

Iffley Mead School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123338
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314565
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Lily Evans

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Cormac O'Hara
Headteacher	Mrs Kay Willett
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Iffley Turn Oxford OX4 4DU
Telephone number	01865 747606
Fax number	01865 711134

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Students who attend this school live locally or travel from in from other areas of Oxford. This is a special school for students with moderate learning difficulties. An increasing proportion of students, now more than half, have a history of social and/or behavioural difficulties as their primary need. From September 2008, the school will also provide a post-16 department. There are no students under the age of 10 years currently attending the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Iffley Mead is a good school. One parent wrote, 'The young people feel welcomed, safe and cared for, so of course they develop in personality, confidence and skills.' The personal development of students is outstanding. Although many of the students have had difficult experiences in other schools, they enjoy coming to this school. Their attendance is good and they wear their school uniform with pride.

At the heart of the school's work is the 'Restorative Justice' system. It demands that students admit wrongdoings, take responsibility for their actions and offer ways to make reparation. They know there will be no punishment. The dynamic headteacher has driven forward this approach with a firm belief in its effectiveness. The system demands a whole school commitment. This is achieved through careful induction of staff and monitoring of teaching styles. The corporate approach enables the school to respond extremely well to the challenging behaviour of students. Staff always try to find strategies to avoid potential conflicts. The management has made a proper commitment to providing excellent pastoral support and care to meet the emotional needs of students. In highly successful individual and small group support sessions, staff and students deal with issues openly and respectfully.

Since the last inspection, the population of the school has changed. The curriculum is good and is continually evolving to meet the needs and aspirations of students. In Years 6 to 9 staff recognise that they can do more to raise standards in reading. Students do not currently have daily opportunities to build up their reading skills. A recent short pilot study, which concentrated on students recognising sounds in words, has shown promising outcomes in reading and spelling for the few students involved. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides outstanding opportunities for work-related learning and developing independence skills. This helps to prepare students well for their future lives. Opportunities for physical education are excellent throughout the school. The quality of teaching is overall good with some outstanding examples. Teachers plan well to meet the widely differing needs of students. Well-prepared special needs teaching assistants make valuable contributions to boost students' confidence. Teachers provide good challenge in lessons with planned extension activities often using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) programs.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Despite staff and governor changes, the hard working headteacher and senior staff have brought about good improvement since the last inspection. Their capacity to bring about further improvement is good. The senior management team has recently changed. Although they have clear roles and responsibilities in relation to the school development plan, they have had insufficient opportunity so far to work together. The school acknowledges that they have to establish cohesion and be prepared to step up to leadership if an occasion arises.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure in Years 6 to 9 that the curriculum planning provides daily timetabled opportunities for all students to build their reading skills.
- Develop the roles of senior managers so that they form a cohesive team focused on raising standards and achievement further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most students join the school with low levels of attainment. All make good progress from their starting points. All students in Year 11 work for accreditation in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Achievement in science and ICT is good. Achievement in physical education and work related learning are outstanding. Many students gain accreditation as Junior Sports leaders and currently in a choice of six areas of work-related learning. All students gain Food Studies Awards in order to be able to work in the Community Cafe. Their achievement of accreditation in English and mathematics is less successful because they are less confident in those subjects. The school has worked hard to enable students in the current Year 11 to overcome their difficulties. Students' progress in speaking and listening skills is good. Most students are able to express themselves clearly. Progress in reading and writing is less consistent. Keyboards, writing slopes and teaching assistant scribes ensure that students have the support they need to promote their confidence in writing. Most students on the pilot study promoting reading and spelling skills have made rapid progress over a short time.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students say, 'Teachers care about us. They treat us like family.' They learn the value of honesty and being responsible citizens, which contributes to their outstanding spiritual and moral development. When a broken toilet seat was discovered, two students owned up, decided what to pay for a new one and repaired the toilet seat themselves. Students are considerate, respectful, tolerant of each other, and friendly to visitors. The head boy, head girl, and prefects help to mentor younger students. They enjoy lessons, especially learning through games and they gain self-esteem through rewards for hard work. Students recognise that break times can be difficult. They know that if problems or worries arise they will be resolved by talking with specialist staff. Students fully understand the importance of healthy living. One pupil related how she is helping her mother to improve her cooking skills. The school council's suggestions have led to beneficial changes such as having lunch in mixed year groups at tables with staff. This has resulted in excellent behaviour. All year 10 and 11 students gain maturity and social skills from work experience activities and learning to travel independently. This contributes to outstanding social development. Students make excellent contributions to the community especially in Year 11 when they take turns to prepare, cook meals and serve the public at lunch times in the community cafe. The cafe forms part of an excellent business enterprise project. Students have good cultural development. They support a number of charities including a locally based international charity. Students' visit to its distribution warehouse enhanced their understanding of the needs of communities abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' relationships with students are excellent. They encourage discussion and respond with praise when students contribute. This builds students' confidence, their sense of well being and mutual respect. Teachers plan lessons well to meet the diverse needs of students. They appeal to their interests but also challenge higher attainers, for example in mathematics.

In the best lessons, students are actively engaged in activities and games. The tuition is finely tuned to help individuals make very good progress, which is clearly recorded against individual targets at the end of the lesson. Teachers make and use good quality teaching aids such as games, interactive whiteboards and ICT programmes. These help students' understanding, enabling them to work successfully so that they make good progress. Their good progress is also promoted by the skilled support of teaching assistants. There are examples of excellent practice in involving students in assessing their progress towards learning targets but this is inconsistent. In some lessons pupils' targets for writing are too broad. They do not help students to know exactly what the next small step is to improve their writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is matched well to the needs and interests of the school population. Subject leaders are continually modifying planning, for example, to ensure appropriate challenge for higher attainers. Planning for reading does not yet give students sufficient opportunities to practise their reading skills on a daily basis. The curriculum is enhanced well by visits and visitors. These include a regular residential visit to Atlantic College.

In Year 10 and 11, the curriculum is outstanding. Programmes of study allow students to work towards nationally accredited certificates and Junior Sports leadership Awards. An effective programme of work-related learning provides all students in Year 10 and 11 with work experience placements matched to their interests. Additionally, there are long-term placements in Year 11, for example in the community cafe where students can access all their learning within that environment. Through the Business partnership links, students take part in football coaching. They have twice won enterprise competitions through the Young Enterprise and Oxford Education Business Partnership.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff ensure that they provide a high quality of care for students. There are exceptional procedures for the safeguarding of students and these meet fully the statutory requirements. The whole school 'Restorative Justice' system concentrates on building confidence and self-esteem. The school seeks to meet the emotional needs of many of its students. It offers emotional support through therapeutic sessions and provides a very popular 'Pets as Therapy' dog used to help students be calm and in control of their anger. The school uses their excellent links with other professionals to enable students to have the special programmes they need such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. The school tracks and measures students' learning carefully, enabling them to make good progress overall in their individual education plans and behaviour Plans. In Years 10 and 11, the process continues in preparation for external accreditation.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The dedicated headteacher has led the school with single-minded determination through a period of many changes of staff and governors. There have also been changes in the profile of students attending the school, with many more having behavioural and emotional needs.

Supported by a hugely caring school team the management have created a school that students enjoy attending. The senior management team has recently been restructured. Whilst management roles are clearly defined, there is a lack of unity in working together. The monitoring of the work of the school is more developed in Years 10 and 11 than in earlier years. The headteacher and senior staff have accurately evaluated the areas for school improvement and progress towards achieving the goals is good. Governors now provide good support for the school and challenge and support the school effectively. Parents are supportive of the work of the school and confident that it provides for their children's needs very well.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

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

14 July 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Iffley Mead School, Oxford, OX4 4DU

I would like to thank all of you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking with you up at the Community Cafe. What a great place that is! The students working up there were doing a wonderful job.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- Iffley Mead is a good school and it was good to see you are proud to wear the school uniform.
- As you said, the teachers care for you 'as if we were family'.
- You learn to tell the truth about any bad behaviour and to take responsibility for putting things right. This helps you to feel good about yourself.
- Teachers help you to learn by making your lessons interesting and enjoyable. This makes you happy to come to school.
- You make good progress in your learning and enjoy getting big scores on your Star Charts. This makes you work hard in lessons so that you can win rewards.
- The 'Pets as Therapy' dog is helpful in calming you down.
- You make very good progress in PE, ICT and science.
- The school plans excellent work experience and helps you to become independent travellers.
- You work hard in Year 11 to gain external accreditation certificates.

I have suggested your school can improve in a few ways.

- Plan more opportunities for those of you in Years 6 to 9 to improve your reading.
- The senior management team need to practise working together more closely.

I believe you can help your teachers by working hard at practising your reading skills. My very best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Lily Evans

Lead Inspector