

# Mayflower High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115232
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326155
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Abbott 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>	Comprehensive
<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 (total)	1434
Sixth form	220
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Stephanie Dawkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Lee Brumby
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Stock Road Billericay Essex CM12 0RT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01277 623171
<b>Fax number</b>	01277 632256

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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

Mayflower High School has held specialist status in science and mathematics since 2003 and in languages since 2008. It also has a specialist dyslexia unit for 20 pupils. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Investors in People and Silver Healthy Eating Awards. It is designated as a Teaching School by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and therefore provides support to other schools.

Attainment on entry is generally above average. Most students are from White British backgrounds, although there is a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are rather more boys than girls. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is below that found nationally. Among students aged 11–16, one in six receives support for a learning difficulty and/or disability, including 43 with statements of special educational needs.

A day nursery is provided on the school site by Dizzy Ducks Ltd. This provision is not managed by the governing body and will be subject to a separate inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Mayflower High School is a good school with an outstanding sixth form. Achievement is good overall and students' personal development and well-being is outstanding. The school forms effective partnerships with care agencies and has an excellent pastoral care system. As a result, students feel very safe.

The present headteacher, who was appointed in September 2008, has made it a priority to raise achievement. With the support of the senior leadership team and heads of school, he has ensured that leaders at all levels understand their roles in promoting improvement. A system of rigorous departmental reviews provides a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is very effective in its role as a 'critical friend', providing both challenge and support.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained above average. However, students did not achieve as well as expected in 2007 and 2008 GCSE examinations. The school has responded by pursuing its challenging targets with greater vigour and purpose. Effective systems for monitoring students' progress have enabled academic support and guidance to be targeted where it is most needed. As a result, Year 11 students are now on track to achieve well in their GCSE examinations.

Students' attendance, behaviour and enjoyment of school are outstanding. This contributes to a positive ethos where students want to learn and are rarely distracted by misbehaviour. Students live healthily and contribute well to the school community, for example by mentoring younger students. Their social development is outstanding but they have limited opportunities to develop their understanding of cultures other than their own. This reflects the lower priority that has been given to the school's duties to promote community cohesion and to monitor the impact of its work on equal opportunities.

The curriculum meets students' needs well and prepares them well for their future lives. It appropriately reflects the school's specialist status. The very strong extra-curricular provision is an important factor in students' personal development. The school has made some progress in increasing the range of vocational courses, and in providing opportunities to experience other faiths and cultures, but with limited take-up in some cases.

Teaching and learning is mostly good and some lessons are outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge, use questioning well and cater for a variety of learning styles. In the best cases, marking and other assessment is used well to support learning and to plan for different needs. However, these aspects are not consistently good and students do not always know how best to improve their work. Learning support is satisfactory. It contributes to good progress for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but is not organised for maximum effectiveness. For example, teachers have little time to brief their assistants and are not always sure whether a lesson will be supported. In addition, the use made of teaching assistants' notes on students' progress is inconsistent.

The school's specialist status has had a good impact on standards, teaching and learning and enrichment, particularly in science and mathematics. The school has forged impressive curriculum links with schools in the Billericay Education Community and has provided them with training and support from the team of Advanced Skills Teachers. The impact of specialist status is monitored carefully through reviews of the comprehensive action plan.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Students' attainment on entry is close to the average for sixth forms and standards are well above average by the time students leave. At AS and A level, the proportion of A and B grades is close to average but overall success rates are above average. Students make particularly good progress in A level Business Studies, History, Geography, English, Sociology, Religious Studies and General Studies. The sixth form has improved considerably since the last inspection and standards are now well above national averages and improving each year in both AS and A2 examinations. A significant factor is the very good leadership of the head of sixth form and the responsible deputy head. Students' progress is monitored effectively and they are very well supported to ensure that they meet challenging targets. They contribute well to the school and local community. Many mentor younger students, organise events, or lead extra-curricular activities. Their personal development is outstanding, resulting in confident, articulate young adults. The care guidance and support given by the staff is exemplary and this is reflected in student surveys. As one student commented, 'They have done everything they possibly can to make the sixth form experience the best it could possibly be'. The curriculum is currently good in the sixth form and is expanding to support a range of learners although vocational courses have not been popular. The school prides itself in its guidance for Year 11 students, which informs them well about the sixth form but encourages them to consider local college provision, where this is more appropriate.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' experience and understanding of cultures other than their own and give a higher priority to the school's duties to promote community cohesion and to evaluate the impact of its disability, gender and race equality schemes.
- Extend the existing good practice in marking and assessment so that students benefit consistently from lesson planning that recognises their particular needs and feedback that tells them how to improve their work.
- Improve the organisation of learning support to ensure that teachers and teaching assistants know when they will be working together and have time to agree their respective roles in the lesson and share information about the progress of supported students.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Taking into account the recent evidence of better progress from age 11 to 16 and the outstanding progress made by sixth form students, achievement is good overall. Standards are above average throughout the school, and have been for several years. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C, including English and mathematics has increased from 49% in 2006 to 67% in 2008. Nevertheless, an analysis of recent results shows that the students concerned had not made as much progress from age 11 to 16 as similar students in other schools. They had been about 6 months ahead of national expectations when they started secondary education and had not built sufficiently on this advantage. In response, the school has worked hard in the last year to push standards even higher, setting itself challenging targets and strengthening academic support.

There are two important signs that this effort is paying off. Lesson observation shows that students are making good progress in most lessons and the school's own assessments show

that current Year 11 students have made good progress since age 11. The school is rising to the challenge to sustain this improvement in other year groups through focused support for students at risk of falling behind. Students with dyslexia make good progress because of the support they receive from the Dyslexia Unit. The strong pastoral system and the well-planned alternative curriculum enable students with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties to achieve well. Achievement is consistent across different groups, such as boys and girls, and students with different ethnic backgrounds. Standards in English and in the specialist areas of science and mathematics are improving. However, the practice of entering the most able students for GCSE mathematics earlier than necessary reduces their chances of gaining the highest grades.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Students' personal development and well being is outstanding. There are very constructive relationships among students and adults. Attendance is high and few are persistently absent without good cause. Students know how to stay safe in the wider community. Their behaviour is exceptionally good around the school and in lessons, which have a calm and orderly atmosphere. Students report that the rare incidents of bullying are quickly and effectively dealt with. Peer support is particularly strong, including the 'CHiPS' project (Child Line in Partnership With Schools) and the sixth form programme to support younger students. Consequently, students feel very safe and enjoy school tremendously. As one younger student remarked, 'It's good here! I don't think any day is the same. Teachers have high expectations'.

Students' social development is outstanding. Their spiritual and moral development and many aspects of their cultural development are good. However, their understanding of the diversity of cultures in Britain is underdeveloped because they have limited relevant experience. Students participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, many involving physical exercise, and have a good awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. They are well prepared for their future working lives because they have good basic skills and develop good work habits. Students feel listened to and value the work of the school council and other groups. For example, students are being consulted about how to make best use of funds that will be provided by the 'Building Schools for the Future' scheme.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school rightly judges that teaching and learning are good. This has been brought about by a mixture of whole school professional development and focused support to meet needs identified through lesson observations and departmental reviews. A high proportion of the lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding.

Teachers plan lessons with clear learning objectives that include a variety of approaches, including whole class discussion, group activities and individual study. However, work in lessons is not always clearly tailored to match the needs of different groups of students. Teachers have high expectations and they use information and communications technology (ICT) very well to support learning. They know their subjects well and this enables them to ask questions that make students think more deeply, helping them to make good progress. Students' approach to learning is consistently very good: they are enthusiastic, attentive and articulate.

The quality of marking and assessment is variable. Assessment systems are in place but their full impact has yet to be felt. Where they are most effective, they are used well to inform teachers' planning and students are supplied with clear guidance on how to improve. However, teachers do not always use information on how well students are doing to plan appropriate work and guide students' learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has a good, thoughtfully modified curriculum to match learners' aspirations and capabilities and to prepare students to meet the challenges of the next stage of their lives. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 has improved since the previous inspection because lessons now engage students more actively. The school is keen to provide more vocational courses and is part of a consortium that will offer diplomas in creative and media, construction and ICT.

The curriculum is well balanced between academic challenge and personal development, with a range of curriculum pathways, including some with a vocational emphasis. The specialist status is reflected in the provision of three languages, separate sciences for the most able, and an enriched mathematics curriculum. An innovative approach to citizenship lessons integrates personal development and health education. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a focus for planning across all subjects. The Every Child Matters initiative raises pupils' awareness of safety and encourages the development of skills to ensure their future economic well being. An excellent range of sporting, social and cultural extra-curricular activities adds to students' enjoyment of school. The school offers visits to broaden students' experience and understanding of different cultures, but not all students have participated.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support and systems for child protection and safeguarding meet current requirements. The pastoral teams work well in partnership with other agencies to provide outstanding care which ensures that all receive the help and support they require. Surveys undertaken recently have given the school an even greater understanding of the needs of students. Excellent provision is available for those who have worries or concerns, or who feel they just need to talk to someone. The management of attendance and behaviour is excellent and levels of exclusion are low. Students are well informed about their future options for education and careers.

The school has rationalised its system for monitoring students' progress and now provides effective and well directed academic support. Students know what targets have been set for them, but they do not always know how to achieve them. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and the alternative education programme for students at key stage four is particularly successful in re-engaging disaffected students in education. Teaching assistants support learning effectively but they have limited involvement in marking, monitoring or planning work with teachers.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management across the school are good. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has made significant changes in his first year. These changes have already brought about improvements in the achievement and progress of all students. They include restructuring senior leadership roles and commissioning expert reviews to sharpen the quality of monitoring and evaluation. Leaders at all levels are increasingly held to account for raising standards, and the directors of learning and heads of department are rising to the challenge of their enhanced roles. Strategic planning at all levels is extensive, and sensibly focused on a few key issues. Action plans include measurable criteria to keep track of their progress and to gauge their impact. Parents' views are surveyed and taken into account.



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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	1
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	1

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
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	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
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	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	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**

15 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Mayflower High School, Billericay CM12 0RT

I recently visited your school with a team of inspectors. Thank you for welcoming us to your school and helping us with the inspection. We found that Mayflower High School is a good school with an outstanding sixth form. We were very impressed with your attitudes. Your attendance and behaviour are outstanding, you clearly want to learn and you enjoy school a great deal. You told us that you feel safe and well cared for and we agree with you that the school's pastoral care is excellent.

The curriculum meets your needs well and prepares you well for your future lives. The school's specialist status has brought new opportunities and good extra-curricular provision helps your personal development. You also contribute well to the school and local community. Teaching and learning is good, although we found that you are not always sure how best to improve your work. The school's examination results are above average. Our analysis suggested that GCSE results could have been even better in the last two years, but we believe this has been fixed for 2009.

When he arrived as headteacher last September, Mr Brumby made it a priority to improve your progress. Staff at the school have responded with great vigour and purpose, and many of you have had better support and encouragement to reach higher targets. As a result, Year 11 students are now on track to achieve well in their GCSEs. Guidance and support for sixth formers has been strong for some time, and Mayflower's sixth formers are ranked second in Essex for progress. As one student commented, 'They have done everything they possibly can to make the sixth form experience the best it could possibly be'.

The school agrees with our recommended improvements. These are to:

- give a higher priority to planning how the school helps national togetherness, including helping you to understand cultures other than your own
- use assessment consistently well, so lesson plans meet individual needs better and you are clear how to improve your work to meet your targets
- organise learning support better.

Thank you again. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

Her Majesty's Inspector