



The Mark Way School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116641
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 290575
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Kay Charlton

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Bachelors Barn Road
School category	Community special		Andover
Age range of pupils	11–16		SP10 1HR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01264 351835
Number on roll (school)	71	Fax number	01264 366276
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr R Bailey
		Headteacher	Mr A Oakley
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	6–7 February 2007	290575

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Mark Way School draws students from a wide geographic area. All have statements of special educational need related to moderate learning difficulties. On entry, an increasing number have behavioural difficulties or are on the autistic spectrum. Generally, students have a wider range of complex needs than in the past. The vast majority are of White British background and none speak English as an additional language. Students come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Overall attainment on entry is very low compared with that in mainstream schools. The school has gained Artsmark and the Investors in People award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Mark Way is a good school. It is effective in enabling students to develop their personal skills and gain access to qualifications which prepare them well for life after school. Comments such as 'It's nice and small, and teachers understand you if you need to talk to them' show that the great majority of parents and students are very positive about the school's provision. The school's own self-evaluation is accurate and robust, and recognises that noticeable improvements have taken place since the time of the last inspection.

All students, regardless of their needs or ability, achieve well. Although standards are well below those in mainstream schools, every year most students attain a good percentage of Entry Level and the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. A significant number attain at least one GCSE grade A* to G. This represents good achievement and is based on good teaching and the very effective way in which staff help and support students in developing their confidence and independence. In English, history and geography, staff ensure that students' learning is of a very high quality and as a result, students achieve extremely well. In science, students' achievements in both 2005 and 2006 were satisfactory. In this subject and, occasionally in other subjects, staff do not always make use of a sufficiently wide range of strategies to ensure that all students are fully engaged throughout the whole of the lesson. The school is responding to this issue very positively and in science, for example, it is clear that the extra practical opportunities that are now being provided are beginning to have a positive impact on students' achievements. Good relationships are developed between students and staff and these are used well to improve students' attendance, behaviour and attainment. Staff manage students' behaviour effectively and overall behaviour is good. Attendance is good and much improved since the last inspection.

The curriculum is well matched to the needs and aspirations of students, with a good balance of academic, vocational and work-related courses which prepare them effectively for life after school. There is an outstanding programme of enrichment activities which makes a very important contribution to developing students' motivation and aspirations. Along with the strong links established with other institutions, such as the local college and work providers, this ensures that students make an excellent contribution to the community. Overall, the care, guidance and support provided by all staff are good and ensure that students are successfully challenged in a safe, secure environment to face the demands of the wider world.

The headteacher and the leadership team lead by example and provide a very clear vision and direction for the work of the school based on a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors are active in school life and play an important role as the school's critical friend.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that students' achievements in science are brought up to the level of those in other subjects.
- Ensure that, in all subjects, staff use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies to ensure that students are fully engaged throughout the whole of the lesson.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students make good progress and achieve well. They usually meet, and some exceed, the challenging targets that are set for them. Given their starting point on entry to the school, students attain well in nationally accredited examinations. The strong focus the school places on literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) ensures that students make good progress in developing these key skills which will be needed in later life.

Students' achievements in science were not as good as in other subjects in both 2005 and 2006. However, students are responding very well to the revised provision in science which places a greater emphasis on practical work. A good example of this was seen in a Year 8 science lesson about the functions of the skin where students achieved well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well being are good. They make noticeable gains in developing their confidence and independence. Most show a sense of enjoyment, take great pride in their school, and attend regularly. Behaviour is good overall. Most students behave very well. Although a small minority finds self-discipline difficult, any outbursts are managed well by staff so that the learning of others is not disrupted. Bullying is rare and students know what to do if any should occur. Relationships are good and students are clear that their views count. The school council eagerly discuss what matters to them, for example, when discussing the major developments proposed in the outdoor areas. Students develop a good understanding of healthy living and they are very aware of the need to be safety conscious, for example, when taking part in activities such as sailing. They make an outstanding contribution to both the school and the local community, for instance, through the school council and through the peer mentoring system. Comments from those they work with outside school, including work experience providers, are a testament to how well students are gaining the skills needed to act as members of the wider community. Overall, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They develop a strong sense of what is right and wrong, and they make noticeable gains in developing their cultural awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Staff have detailed knowledge of the students' needs so that work is well matched to their levels of understanding. They make careful assessments and set challenging targets for each pupil. These 'small step' assessments are used well to challenge students in the next stages of their learning. Teachers and support staff work well as a team and set clear expectations for students' work and behaviour. Lessons are well organised and students are keen to contribute their ideas, often showing a good sense of fun.

In many lessons, a wide range of teaching and learning strategies are used and students are highly motivated; for example, when they re-enacted scenes from 'Romeo and Juliet' in an excellent English lesson. However, in science, and occasionally in other subjects, staff do not always make use of a sufficiently wide range of teaching strategies to ensure a high level of motivation from all students throughout the whole of the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with an effective balance of academic, vocational and work-related activities. Throughout the curriculum, strong emphasis is placed on developing students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in order to prepare them for life after school. A recent review of provision has taken place to ensure that there is a good emphasis on 'hands-on' experiences in all subjects and this is making sure that the curriculum is effectively matched to the changing needs of the school population. This has been particularly important in science where to date there has not been a sufficiently systematic development of students' practical skills. There is a very good programme of personal development which pervades all aspects of school life and enables students to make good progress in taking responsibility and in improving their social skills. The school has developed an extremely wide range of enrichment activities some of which, particularly the sailing trip, students refer to as 'amazing'. There is a wide range of sporting opportunities, visits to local places of interest, residential visits, theme days, vocational and work experience as well as lunch-time and after-school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good, and supported very well by the pastoral programme which ensures strong support for students' personal development. Risk assessments, and health and safety checks are undertaken thoroughly and systematically. A high level of support is provided by a wide range of staff, including

teaching staff, trained counsellors and school mentors. A key strength in the support given to students comes through the home-school liaison work which is undertaken.

Information about students' academic performance is used well to set challenging and yet realistic targets for students. Throughout the school, students make important contributions to their annual reviews by analysing what they have done well and where improvements are needed. However, there is still further to go in helping them to evaluate their own learning in lesson situations. The school is addressing this as part of its work on extending the range of teaching and learning strategies used in classes. Very good advice is provided for those leaving the school at age 16 so that they have the confidence to face the challenges of the wider world.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides clear vision and direction for the work of the school. He is very well supported by his senior managers and has established a team ethos which ensures an effective climate for learning. Subject leaders are effective and governors support the school well and act effectively as a critical friend. A programme of re-training is being undertaken to ensure that new governors are fully confident in the role. The school has very good systems to develop the skills of all staff and is particularly effective in ensuring that support staff benefit from professional development. Senior managers are working effectively with subject leaders to reduce the inconsistencies in teaching and improve the overall quality of students' learning. The school has maintained its performance, despite the increasing complexity of students' needs. Along with its active involvement in national initiatives, such as the Specialist School's Trust, this shows that the school has good capacity to improve. Resources and accommodation are very good and well cared for and overall the school provides good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	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	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?	2
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Thank you for your help when I came to inspect your school on 6 and 7 February 2007.

Most of you indicated that you like school and that you can go to staff if you need help. You are clear that you enjoy the very wide range of extra activities, such as sailing and the sports activities. The inspection shows that the school provides you with a good education.

I could see that you achieve well and that most of you reach your targets and some of you do even better. By the time you leave, most of you gain Entry Level qualifications and ASDAN qualifications, and some of you get GCSEs. Your behaviour is generally good and many of you recognise that you have improved a lot in this area. Teaching is good. Staff work well as a team and set clear targets for you. They organise an extensive range of events and visits out of school and you are very enthusiastic about these activities, particularly the residential visits, including the sailing trip. All staff look after you very well and give you good support and advice to help to prepare you for life after school. You are well informed about the importance of staying safe.

The headteacher supports the staff well and helps everyone to develop their skills so that the school improves. At present, staff are working to help you improve your achievements in science. They are also increasing the range of strategies they use to help make sure that you concentrate throughout the lesson. You have an important part to play by making an active contribution to all lessons and achieving as well as you can.

Yours sincerely

Kay Charlton

(Lead Inspector)