

The Petersfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116510
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	290557
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Martyn Rhowbotham HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Flannaghan
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Poole
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2002
School address	Cranford Road Petersfield GU32 3LU
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Petersfield School is a specialist performing arts school and is the only state secondary school in Petersfield, a relatively prosperous town in east Hampshire. The school recruits from around 20 primary schools and has increased its roll significantly in recent years. Pupils enter the in Year 7 with standards that are broadly at the national average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities are both well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Petersfield School provides a satisfactory standard of education and has many good features. The school has secured good improvements in pupils' personal development and well-being due to changes made by the relatively newly appointed senior leadership team. Behaviour around the school and in most lessons is good. Pupils feel safe and are cared for well. Relationships between pupils and teachers are outstanding and there is a calm and pleasant atmosphere in the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good. Pupils involve themselves enthusiastically in school life by participating in and;quot;peer mentoringand;quot;;, performing arts and the running of the industry standard theatre.

Although standards achieved are generally above average and pupils make good progress lower down the school, they do not all make the progress they are capable of in Years 10 and 11. Senior leaders have identified this and put in place appropriately robust procedures to raise attainment. There are early indications that these are likely to be successful. However, the impact of these measures has yet to be demonstrated by showing that all pupils make the good progress of which they are capable. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. The procedures for tracking pupils' progress have been revised. These are now much more robust and are used well alongside prior attainment data to help pupils move towards their targets. Again, the full impact of this initiative has yet to be demonstrated.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. Pupils' attitude to learning is good and in some lessons teachers make full use of this to help ensure that pupils make as much progress as they can. These lessons are characterised by fast pace, high expectations and hard work as the norm. In other lessons, pupils do not always work as hard as they could and in a few cases there is some low level disruption in Years 8 and 9.

The curriculum is planned well and ensures courses meet pupils' identified needs well. It includes a wide range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and a good range of performing arts related courses and extra-curricular activities. The needs of more able students are met through the provision of additional courses, early entries to GCSEs and some AS level subjects. The guidance pupils receive about subject choices and options on leaving school is good.

The community and the vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and many praise the support and commitment of teachers. Many also speak highly of their children's enjoyment of school and the opportunities it provides for their personal development. A parent of a pupil in Year 9 commented, 'Our son loves The Petersfield School. His confidence has grown since he has been at the school'. Another expressed delight with the 'opportunities our children are offered to extend their education through extra-curricular activities and visits'.

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory overall with many good features. The recently appointed senior leadership group provides a clear vision for the school. Following wide-ranging self evaluation, the group has implemented well thought through strategies to drive up achievement and address some inconsistencies in subject leadership. These have yet to impact fully on pupils' achievements but there are early indications, such as improved progress in 2006, that these will be successful. These initiatives, together with the improvements made in pupils' personal development and well-being, the curriculum, and care, guidance and support, show that the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 and raise expectations in some lessons.
- Ensure consistency of subject leadership across the school.
- Improve behaviour management in a small number of lessons in Years 8 and 9.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although standards dipped in 2006, they are generally above average. Students are of average ability when they start in Year 7. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and are significantly above average when they start their GCSE courses in Year 10. Achievement is satisfactory rather than good, however, because the good progress made in Years 7 to 9 is not sustained in Years 10 and 11. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities do as well as expected. Able students achieve relatively well and a good number attain A and A* grades in GCSEs. It is principally middle ability students, many of them girls, who do not achieve as well as they should. In the past, this group has underachieved significantly in mathematics and science. In 2006, though pupils' progress improved, there was still some underachievement in mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT). School leaders have correctly identified this and have put in place several initiatives to raise students' attainment. There are early indications that these are likely to be successful. However, the impact of these measures has yet to be demonstrated in GCSE results that show all pupils making the good progress of which they are capable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good with many outstanding features. Significant changes have taken place in pastoral care. The school uses data well to identify issues and make further improvements. The school's acquisition of performing arts specialist status is being used well to encourage pupils to reflect on the lessons they learn and to respond sensitively to situations they encounter.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. The school actively promotes an appreciation of cultural diversity through its newly-formulated policy and activities such as assemblies and the recent Black History Month. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are less well developed apart from in RE lessons. Behaviour around the school and in most lessons is good, except on a few occasions in Years 8 and 9 where poor behaviour management enables pupils to drift off task. Pupils feel safe in the school. They report very few incidents of bullying. When bullying does occur they are confident that it will be handled sensitively and efficiently. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They value the relationship that they have with their teachers, mentors and other adults on the staff. Attendance has improved and is now good. Pupils are well-cared for and adopt healthy lifestyles through such things as eating healthily in the increasingly popular FairTrade Cafand;eacute;.

The involvement of pupils in the life of the school through such bodies as the student council and as and;quot;peer mentorsand;quot; and prefects is outstanding. The newly-created student panels in each department are potentially a vital driver of change and improvement. Pupils also make a significant contribution to their wider community through, for example, their participation in the design of new housing for one of the local wards. Their good team-working skills contribute significantly to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. In almost all lessons pupils enjoy good and often very good relationships with their teachers. Pupils' attitude to learning is good and most are keen to do well. In some lessons, there is a very good focus on pupils working as hard as they can so as to make as much progress as possible. There is a very purposeful atmosphere in these lessons and teachers have high expectations of what pupils will achieve and how they will behave. Pupils are engaged fully on well planned activities and there is a clear sense of urgency. In the less successful lessons, some pupils do not work as hard as they could. On occasions their concentration is allowed to lapse. Low level disruption, for example in some lessons in Years 8 and 9, is not managed well. Pupils' progress and learning are not checked frequently enough and too little attention is given to individual pupils' abilities. Pupils' progress, though satisfactory, is not maximised in these lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Good improvements have been made to the curriculum since the last inspection. It is planned well and enables pupils to follow courses that meet their needs. The range of performing arts and related courses is wide and more are planned for September 2007. More consideration is given to matching staff expertise to particular groups. Pupils are consulted on the curriculum through the innovative use of student panels. The school is aware of the needs of different groups and has taken steps to amend their provision by, for example, introducing single gender groups in science.

There is a good range of vocational courses now on offer in Years 10 and 11 and more able pupils access an extended curriculum that includes AS levels and early entries to some GCSEs. Personal, social and health education in Years 10 and 11 is taught through a mixture of core lessons taught by specialists and a rolling programme taught by tutors, but the latter is not valued highly by all pupils. Time constraints limit the delivery of citizenship some of which is delivered across the curriculum in other subjects. As part of an innovative transition project pupils are involved in a curriculum bridging activity which has greatly benefited pupils transferring from local primary schools. There is a good range of additional activities and trips and visits. The emphasis on the performing arts and the high level of participation in performances raises individuals' self-esteem and pride in their school generally.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are supported well and the school has an inclusive ethos. Pupils are happy to approach any teacher or other adult in the school if they have concerns. Pupils with special learning needs receive improving support and the use of a computerised literacy programme is beginning to have a good impact on the progress of these pupils.

The school has recognized that the tracking of pupils' progress was not sufficiently robust in the past. The revised procedures are thorough and good use is made of data to track pupils' progress towards their well defined and appropriately challenging targets. Prior attainment data are now used well in this process. Pupils are particularly appreciative of the checks on

their progress that they receive in their termly mentoring sessions with their teachers. Early indications are that these procedures are now improving pupils' progress. The tracking of potentially vulnerable groups is good overall, but there is still variation in practice between year groups. Reports to parents contain clear information about their children's progress towards their targets. Guidance on subject choices for GCSE and for options on leaving school is good. Provision and support for gifted and talented pupils is good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and follow local authority guidelines.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, with many good features although these have yet to exert their full impact on the achievement of all pupils. The acquisition of specialist performing arts status has created a 'buzz' of enjoyment, increased participation amongst pupils and improved the links with the local community.

Strategic appointments have been made to strengthen the leadership team. Under the energetic leadership of the headteacher this group now promotes a clear vision for the school.

Wide-ranging self-evaluation has been undertaken, involving many stakeholders. Leaders now have a grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, though occasionally their judgements are over-generous. Well-targeted improvement strategies include rigorous line management arrangements and the better use of prior attainment data to drive up achievement. Middle managers speak enthusiastically about the balance of support and challenge they now receive from the senior team and the renewed sense of common purpose. Pupils appreciate the visibility of senior staff around the school.

Innovative strategies to support students' personal development and well-being have been successful. To the school's disappointment, however, the 2006 GCSE results showed that academic achievement had not been raised consistently across all subject areas. Close analysis revealed shortcomings in teaching and leadership within some subjects. These issues should have been identified earlier and managed more effectively, which is why leadership and management at all levels are not yet good. The senior team has responded by refining the systems for target-setting and tracking student progress. The school reports that recent modular test scores in mathematics and ICT indicate that current Year 11 students are making better progress than their predecessors.

The governing body discharges its responsibilities effectively and manages the school's financial resources well. Since the last inspection it has successfully overseen the specialist school status bid and capital build projects. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we recently inspected your school. You probably saw us around the school and we may have visited one of your lessons. Some of you came to meetings with us, where you were very good at telling us about your work and your progress. You also told us what you like about school and what you thought could be improved. You were very polite and helpful during the inspection and were particularly good at giving us directions when we got lost! You all made an important contribution to the inspection and we would like to thank you very much for that.

The main strengths of your school are:

- the standards you achieve in most subjects
- your good attitude to learning and your enthusiasm for school
- the additional activities such as performing arts and clubs
- the way it supports you
- your generally good behaviour
- the good relationships you have with teachers and each other.

So as to improve further, your school needs to:

- make sure you make better progress in Years 10 and 11
- help you work as hard as you can in all lessons in all subjects
- ensure everyone behaves well in all lessons in Year 8 and Year 9.

Mr Poole and your teachers have some really good plans to achieve these things. You can help a great deal by attending all of the time and working as hard as you can in every lesson.

Thank you again for all your help in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Rhowbotham
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools