

# Mill Hill School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113001
<b>Local Authority</b>	DERBYSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311084
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Cook HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1265
6th form	152
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Roberts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sarah Graham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Peasehill Ripley Derbyshire DE5 3JQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01773 746334
<b>Fax number</b>	01773 570685

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

The number of students who attend Mill Hill School make it a larger than average secondary school. Student's attainment when they start in Year 7 is broadly average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds or those who do not have English as their first language is well below the national average and less than 2%.

The school was awarded a specialist school status in 2004 and is a Media Arts College. The school has also achieved a number of awards including: Healthy Schools Award, Gold ArtsMark, Investors in People, Career Mark, Basic Skills Agency Equability Mark and recognition that it follows all recommendations as to managing finances.

There has been a high turnover of teaching staff over the last three years including those on the senior leadership team (SLT). The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) role is currently being covered by a temporary member of staff, as is the business management of finances.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

Mill Hill school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Currently, it is not effective enough in ensuring students achieve as well as they could in all subjects. In accordance with legislation, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to student's achievement and the quality of teaching.

The amount of progress many students make in mathematics and science is inadequate. A significant number of boys do not make adequate progress and because teaching is not always matched to the learning needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities, many of these make inadequate progress. This inadequate progress is a result of teaching that is unsatisfactory.

Standards in the school are broadly average at the end of Year 9, although the proportion of students achieving above average results is much lower than the national average. By the end of Year 11, standards vary for each subject area. The proportion of students who achieve five GCSE A\* to C passes has risen over the last three years but when taking into account their starting points, progress is sometimes inadequate.

Students' behaviour, attendance and moral, social and cultural development all confirm that their personal development is satisfactory. The pastoral support students receive is good. Student's behaviour is satisfactory. Parents and students commented that this is not always the case in every lesson. However, the school has taken action and there are signs of improvement. The school makes all necessary safety checks and the level of care student's benefit from is satisfactory.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recently, the headteacher has very effectively managed a number of positive changes to the senior leadership team (SLT). However, some positions are still not filled and this is limiting the impact of this team. The quality of middle leadership, staff responsible for subject areas, varies and some is inadequate. The SLT and governors of the school are fully aware of the need to improve achievement by eradicating any teaching that is not effective. There are early signs that teachers are responding to training and using teaching strategies that improve the rate of progress students make. What holds the school back is where these strategies are not yet being used or have not been used long enough to have impact. Likewise, the assessment of student's progress has improved but not all teachers are using this to set clear targets for students or raise the level of challenge their teaching should provide.

The school was awarded specialist school status in 2004 and has made effective use of this in the wider community as well as the school itself. To date the school has met all of its specialist school targets with the exception of those for A-level Art and there is a robust action plan for improvement in place. The school has used its status to forge strong links with local primary schools which involve not only sharing expertise and equipment but also providing training for staff so that there is a long term benefit.

The school has been successful in using the specialist status to have a positive impact on raising standards in English.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. Overall standards are broadly in line with the national average. Although achievement is satisfactory overall, progress in some A-level subjects falls significantly below what might be expected. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teaching time allocated is below the national average.

The sixth form has a positive ethos in which the majority of students enjoy their studies. Students' personal development is satisfactory and the sixth form offers a good range of enrichment and other extra-curricular activities which encourage students to participate in the wider community. The curriculum is satisfactory with a wide range of courses on offer. Students' behaviour is good and they make a positive contribution to the community.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Attendance has improved significantly and students are beginning to value the structures put in place by the new director and the impact they are having on their achievement. There is inconsistency in the use of targets for improvement given to students and they are not used effectively enough to motivate students to do better.

Leadership and management are good and there is a good capacity to improve the provision further. The director of the sixth form has a clear vision of where the sixth form is going and what needs to be done to achieve this. She is fully aware that achievement needs to be raised and that in order to do this there needs to be a more robust use of data and target setting as well as a more rigorous review of teaching and learning.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve student's achievement where it is inadequate, especially in mathematics and science.
- Ensure the consistency of effective teaching across the school.
- Use assessment more effectively to inform teaching and raise expectations.
- Improve the effectiveness of middle leadership.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

Significant numbers of students make inadequate progress in mathematics in Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11) and in science in Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9). Many boys also make inadequate progress, as well as some students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Most students start in Year 7 having attained average standards. By the end of Year 9 standards are broadly average. However, the proportion of students who gain the above average Level 6 and 7 at the end of Year 9 is much lower than the national average, especially in English and science. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs A\* to C has improved over the last three years. However, this masks the below average standards in mathematics, physical education, geography, drama, design and technology and economics. In 2007 56% of boys achieved five GCSE A\* to C passes compared to 79% of girls. Standards vary and in English, music and home economics the proportion of students gaining an A\* to C pass in GCSE examinations in 2007 was above the national average.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in attendance rates which are satisfactory and are improving, especially in the sixth form. Whilst most students are punctual to lessons and move purposefully along the corridors, unpunctuality causes disruption in some subjects.

A small minority of parents have concerns about behaviour and bullying in the school. The inspection found that the behaviour of students, in the majority of lessons is satisfactory but where the pace of teaching is slow or fails to stimulate, the poor behaviour of one or two students hinders the learning of all. Students have begun to respond to the school's new behaviour policy and there has been a significant fall in the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Students talk about the inconsistencies in the way staff use sanctions. Behaviour around the school is generally good and is well monitored by staff. The Intermediate Award of the Anti-Bullying Charter has reinforced students' feelings of security and many are aware of how to access help if needed.

Students have a satisfactory range of opportunities to make healthy life style choices. The amount of time students spend in physical education lessons is sufficient up to the end of Year 9 but older students do not get the recommended two hours.

A small group of students, who form the student leadership group, feel that the school could do more to listen to and act on their views. Sixth form and Year 10 students supporting younger students, for example, those with reading difficulties, are examples of the satisfactory opportunities given to contribute to the school community. Students' future economic well-being benefits from work experience but there is insufficient support for this area given in information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in the main school. The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school so that not all students are making satisfactory progress in all subjects. Parents and students commented on the high turnover of staff having a detrimental impact on learning.

Most teachers have good relationships with students using praise and humour to engage and motivate them. The best lessons are well planned and resourced with a sharp focus on what students need to learn. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and of examination requirements. Students respond well to clear explanations and to probing questions that help them understand their work better. When they know what to do and how they will be assessed, they work with purpose and at a good pace. At other times, some students arrive late to class, do not settle and concentrate and they produce little work. In unsatisfactory lessons, teachers do not plan and prepare effectively, students' learning is not managed skilfully and they are not challenged to raise their standards. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities or

those with above average abilities, do not always make satisfactory progress because work is not well adapted to their capabilities. Only in the very best lessons are high attaining students challenged to think more widely and deeply.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall with some good features. In Key Stage 3, art, music and drama are taught in Year 7 as separate subjects helping to build student's confidence and communication skills. All students take either French or Spanish. In most subjects students are taught in all ability groups but work is rarely planned to meet individual needs. This limits the progress of gifted students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

In Key Stage 4, there is a wide selection of accredited courses on offer. Those provided in school include more academic and traditional courses as well as applied and vocational subjects such as music technology. A significant number of lower attaining students follow practical courses in the work place to qualify, for example, as motor vehicle mechanics. They also have appropriate chances to gain qualifications in basic literacy, numeracy and life skills. All students follow an examination course in citizenship and ICT. There is a good range of extra curricular activities and visits particularly for sport and the arts. These opportunities extend students' learning outside the classroom.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pastoral and welfare support for students is good. Arrangements for supporting Year 7 students new to the school include organising tutor groups according to the primary schools they attended and using experienced staff to help students adjust to secondary school. This provides some continuity for students and makes many feel safe and secure. Arrangements for safeguarding students are in line with statutory requirements. Child protection issues are well managed and appropriate training is provided for all staff.

A wide range of support is provided for students including a counsellor, mediators and mentors. The 'BASE' room provides a safe space in which students can receive support. Good relationships exist with external agencies.

Guidance for students to make decisions about option and career choices is good. The school takes positive steps to involve parents in this process. However, academic targets for students have only recently been introduced and their use is still developing. Guidance for students in lessons varies with some students receiving little direction on how to improve their learning and achieve their targets. Most teachers check students' books regularly and but few provide detailed feedback and set specific targets.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher has very effectively managed a number of changes to the SLT and has deployed key staff into important roles. For example, the school has recently set up a leadership role entitled 'Director of Learning', which is beginning to have a positive impact on student's progress. One parent wrote about this role 'On a positive note, my children feel well supported by their Directors of Learning who are approachable and will endeavour to deal with any problems'. This new enthusiastic SLT, some relatively inexperienced, have begun to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The SLT has been right to focus on introducing teaching strategies, which should engage students in their learning and help them make progress. There is now evidence that these strategies are beginning to be used, although not yet consistently in all lessons.

The SLT has no illusions as to the quality of provision in the school and has made accurate evaluations of the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Evaluations are based on a much-improved collection of student progress data and observations of teaching and learning. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are fully aware of the school's self-evaluation, agree with it and are both challenging and supporting the school as it improves.

The temporary SENCO has effectively begun to restructure provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with statements of special education need. There are no permanent staff in place responsible for the leadership of science and ICT, which leaves leadership and management weakened. The SLT has identified weaknesses in curriculum leadership and has taken effective action. However, in some subjects, leadership and management remain inadequate and these weaknesses hold back any real progress the school aspires to.



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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	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?	4	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	

### 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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3	3
The attendance of learners	3	3
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	3
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	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	
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	3	
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?	Yes	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 February 2008

Dear Students,

Inspection of Mill Hill School, Peashill, Ripley, DE5 3JQ

Thank you for the helpful comments many of you shared with us during the inspection of your school. Your views and comments helped us make judgements about how effective your school currently is. We found a number of positive changes happening in your school. Behaviour is improving, although there are still a few of you that disrupt lessons. Your attendance has improved recently especially in the sixth form. The range of courses you can take in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form gives you good choices.

When we looked at the amount of progress you make we had some concerns. For example, in mathematics and science there are a number of you that do not make enough progress. Boys do not always make the progress they should and we noticed this in some of the lessons we observed. We also found that the work you are given is sometimes either too easy or too difficult. For these reasons, we have given your school a Notice to Improve. This means that you will be inspected in about a year's time to check as to whether things have improved enough. Before that inspection, your school will also get a monitoring visit from an inspector. To ensure your school is focused on what it needs to do to improve we have identified four key areas to work on:

- The progress you make in lessons especially in mathematics and science - this includes the progress boys make.
- The effectiveness of teaching - making sure teaching is always good enough to help you learn.
- The way teachers find out how much you know so that they can decide what to teach next (you play an important role in this because you need to know what your targets are and how you can achieve them).
- Making sure that all of the staff responsible for subjects work in the same effective way.

We hope that you will work with your teachers to improve your school.

Andrew Cook

Her Majesty's Inspector