

The Mandeville School Specialist Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110497
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310334
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Nigel Fletcher HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1087
Sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Webber
Headteacher	Mr P Patchett
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2005
School address	Ellen Road Aylesbury HP21 8ES
Telephone number	01296 424472
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school in a county where there is selection, and it is over-subscribed. Most of its students are from the immediate vicinity, with the rest from the local rural community. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. About a quarter of the students come from minority ethnic groups, mainly Pakistani. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than the national average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational needs. The school became a specialist sports college in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a broad curriculum, satisfactory education, and good care and support. Many parents report that their children enjoy school and feel safe, and agree that the school provides, 'a positive approach to learning and good support', which help students to 'enhance their self-confidence and make them feel special'.

Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average. They make very good progress in their learning at Key Stage 3, but slower, although satisfactory, progress in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, standards reached by the students are below those found nationally, although the proportion gaining five or more high grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is rising. A high percentage of students are successful in gaining at least five passes at grades A* to G. However, students' overall progress remains broadly average compared with most schools, and this varies across subjects.

Although improvements since the last inspection have been slow to have impact, actions are being taken to improve students' performance. For example, recent procedures to improve students' attendance have raised it from below average to above. A broad range of staff development is raising the quality of teaching and learning, which is now good with some examples of outstanding practice. However, in a few lessons, insufficient attention is given to providing interest and challenge to the students, and this results in the behaviour of a minority disrupting learning. Although the quality of marking of students' work has improved, too many students are still unclear on what they must do to meet their targets.

Leadership and management have recently been restructured across the school. Although leaders are developing an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas, they have not yet developed a clear direction on how to improve students' progress. However, initiatives implemented by the new senior leadership team are already at an early stage of showing impact and the school is demonstrating a good capacity to improve. School leaders have the full support of parents, a committed staff and a strong governing body, although some parents would like better communication with the school.

The school has a caring and inclusive ethos, both within the school and in the outside community. Excellent links with welfare and other organisations ensure that the personal development of students is good. Students generally respect their teachers and peers in a calm, productive learning environment. They feel safe and are confident about the strong care and support they receive from staff. Behaviour is good around the school. Bullying is minimal, and parents report that, when it does happen, it is dealt with efficiently and sympathetically. Effective support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities ensures that they make good progress. The school also plays a significant part in the local and wider community, for example, in its provision of swimming for Asian women, and through musical workshops in Bosnia.

Students appreciate the school's good curriculum which has a broad range of options that meets their needs and interests, whatever their abilities. The school's sports specialism has a good impact on improving learning across the school. Students value the dimension that this brings to different areas of the curriculum, and how it pervades the culture of the school. Throughout the school, there is an outstanding range of cultural, sporting, and other enrichment activities that enhance students' lives. One parent commented that her daughter, 'has been given a wide range of opportunities that I would not normally have expected'.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Standards of attainment are below national averages but progress is satisfactory overall as students enter with low qualifications. The school provides a good curriculum with a range of academic and vocational courses designed to meet the needs of individual students. While there is some good or better teaching, the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In some subjects, students are given insufficient challenge to enable more of them to achieve higher grades.

Students' personal development is good because of the good support they receive. They contribute well to the life of the school and the community. They enjoy their learning and appreciate the good relationships they have with staff and the advice they receive when considering subject and career options. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Recent staff changes are now enabling the school to initiate improvements to raise standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment of students at all levels.
- Ensure that all students understand what they need to do to improve in lessons.
- Improve the way that leaders at all levels set clear direction to ensure that students make better progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory, although standards are below the national average. The attainment of students when they enter the school in Year 7 is below the national average. In Years 7 to 9 they make good progress; achievement in English is particularly high, but students perform relatively less well in science. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement is satisfactory compared with their starting points. The attainment of five or more GCSE A* to C grades is below the national average, and has declined since the previous year. When including English and mathematics, the proportion reaching the high grades has improved, although still remaining below average. A high percentage of students gain at least five grades at A* to G.

Having identified that students' progress at Key Stage 4 is inconsistent and below the expected level in some subjects, the school is now taking action to address these issues. More robust tracking and early intervention are beginning to show improvement, although their impact on progress has yet to be seen. Good support ensures that no group is at a disadvantage. Indeed, students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those with English as a second language, make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's positive ethos contributes significantly to students' good personal development and well-being. For example, one student said that all staff, 'try and make you feel welcome'.

Students feel safe, enjoy school, and attend well. They are aware of the need for healthy lifestyles and take full advantage of the many sports activities available. Most students have good attitudes to school and their learning, and are well behaved. Any instances of poor behaviour are managed well by staff.

Students' contribution to school life is strong through the school council, school cabinet, and student leaders. They make a good contribution to the local community, for example, through sports activities in primary schools and concerts in hospitals and nursing homes. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, demonstrated through assemblies and celebrations of festivals such as Eid. Students mix harmoniously round the school. Their development of skills to help them prepare for future life is satisfactory, supported through effective links with the local business community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Through an effective professional development programme, teaching and learning are now good overall, although satisfactory in the sixth form. Students report on the good relationships they have with staff and how well they are motivated to succeed. Students are set challenging targets. However, there is inconsistency in their understanding of what they need to do to move their learning forward, and they are not encouraged sufficiently to take responsibility for their own learning.

In the best lessons, students are actively engaged through tasks that are exciting and that enable them to be creative in their thinking. The pace of most lessons is swift and students' knowledge and understanding are regularly checked to consolidate progress and move learning forward. However, in some lessons, students are not sufficiently challenged. Where the pace is slow, students lose concentration, and occasionally a minority disrupt the work of others. Exemplars in teaching from the school's sports specialism are now being shared across the school, for example in English and modern foreign languages, promoting confidence in teachers to become more innovative in their lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum meets the needs of the students well, for example, through the introduction of vocational courses. There is a good range of options and the school has effective guidance systems to ensure provision matches their needs and capabilities.

Collaboration with other organisations has introduced greater flexibility for students in Years 10 and 11, but the school is rightly reviewing its vocational provision for the future.

The extensive range of extra-curricular activities includes many cultural, sporting and musical opportunities. There is a broad range of trips and visits, both home and abroad, to complement and support students' learning and development, for example, with music performances, inter-school sports competitions, and various overseas cultural visits. Participation is high and does much to encourage teamwork and enjoyment of school. An impressive range of curriculum enrichment activities helps to meet the needs of students of all abilities, and teachers continually seek out new opportunities for students to further develop their skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents comment that all staff, 'are a very dedicated, caring and helpful group; they are always ready to assist in every way possible', and students speak highly of the support that they receive. Safeguarding procedures are securely in place. There are excellent links with external agencies such as the 'Children in Need Team', and medical and social services, to help with students' social, emotional and behavioural development. Induction procedures are clear and effective for students entering Year 7, through strong links with primary schools, and with high parental involvement. Students in other year groups receive sound advice as they move on to the next stages of their education.

Effective systems across the school are in place to track students' learning and good support is provided for students with specific learning needs. Assessment data are used well to inform teachers' planning and to ensure that activities match the students' abilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has recently restructured leadership and management, and established a new senior leadership team eager to drive forward improvements. Challenging targets have been set in all three key stages and the improved use of data is resulting in a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although self-evaluation overall is still only satisfactory. The senior team has implemented a range of initiatives in key aspects of the school's work, but there is not yet a clear and consistent direction to drive forward improvement in students' progress.

A comprehensive programme of lesson observations and training is beginning to raise standards in the classroom, and processes for monitoring students' performance are being embedded, but are not yet used consistently across the school. Consequently, there is some evidence of improvement in standards of work but it is too early to judge final outcomes for students. Although 'green shoots' are starting to emerge, sufficient impact of many of the initiatives cannot yet be seen. The school's response to community cohesion is excellent. Particularly noteworthy are its promotion of inclusion, and its provision of sporting and musical opportunities in and for the local community, and abroad. Governors have sound financial knowledge and are on target to eliminate a deficit budget. The school receives good challenge and support from the governing body, which is well informed and committed to school improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?	2	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?	2	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Mandeville School Specialist Sports College, Aylesbury, HP21 8ES

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to your teachers and other staff, and visiting lessons. Many of you and your parents told us how the caring and supportive environment, and your good relationships with teachers, meant that you enjoy school and feel safe there. We judged your school to be a very caring school that is providing you with a satisfactory education. We were particularly impressed by:

- the courses and other activities that the school provides to ensure that you enjoy school and have the best opportunities to make good progress in your academic and personal development
- the way the school cares for and supports you in your learning, and when you have other problems or concerns
- the improvements that the senior staff are putting into place to help you make better progress in your studies.

To make your school even better we have recommended that:

- it helps you do better in national tests and exams as you move through the school
- teachers explain clearly what you need to do to improve your learning and understanding
- managers set a clear direction for how the school can help you to improve the progress you make at each key stage.

The senior staff and governors know what needs to be done to improve the school and have plans to do it. We believe that if you behave well and work hard in lessons, and help the school put these plans in place, then standards will rise further. On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Fletcher

Her Majesty's Inspector