sixth form.

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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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
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	2	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
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?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

Dear Students

We enjoyed visiting your school recently to inspect it. Thank you very much for making us feel welcome and for talking to us so frankly. We have now written our report and hope some of you will want to read it; but this letter is addressed specifically to you and sums up what we think of The Purbeck School.

We have judged your school to be satisfactory but with good potential to become better. You make good progress in Year 9; but in Years 10 and 11, compared with other students across the country, you do not do as well as you should or could, although you make good progress in English and mathematics and do well in these at GCSE. We think this is partly because too many of your teachers underestimate what some of you are capable of, and so you are not stimulated to work as hard as you can. Too many lessons are a bit slow and you are not checked often enough against your targets. In the sixth form, although results in some subjects are good, there are many subjects in which you underachieve. You need to be taught to think more for yourselves and to have higher ambitions for the grades you might get.

Mr Holman and his deputy and assistant headteachers had already told us most of this before we arrived at the school. This is reassuring, because it means that the school is realistic about its strengths and weaknesses and knows just what has to happen for it to get better. That is why we have strong confidence in your school's potential, and in your headteacher and his staff's ability to improve some of the teaching and help you reach higher standards in your examinations.

The main things that need to be improved at The Purbeck School are:

- You need to make better progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Many of you who stay on in the sixth form are capable of higher standards of work and better results in your examinations.
- All of you, teachers and students together, deserve to set your sights higher and expect more of yourselves.

Good luck with your studies.

Alan Marsh HMI Lead inspector