

Mayfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116463
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	312324
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Browning
Headteacher	Mr D Trimmer
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Mayfield Road North End Portsmouth PO2 0RH
Telephone number	02392 693432
Fax number	02392 665298

Age group	11-16
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Inspection number	312324

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Mayfield School is a larger than average sized comprehensive school. The school was designated as a specialist arts college in September 2007. Few students at the school come from a Black or minority ethnic background. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of these students have either moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Mayfield is an improving school, but its overall effectiveness is inadequate because too many students make insufficient progress. Therefore, in accordance with Section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, 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 teaching, learning and achievement.

There have been some improvements in results in recent years. In particular, the proportion of students attaining five or more higher GCSE grades has increased considerably. However, standards remain too low at both key stages and too many students fail to make sufficient progress. This is because the quality of lessons is too variable. Whilst some lessons are good or outstanding, too many lack variety and fail to interest and engage students sufficiently which limits their progress.

Other aspects of the school's provision are satisfactory. The curriculum has been developed by the school to ensure that it meets the needs and interests of students as fully as possible. However, many of these changes are yet to make a significant impact on students' achievement. The care, guidance and support provided by the school are satisfactory, with a number of strengths. Staff provide comprehensive and effective pastoral support for students. An improved system is in place to set targets for students and to track their progress. However, many teachers do not make enough use of this information when planning lessons or monitoring students' progress in lessons.

Strengths in care, guidance and support contribute to students' satisfactory and improving personal development and well-being. Students confirm that they feel safe and secure in school. Students' enjoyment of learning is satisfactory, although many are rather passive in lessons and they sometimes lack motivation. Attendance has improved, although it is still below average. Some students also lack a sense of urgency in getting to lessons on time. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection. The behaviour of students around the site and in most lessons is at least satisfactory. However, where teaching is weaker, behaviour sometimes deteriorates and can become a significant barrier to learning. Students make a good contribution to the community, for example through the effective school council or by acting as governors, prefects or mentors.

Senior leaders are providing clear direction and are ambitious for further improvement. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, although judgements about quality are not always sharp enough and are sometimes over-generous. Changes have recently been made to the work of the school's middle leaders, who now have much greater responsibility for securing improvement in their areas. However, these changes are relatively recent and middle leaders are not yet having sufficient impact on the quality of teaching. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. There have been clear improvements in a number of aspects of the school's work. However, progress in other areas has been slower and students' achievement remains too low. Although still at an early stage, the school's work as a specialist arts college is a strength and is already contributing to the school's wider improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve the achievement of all students.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning.
- Improve the capacity of middle leaders to bring about improvements in teaching, learning and students' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Students generally enter the school with standards that are slightly below the national average. They make inadequate progress during their time in school and leave having attained standards that are significantly below the national average. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other students.

End of Key Stage 3 test results are consistently below national averages. Although results showed some improvement in 2005 and 2006, they dipped significantly in 2007 and were exceptionally low, particularly in mathematics and science. These students made inadequate progress during Key Stage 3.

GCSE results have improved since the last inspection, although standards are still low. Even with these improvements, the progress made by students as they move through the school is consistently below that expected. In 2007, standards were below average. These students made inadequate progress given their capabilities and starting points in Year 7. Standards in English and mathematics are also low. As a result, few students attain five or more higher grades including these subjects. However, standards in the specialist subject of dance are high and students achieve well in this area.

There are some indications that students are making better progress this year, but their progress is still inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students confirm very clearly that behaviour has improved in recent years. The number of exclusions has fallen considerably and is now below average. Although not a serious problem, behaviour around the school can be rather boisterous. All students participate in at least two hours of physical education every week. This helps students to adopt healthy lifestyles, although not all make appropriately healthy food choices. Students are helped to develop better work-related skills than in previous years. Far fewer students now end up without employment, education or training when they leave and many more continue in education. However, the low standards achieved by many students inevitably limit their future prospects. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is highly inconsistent. In the good lessons, teachers manage students well and relationships are positive. They use a variety of activities and strategies including questioning, discussion and group work. As a result, students are attentive, enjoy

learning, and make good progress. However, too many lessons lack variety, with students spending too much time passively listening to the teacher. In these lessons, students are too dependent on the teacher and are not able to develop the skills needed to work on their own or with others. They easily lose interest and motivation, and make limited progress.

In some cases, effective use is made of information about students' progress to plan lessons, set targets for students and monitor progress. However, many teachers make insufficient use of this information. The objectives of the lesson are often not used sufficiently to focus the lesson or to check what students have learned. While some teachers provide very helpful written feedback to students on how to improve their work, the quality and regularity of marking across the school are inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Considerable changes have been made to the curriculum in recent years. For example, Key Stage 4 students now have greater choice and can follow an increased range of options to suit their interests more closely. At Key Stage 3, higher attaining students move more quickly through the curriculum and take national examinations at the end of Year 8. While this has not yet made a significant impact on their standards, it is providing useful additional time for them to study other subjects. The cultural studies programme in Year 7 integrates elements from different subjects. The opportunities that this provides for teachers from different subject areas to work together are helping to improve the quality of curriculum planning across the school. However, while there is some evidence that changes to the curriculum are helping to raise achievement, their impact is not yet fully proven.

A good range of additional subject support sessions is available to students. The range of other extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. Activities connected to the school's specialist status, such as the highly successful productions and the school's involvement with the Rock Challenge dance competition, are strengths and are popular with students.

The school has successfully widened students' opportunities to develop information and communication technology skills across the curriculum, although leaders rightly recognise the need for further development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Students feel well supported by the school. They confirm that any instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. Procedures to ensure that students are safe meet current requirements. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, looked after children and vulnerable students are well cared for and supported. Procedures for managing attendance are robust and are supporting improvement. Arrangements for care and support benefit from close working relationships with a broad range of outside agencies and organisations. For example, close partnership working with Connexions ensures that students receive useful advice about careers and further education opportunities.

The school has recently improved the system that it uses to monitor students' progress against their targets. This is helping leaders to identify underachievement and is supporting some useful intervention work with students. However, while the system itself is strong, the information that it provides is not yet used consistently across the school by individual staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Changes have recently been made to develop leadership across the school. The roles and responsibilities of middle leaders are now much clearer and additional time is available to enable them to perform their roles effectively. They are now being held more accountable for the performance of their areas. These changes are beginning to lead to sharper evaluation and monitoring, and this is strengthening the school's capacity to improve further. However, these changes are still relatively recent and middle leaders are not yet making sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and the progress made by students. Governors are monitoring the school's work, challenging leaders and discharging their responsibilities appropriately.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	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
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	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

04 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Mayfield School, Portsmouth, PO2 0RH

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings. We found that your school is improving and has many positive features. However, we also found some important things that need to be improved. We have therefore given the school a 'Notice to Improve'. This means that inspectors will return in a few months to check the school's progress.

Staff work hard to care for you and you told us that you feel very well supported. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection. We were particularly impressed by the way in which students contribute to the school and wider community, for example through the school council or by acting as prefects, governors or mentors.

There have been some rises in examination results in recent years. However, many of you do not achieve as much as you could. The main reason for this is that lessons are too variable. Whilst some lessons are good, too many lack variety and do not enable you to make enough progress. In these lessons, you easily get bored and behaviour is sometimes poor. We have asked the school to focus very hard on improving the consistency of lessons. This will help you to achieve more.

Your school's leaders understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and are committed to making improvements. There have been a number of recent changes to the school's leadership and management. Leaders and managers across the school are now playing a greater role and this is helping to improve the school. We have asked the school to continue with this work and to ensure that they focus very sharply on improving lessons.

The inspection team wishes you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector