

Murray Park Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112991
Local Authority	City of Derby LA
Inspection number	311080
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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	1008
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr P Branson
Headteacher	Mr E Green
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Murray Road Mickleover Derby DE3 9LL
Telephone number	01332 515921
Fax number	01332 519146

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Murray Park Foundation School is a specialist school for mathematics and computing. The school is larger than most other secondary schools. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7, while covering a wide range fluctuates from average to below. In most years, it is below average. The school serves the communities of Mackworth and Mickleover, but with a significant proportion of students drawn from some of the most disadvantaged wards in the City of Derby. There is a broad mix of social and economic circumstances and, overall, a below average picture. Students are mainly of White British background. There is a below average proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and of those who are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, while the proportion with statements of special educational need is average. The school holds the Investor in People and Artsmark Silver Awards, and became a Creative Partnerships Core School from September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good and inclusive school provides good value for money. The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to providing an education that meets the needs of every individual. The school uses its specialist status in mathematics and computing well to promote learning and raise standards. It has good capacity to improve further, based on good leadership and management, challenging targets and excellent self-evaluation procedures. These procedures involve all staff with leadership responsibilities and provide a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Standards overall, while broadly average, are improving. In 2007, the proportion of students gaining 5 or more A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations was average. These results represent good achievement when standards on entry to the school are taken into account. However, the percentage of students gaining 5 or more A* to C grades with mathematics and English included was below average. Raising standards in these subjects is a key challenge for the school.

The school has done much to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, there are many good and occasionally outstanding lessons. In these lessons, students are actively engaged in learning and make good progress as a result. In some lessons, teachers spend too much time talking and do not make enough use of rapid questioning techniques to ensure all students are engaged, or to assess students' level of understanding and the extent to which the learning objectives are being achieved. In almost all lessons, the positive impact of the school's specialist status is seen in the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). The teaching and support for students who find learning more difficult is good and subsequently these students make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Underpinning students' good progress are effective care, support and guidance, and the rigorous way in which students' progress towards their challenging targets is monitored, with parents and carers involved in the process. This has raised expectations of academic standards among staff and students. The guidance given to students on what they need to do to achieve their targets is exceptionally good. Students' progress is also supported by a highly innovative curriculum that is outstandingly well planned to meet students' changing needs as they move through the school. This is having a positive effect on preparing students for their future economic well-being and increasing their enjoyment of school, which is reflected in the rising attendance rate.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Students say that they feel safe in school and have a good understanding of what they need to do to be healthy. Many students, particularly in the upper years, make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The majority of parents are very supportive of the school's work; however, a significant minority raised concerns about the quality of some teaching and aspects of student behaviour. Inspectors found that the school is a calm and orderly community and that most students behave sensibly both in lessons and around the school. A minority, however, display immaturity in their behaviour when not under the direct supervision of staff and lack the self control necessary to work purposefully when opportunities are provided to work independently or in small groups. Clear actions to improve each of these aspects feature in the school's improvement plan.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the proportion of students gaining A* to C GCSE grades in English and mathematics to at least match the national average.
- Ensure that the ongoing assessment of students' learning is a feature of all lessons so that teaching can be modified to make sure there are no gaps in understanding and good progress is made.
- Ensure that all students take full responsibility for their own behaviour when not under direct supervision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and in most years achieve average national test results. In 2007, the proportion of students gaining the expected Level 5 or better in English, mathematics and science was average. However, while progress in mathematics and science was good, progress in English was satisfactory. This was because fewer students achieved the higher Level 6 or better in English than in the other two subjects. Although girls make slightly better progress than boys, there are no particular groups that underachieve. In 2007, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades was average. Taking account of these students' attainment on entry to Year 7, their progress and achievements were good and the school met its GCSE targets. However, progress in English and mathematics was satisfactory, rather than good, and the proportions of students gaining A* to C grades in these subjects were below average. As a result, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics was also below average. The school is implementing a number of well-considered strategies to tackle this issue. Specialist targets were exceeded in ICT but not achieved in mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that the majority of students, including those who find learning difficult, are making good progress and are on track to meet the higher targets set for this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and cultural development, is satisfactory. Social development is good. Much effort goes into providing opportunities for collaborative work in lessons and this supports students' social development. Students have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and this is supported by the participation of many in a wide range of sporting activities. The school makes a good contribution to students' future economic well-being through specialist activities and the variety of work related learning and vocational courses available in Key Stage 4. Through the school council, students are able to express their opinions and contribute to the school community and through a variety of charitable activities, they make a good contribution to the wider community.

Most students say that they enjoy school and this is reflected in the improving rate of attendance that matches the national average. The school is doing much to improve standards of behaviour and most students behave sensibly both in lessons and around the school. As a result, the school is an orderly community. Through the success of a variety of strategies, the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen by around 40% in the present school year. Nevertheless, the school recognises that the number of fixed-term exclusions is still too high. This is mainly

because a minority of students display immature behaviour and an inability to engage in learning when not under direct supervision.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school has worked hard and successfully in recent years to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A consistent approach to planning lessons is having an increasingly positive impact on the quality of learning. The impact of the school's specialism is seen in the effective use of interactive whiteboards to stimulate interest and increase motivation. In most lessons, learning objectives are made clear and teachers use their subject expertise well to extend students' knowledge and understanding. In these lessons, there is a high level of challenge and sharp and incisive questioning is used to assess students' understanding, share ideas and shape students' learning. This promotes independence and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. In many of the satisfactory lessons, teachers talk too much with the result that students are only passively engaged and some lose interest. In these lessons, questioning is rarely used to identify gaps in students' understanding so that teaching can be modified as the lesson proceeds to ensure that all are making good progress. Teaching assistants provide effective support for students who find learning more difficult. Rigorous procedures for assessing and tracking students' attainment are contributing to the good progress that students are making.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is exceptionally well suited to the needs and aspirations of students of all abilities. An innovative approach to the curriculum in Year 7 provides greater continuity with students' learning experiences in the primary schools, and appropriately emphasises the development of literacy, numeracy and social skills. This innovative approach is continued through Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 where students are able to plan individual learning routes through a comprehensive mix of academic and vocational courses. This provision is significantly contributing to students' good achievement and helping to promote positive attitudes to school in students less suited to the more traditional options. Reflecting the school's specialist status, the increased use of technology is having a positive impact on the development of students' ICT skills. A well-planned citizenship programme contributes effectively to students' understanding of social issues and curriculum provision for students in need of additional learning support is good. The curriculum is complemented by an extensive range of enrichment activities. Students of all abilities take advantage of the many sporting and other clubs and activities, educational visits and residential opportunities the school offers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. Students say they feel safe and are well supported by staff. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are well established and understood by all staff. Good support is provided for vulnerable students and those identified with additional learning needs. Gifted and talented students are supported effectively through the school's specialist activities and a wide range of enrichment

opportunities. A number of strategies to improve behaviour, such as the use of the student inclusion centre, are having a positive impact and, although this remains a work in progress, the number of fixed-term exclusions is falling. Procedures for setting students' academic targets and for monitoring their academic progress are rigorous. These provide students, teachers and parents with a clear understanding of students' progress and enable the school to identify and act on potential underachievement. This is having a significant impact on the good progress students are now making. Appropriate careers advice and guidance help to ensure students are given suitable information on further and higher education and employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership, management and governance are hallmarks of the school's increasing success. The headteacher, with strong support from the senior leadership team and others with management responsibilities, ensures that this is an inclusive school and one with a very clear sense of direction. Together they provide the school with a clear and accurate agenda for improvement. This is based on systematic reviews of performance by senior and middle leaders, together with exemplary evaluation procedures. Although the full impact of the school's strategies to raise standards has yet to be seen, expectations are high and challenging academic targets set. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined to enhance support for teaching and learning and ensure that there is clear accountability for performance. The opportunities provided by the school's specialist status are managed well. Provision is enhanced by good links with other schools, colleges, businesses and the community. School governance is good. Governors capably fulfil their strategic role in guiding the school's work and providing challenge for further 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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	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?	1
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

19 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Murray Park Foundation School, Mickleover, Derby, DE3 9LL

Thank you for welcoming my team of inspectors and myself to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and joining you in your lessons.

We found that Murray Park is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Your headteacher, governors and all of the staff at the school do everything with your best interests in mind. The curriculum provides you with an excellent range of courses. This, together with the school's specialist status, ensures that all of you are able to find something suitable for your needs and helps to prepare you for the future.

You say that you enjoy school and that you feel part of a safe and caring community. The majority of you behave well both in lessons and around the school. Your teachers work hard to provide you with lessons that interest you and to provide opportunities for you to work together and share ideas. But in some lessons progress is slowed because the behaviour of some students is too immature for them to take advantage of these opportunities, and dealing with this behaviour demands too much of the teachers' time. To improve this we have asked the school to make sure that all of you take full responsibility for your own behaviour. In most lessons, teachers take care to check that you understand everything as the lessons goes along and we have asked the school to make sure that this happens in all lessons.

Your achievement is good, but it could improve, particularly for those of you in Key Stage 4 who are capable of gaining higher grades in your GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. We have asked the school, and the school is determined to do all it can, to make sure that this happens.

You can help your school and yourself by working hard, following the advice teachers give you and having high expectations about your own capabilities. This applies particularly to those of you who find it difficult to behave as well as you should in lessons.

With best wishes for your future success.

Dr Kenneth C Thomas

Lead inspector