



Prospect College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110106
Local Authority Reading
Inspection number 294543
Inspection dates 8–9 November 2006
Reporting inspector Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Cockney Hill
School category	Foundation		Tilehurst
Age range of pupils	11–19		Reading RG30 4EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01189 590466
Number on roll (school)	1233	Fax number	01189 504172
Number on roll (6th form)	151		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Wilton Wills
		Headteacher	Ms Deborah Ajose
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	8–9 November 2006	294543

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average and serves a widespread area with pockets of deprivation. Just under a third of pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds and most of these have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is a little higher than usually found. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties is just above average as is the percentage with a statement of educational need. Pupils start school with levels of attainment that are below those expected for their age. The school has 30 resourced places, 'The Bridge', for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties including pupils with speech and language delay. There has been a high level of staff turnover in the last three years and the school has had particular difficulty recruiting mathematics and science teachers. The present headteacher has been in post for just over a year. The school has recently been awarded the Naacemark for Schools, Artsmark and Bronze Healthy Schools' Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Prospect College is an improving school which is becoming increasingly effective. It now provides a satisfactory standard of education. There is still much to do, but leaders and pupils can be proud of the improvements made since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. Although standards are still below average there has been good improvement. The proportion of pupils leaving school with five or more A* - C grades at GCSE has risen significantly. Standards in science are still too low because the subject is not well led and managed and teaching is not good enough.

Personal development of pupils is satisfactory and attendance is now average. Pupils enjoy their education because of the good working relationships within the school. Pupils are cared for and they feel safe and secure. They really feel that their school is 'a better place to be, now.'

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with pockets of good practice. However, the proportion of good teaching is not high enough. There are particular weaknesses in science and senior leaders are working hard to rectify these. On the whole, pupils behave well in class but a small minority disrupt lessons that they find dull. They relish opportunities to work in an active way but these opportunities are all too infrequent. The curriculum is satisfactory overall with considerable strengths in Years 10 and 11. Vocational courses on offer are popular and successful and help to improve achievement.

The headteacher and her senior team are leading the school well. They have already introduced a number of appropriate measures to improve pupils' behaviour and improve their achievement. They monitor work in classrooms rigorously and tackle issues of concern. The school has recognised the variation in subject leaders' capabilities, and has put effective measures in place to address weaknesses. Though assessment procedures have been recently improved, the information is not yet being used effectively enough to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can.

In light of the school's track record of raising standards, making improvements and good leadership, inspectors judge there is good capacity to improve further.

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. This is because teaching has improved and is now good, but the legacy of unsatisfactory teaching has had a negative impact upon standards. Standards in 2005 were below average overall, but standards achieved in vocational courses were broadly average. Standards improved in 2006 and are expected to improve further in 2007. Students' achievements, when measured against their starting points on entry to the sixth form, are satisfactory. Students' personal development is satisfactory and they speak highly of the support

and guidance they receive. Attendance is now monitored carefully and has improved. Students are well aware of their learning goals and their progress is now tracked more effectively. The vocational curriculum is good, but there are a limited number of subjects offered at AS and A level. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The new sixth form coordinator has a good understanding of what is required to improve standards and how to put these requirements into practice. Enrolment into the sixth form is improving, but a significant number still transfer to other schools which cater for more able students. The school plans to reduce the amount of transfers by re-introducing subjects such as specialist sciences to AS and A-level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards achieved in science by improving the quality of teaching and of leadership and management.
- Increase the proportion of lessons rated as good.
- Sharpen the use of assessment data in monitoring and evaluating the progress of all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is satisfactory but standards are below average. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is below average. Achievement from Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory overall. In 2005, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average. GCSE examination results were below average. In each, the performance of boys and girls was similar. In 2006, standards and achievement at the end of Year 9 improved even though standards remained below average. Targets for pupils gaining Level 5 or higher in English and mathematics were achieved. GCSE results in 2006, whilst still below average, improved significantly and realistic targets were exceeded. Lesson observations indicate that pupils make at least satisfactory but sometimes good progress. Evidence collected indicates that this improvement is likely to be maintained in 2007. The achievement of the great majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory.

In the sixth form, students start more advanced GCE and vocational courses with attainment which is below average. Results at AS and A-level in 2005 were below average but those for vocational courses were broadly average. Results improved in 2006 in most subject areas but were exceptionally low in Travel and Tourism, single award ICT and psychology. Students' progress and achievement, in relation to their starting points at GCSE, were satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Relationships are in general good. Most pupils get on well with each other and their teachers. The majority enjoy school life. A Year 11 pupil commented, 'The school is a much more calm and friendly place ... there is less poor behaviour now because adults are always checking'.

Pupils are well aware of reasons for adopting a healthy life style but need to take more responsibility for doing so. Many attend clubs and activities and willingly take responsibility through the school council, the prefect system and peer mentoring.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. Most pupils have good social skills and are keen to talk about their work. Though many treat the code of behaviour with respect a minority of pupils still disrupt learning through inappropriate behaviour. These incidents are well recorded and analysed, and appropriate action is taken. However, some pupils feel that there is inconsistency in the enforcement of the code of behaviour. The school has worked diligently on trying to improve attendance so that it is now satisfactory.

Pupils are aware of those less fortunate than themselves and take part in fund raising activities. Some of these support local charities such as initiatives managed by the Berkshire County Council, for example 'the support of developments for the deaf'. Sound business links give pupils a good basic understanding of the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and meets the needs of most pupils. The school is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching because it monitors lessons rigorously. As a result, pupils are making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. Some teaching ensures that pupils are clear about what gains they are going to make in their learning and how these gains will be measured; pupils are challenged and made aware of what is expected of them. This was clearly the case in a Year 9 English lesson where pupils were improving their writing skills. Lessons are usually well planned and most teachers manage pupils well, using whole school procedures. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and support pupils well.

However, there are still inconsistencies between departments. Teaching in science is not good enough. Pupils are not always challenged well enough both in terms of their behaviour and in the quality of work they are expected to produce. Though there is some good quality marking, in some instances pupils are not given sufficient guidance in what they need to do to achieve higher standards. Planning in some lessons does

not provide for enough involvement of pupils in their own learning. Consequently, some become bored and 'switched off' and make little or no progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall in meeting the needs of the range of pupils at the school. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Less able pupils are effectively supported through additional time for literacy and numeracy. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is good and pupils choose from a broad range of subjects. The range of vocational options is well geared to pupils' learning needs and interests and this is contributing to improvements in performance. More able pupils benefit from satisfactory extra-curricular provision. However, they are not always provided for well in lessons. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory and good in physical education and the performing arts. Pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided for satisfactorily. Religious education and the programmes for citizenship and personal and social education contribute effectively to pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is taking a creative and innovative approach to developing the curriculum further. Many good and new initiatives have been put in place recently but it is too early to assess their impact on learning and standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to the care of pupils. Child protection arrangements are strong and careful attention is paid to health and safety within the school environment and on educational visits. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are regularly reviewed. Teachers are now more visible in support of pupils during lesson changes, break and lunch times. This has helped pupils to feel more secure.

The school has satisfactory systems for the guidance and support of pupils through option choices and career decisions. Pupils agree with this judgement and feel that this aspect of citizenship and tutor time is useful. Arrangements for the academic guidance and support of pupils are now in place. Achievement reviews, held each term, give pupils an opportunity to discuss targets with teachers and parents. This enables them to keep a clear focus on what they need to do to improve. However, monitoring of pupils' day-to-day progress through tutors is inconsistent. There has not yet been sufficient time for the new arrangements to impact fully on raising pupils' standards. Overall the provision to support the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and other disabilities is satisfactory. Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory although support in 'the base' is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good and have created an atmosphere in which standards are rising and students are beginning to achieve well. The headteacher is a strong and dynamic leader who has real aspirations for her school. Her enthusiasm and drive is infectious and leaders at all levels now share her vision and set clear direction leading to improvement.

Other members of the senior team demonstrate strong leadership and support the work of the headteacher well. Between them they have set a clear agenda for raising standards still further. As a result of this direction, subject leaders monitor the work of their departments well and make careful assessments of particular strengths and weaknesses with the exception of science. Low standards and lack of progress of pupils in science are a direct result of poor leadership and management and weak teaching. The school has recognised this because it is a school that knows itself well and makes accurate judgements about where it is achieving success and where it needs to improve.

Monitoring of teaching and learning focuses well on what is happening in classrooms and helps teachers to improve their work. Governance is good because the headteacher has empowered governors to be critical and hold the school to account. They do this well. Monitoring by governors is good and they know their school. Performance management is efficiently organised and is central to the professional development of staff.

The school works well in partnership with the community and with other schools. Most parents who made their views known are happy with the way the college is managed and what it offers.

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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	3	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	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	3	
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?	3	2
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	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	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	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	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 very much for the help you gave us recently when we inspected your school. You talked to us about how much you think that the school has improved in the last year or so and we agree with you. Exam results have got better especially at GCSE, you are achieving more and your behaviour has improved. Well done!

We think that your school now gives you a satisfactory education and that this improvement is down to the hard work and dedication of your headteacher and her leadership team. She really wants you all to achieve as well as you can. You can help her by behaving well and completing all your work to the best of your ability. This will help you do even better in exams and help the school to raise its standards even higher in 2007.

Even though your school has improved, there is still work to be done. We have identified three areas we would like to see get even better. Some of your lessons are pitched at the right level for you and contain activities that are interesting and enjoyable. However, this is not always the case. We have asked that the school continues to check that teachers are teaching you all as well as they can so that all of you receive the good teaching you deserve. Most heads of department also have good plans to improve their subjects and lead these developments well. We have asked the school to ensure that this happens in science so that you do better in exams. Finally, we have asked your school to make sure that they use even more carefully all the information they have gathered about how well you are doing. This is so that you make as much progress as possible while you are at Prospect College.

We wish you all the best and will be watching how well you do in the summer!

Kind regards

Glyn Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector