

Felpham Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126080
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	328454
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Jones 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1370
Sixth form	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Lloyd
Headteacher	Peter Cook
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
School address	Felpham Way Felpham Bognor Regis PO22 8EL
Telephone number	01243 826511
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Felpham Community College is larger than most schools. Few students come from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. Fewer students than usual are eligible for free schools meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that found nationally. The school has international school status and has been designated as a specialist school in mathematics and computing since September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Felpham Community College provides a satisfactory standard of education. Parents recognise the school's strong focus on the 'whole child' and appreciate the care taken to ensure students are safe and well looked after. Students' achievement is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. They start school in Year 7 with average attainment and make satisfactory progress between Year 7 and Year 11. In 2008, the GCSE examination results at five or more A* to C grades (including English and mathematics) dropped after an improving trend established in previous years. In particular, fewer more able students reached the highest A/A* grades. The school moved rapidly to address the situation and present Year 11 students are well on course to reach appropriate standards. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make better progress than their peers because of the good support provided for their needs. In the sixth form, standards are broadly average by the end of Year 13 and show an improving trend.

Students benefit from good care and support, and appreciate the opportunities available to them. As a result, many are maturing as responsible, committed and lively members of the school community. This is reflected in good relationships and mostly positive attitudes to learning. Students have a good understanding about staying safe, for example when using the internet. Students are fully aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and although they do not always give up their packets of crisps willingly, many are eager participants in sporting activities. As one student commented, 'They push you quite hard here to keep fit.' Students enjoy coming to school and most attend regularly. Some parents raised concerns about behaviour. This inspection found behaviour is usually good and occasionally exemplary, particularly when students are moving around school corridors. However, if lessons lack pace and do not capture and engage students' interest, some will seize the opportunity to talk too much and this can disturb other students. Senior leaders have a strong focus on improving the satisfactory quality of teaching and many initiatives are in place. These strategies have not yet had a consistent impact on raising the quality of teaching in all subjects. Not all teachers give sufficient emphasis to checking students' learning in lessons so that they can intervene where necessary and accelerate progress. Assessment information is being used satisfactorily in most subjects to set appropriate targets for students. The curriculum now offers students appropriate courses. Recent changes to Key Stage 4 allow for greater flexibility and choice as well as more opportunities to personalise learning. This is helping to motivate students and provide pathways to further education, training and employment. The response of parents and students to a recent options day indicates high levels of interest and an enthusiasm for the new curriculum on offer. Specialist status has had a strong impact on school life. For example, good work in information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics with pupils in primary schools supports their effective transition to secondary school.

Good partnerships with other agencies, including local schools, support students' well-being. The school is working hard to establish a positive contribution to community cohesion, although the impact on students' understanding of the diverse multi-ethnic nature of British society is limited.

Recently, procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have become more robust and staff now have a clearer sense of the improvements needed. Whilst leadership, including governance, is good in some areas of the school, the effectiveness of middle leaders, particularly in terms of directing improvement in the quality of education, is patchy. Nevertheless,

the commitment and drive of all staff to ensure the school does its best for all their students, coupled with the improvements made so far, show that there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students receive a good education in the sixth form and make good progress from their starting points. Progress is better in the more popular subjects such as mathematics and media studies, where there are large numbers of students and standards on entry are well above average. The school has found it difficult to improve performance in less popular areas such as vocational courses, where student numbers are low. Students comment on their positive relationships with staff and appreciate what the school does for them. They feel well supported both academically and in their personal development. Students place high value on opportunities created as a result of their involvement in the organisation of events such as whole-school charity week. As one commented, 'The whole experience is just brilliant, it has changed what I want to do with my life.' Students also value the opportunities to extend their personal skills and experience through mentoring younger students in subjects such as mathematics and their voluntary work in the local community. Some students did comment that they would like more opportunities for enrichment and physical activities. The good sixth form curriculum is well taught and offers students an increasing range of qualifications. Students value the support and care they receive from the Head of Year and their tutors, and comment on the excellent support given for applications for higher education. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and there are real strengths in the drive to include students in the active evaluation of all aspects of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of more able students through ensuring teaching challenges them to reach higher standards.
- Ensure all middle leaders contribute fully to raising achievement, particularly through further improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas.
- Ensure all aspects of community cohesion are promoted effectively.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In 2008, students reached above average standards in Key Stage 3 and made better progress than in Key Stage 4. GCSE results were showing an improving trend until summer 2008, when they declined due to some issues with examination entry and the fact that some students did not achieve their expected results. Up until this time, results in exams, although variable in different subjects, were broadly average.

The school has worked hard to improve the achievement of less able boys and has had some success in this area, although the achievement of less able girls has not yet improved in the same way. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making good progress due to the secure care and support they receive. More able students do not do as well as they might

because the work does not always challenge them enough. The school's regular assessment of students' progress indicates that current standards are improving, and the school is on course to meet challenging targets. However, achievement is still variable across different subjects and the school recognises the need to address this by continuing to improve teaching and learning.

The school has met specialist targets in mathematics but has struggled until recently to meet those in ICT. The recent introduction of a new ICT course is improving performance in this area and the school is now on line to meet targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students are enthusiastic about their school and clearly enjoy their learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Students show a secure level of understanding of life in other countries but are not sufficiently aware of what it means to live in multicultural Britain. Attendance is below the national average but improving due to the good range of programmes to celebrate and reward good attendance.

Students have an active voice in the school and know that their concerns and opinions are valued. For example, they particularly enjoy being involved in the 'Learning detective programme' as it gives them an opportunity to assess their attitudes to learning and comment on teaching. Students also enjoy being involved in supporting charitable organisations and value the links established with and visits made to European countries and South Africa. Students are developing secure basic skills, especially in ICT, that ensure they are adequately prepared for their life ahead. This is helped by the good quality careers guidance, work experience and college links. Students are encouraged to consider entry to the sixth form. As one student stated: 'We get pushed into thinking about higher education.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there is some good practice, most of the teaching is satisfactory. While many teachers share lesson objectives with their classes, these often relate to tasks and activities rather than what the students should learn. As a result, teachers do not focus enough on checking what learning has taken place, or enable students to reflect carefully on the skills and knowledge they have gained. Where learning is more effective, teachers use their skills well to ask probing questions to challenge and extend students' thinking. Good lessons are planned around a variety of engaging, well structured activities that encourage students to think for themselves and provide opportunities both to work in groups and to learn independently. Weaker lessons do not focus on the differing needs of students within the class and are often slow paced. Teachers' skills in using information on students' performance are improving. Individual students' work is usually marked regularly but consistent advice and feedback on improvement are not always given. Most students know the levels they are working at but are not always clear about what they need to do to reach the next level.

Teachers' skills in using ICT to support learning have improved significantly as a result of the school's specialist status. The mobile coaching suite contributes significantly to teachers'

professional development and is a powerful tool that enables teachers to reflect on and improve their practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a satisfactory match to most students' needs and interests. The curriculum is reviewed on an annual basis with alterations made to aid student progress. A full curriculum review takes place every four years in order to take account of new developments and to increase its relevance to learners. This process involves students and local primary schools.

Recent changes to the curriculum in both Key Stages 3 and 4 addressed areas of underachievement and concerns about option choices for older students. For younger students, recent innovations have included a competence-based course in Year 7, ICT accreditation in Year 9 and the revision of schemes of work in Years 8 and 9. These provide a stronger focus on the acquisition of key skills, for example in enquiry and problem solving. These innovations are already raising levels of motivation, expectation and achievement but the college acknowledges that implementation is not yet consistent. The college's specialist status has had a significant impact on curricular development, especially in extending the use of ICT into all subject areas. Many students enjoy taking part in a broad range of enrichment activities including English creative writing, AS critical thinking, music, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and a variety of sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The college rightly prides itself on its success in ensuring that students feel valued, cared for and well looked after. This is evident in the way it promotes a positive attitude to school life amongst its students, many of whom thrive personally and socially in this inclusive environment. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and the support centre offers effective help and guidance for vulnerable students in developing their social skills and self-esteem.

Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are securely in place. Students have justifiable confidence that their problems will be listened to, and that action will be taken as necessary to address issues such as bullying.

The support students receive as they transfer to Year 7 is strong and appreciated by both students and their parents. In particular, students who are more vulnerable are helped to settle into their new school very quickly. Advice and guidance on future courses and careers are thorough and enable students to make well informed choices for their future lives. Academic guidance is not so strong. Appropriate systems are now in place to track individual students' progress and year leaders are making better use of information to identify and monitor students who are at a risk of not achieving their targets. However, whilst most students are aware of their targets, there is inconsistent practice across subjects and year groups. Last year's difficulties in academic guidance that led to some students taking the wrong tier of entry in English and mathematics have been addressed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders have a clear focus on ensuring that the school's provision meets students' needs more effectively. Honest self-evaluation gives an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development but lacks a sufficiently rigorous focus on outcomes for the students and accountability. Some middle managers are increasingly effective as team leaders but some have not yet fully grasped the implications of their roles and responsibilities for the overall quality of education in their departments. They do not give sufficient priority to the systematic monitoring of students' performance, or relate this to improving teaching in their departments. The senior team is working hard to develop a good programme of training for teachers. This is starting to improve performance and encourage staff to think creatively about their teaching and share good practice. The school provides satisfactory value for money and deploys its resources appropriately and efficiently. A number of parents in their responses to the inspection questionnaire raised particular concerns about the quality of communication between the school and parents. However, others felt well informed and kept up-to-date with their child's progress.

The governors are strong supporters of the school with an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. They are organised in a team-based approach that allows a flexible response to issues as they arise and provides additional depth to the work of governors' committees.

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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	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?	3	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
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	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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 learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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	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	3	
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**

6 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Felpham Community College, Felpham, PO22 8EL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed our visit, especially our discussions with some of you and seeing you at work in lessons and around the school. This letter is to tell you our main findings. I hope that some of you will take the opportunity to read the full report.

The school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Satisfactory teaching helps most of you make the expected progress during your time in the main school, although those of you who need extra support in your learning do well. Teaching is good in the sixth form and students here make good progress. The standards you reach at GCSE are improving, apart from last year, when they dropped and not enough of you gained the higher A/A* grades. The signs are that the results this year will improve. We think, though, that with more demanding work in lessons, some of you can do better than you currently do.

You tell us that you enjoy school, and you make an effective contribution to the school and local community, and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Staff give you satisfactory care, support and guidance, and you tell us that you value their support. Most of you behave well, although some talk too much when you are bored in lessons and this disturbs others.

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. We have asked them to do three things to improve the school and raise standards further.

- Make sure that teaching challenges you to reach higher standards, especially those of you who are capable of getting the highest grades.
- Make sure that the curricular leaders keep a close watch on the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas so that it is as good as possible.
- Improve your understanding of what it means to live in our diverse multi-ethnic society.

You can help by always working hard, attending regularly and behaving well. With very best wishes for the future

Yours faithfully

Christine Jones (Her Majesty's Inspector)